

HEAR MINISTRIES

Sermon for Sunday, November 30th, 2025

Text: Isaiah 2:1-5; Romans 13:11-14, Matthew 21:1-11

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***Let us Pray:** Lord, we come to You today, longing to hear the truth of Your Word. We give you our hearts, our ears and our minds this morning and pray that You will impart to each of us just what we need to hear. Thank You for the HOPE we have in Christ Jesus our Lord.....help us to truly live in that HOPE. And now, may the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be pleasing in Your sight, our Lord and Savior. Amen.*

The word Advent means “*coming*” from the Latin “*adventus*.” Today, on this **first Sunday of Advent**, we lit the first purple candle. This is the **HOPE** candle, also known as the **Prophecy** candle. It represents the anticipation and HOPE of the Messiah’s coming. Purple symbolizes royalty and repentance as we prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ.

Today, **we begin the time** when we **remember the birth of Jesus** and we **look forward to (hope for, anticipate, wait for) the second coming of Jesus**.

Have you ever heard the phrase, “Hurry up and wait!??” Maybe you’ve used this phrase a time or two. This phrase is said to have originated in the 1940s with the U.S. military personnel grumbling about having to **hurry up** to get to the battlefield and then **wait** for orders.

No one really likes to wait.....but good things ARE worth the wait! We wait all the time for good things: we wait for cookies to bake or potatoes to cook or a quilt to be made or a field to be harvested. We wait all the time. So, we should be pretty good at **waiting this Advent**, which really means **we “wait” for Christ’s coming**.

But, the question is, are we REALLY good at waiting? In our Old Testament reading for today (Isaiah 2:1-5), Isaiah brought a Word from the Lord to the people that gave them **HOPE**. He was talking about **a future where all the nations will come to the mountain**

of the Lord, to learn and walk in His ways. It calls for the people of Israel to walk in the light of the Lord. It is the HOPE of a future where justice prevails over violence.

In the midst of all the violence today, **this Word from the Lord provides HOPE for us as well.** Isaiah is encouraging the Israelites (and us today) to “*walk in the light of the Lord.*”(Isaiah 2:5b)

The glitch is that, between the time Isaiah spoke these words, and the time of the New Testament when Paul lived, and our current time **there has been a loss of HOPE, a disinterest in God and in waiting for Christ’s return. People have fallen away from the Lord and have preferred to do each as they please.**

Paul addressed this with the people in the church in Rome in our Second Reading today. Initially, they thought Jesus was returning with more immediacy so they quit their jobs, sold their homes and waited. But not for that long because Paul had to tell them to go about their lives and always be ready for the time when Jesus would return.

Now, we all know what human nature is like. If it’s not going to happen right now, we lose interest and go about doing the things that are immediately pressing or more interesting. **We get bored with waiting.** This happened to the early Christian’s as well.

So, in Romans 13:11-14, Paul has some firm words for the early believers. Apparently, they had become lax in their faith, lethargic in their obedience to God and engaging in behaviors that were not becoming of God’s people. Paul is urging them to awaken from their spiritual sleep and embrace a life of moral living.

As we come to verses 11-14, the scene is set in a small house church in Rome. The room is dimly lit by oil lamps, casting a warm glow on the faces of the believers gathered there. Among those present are Aquila and Priscilla, a husband and wife team who have opened their home for this gathering. They are known for their hospitality and their dedication to spreading the teachings of Jesus. Also present is Phoebe, a deaconess who has traveled to Rome to support the church and assist in any way she can.

As Paul’s words are read aloud, **the room is filled with a sense of anticipation and reverence.** They respect Paul and they want to hear what he says. The atmosphere is charged with **a sense of urgency and a call to action,** as the **believers are challenged to live as children of the light in a world filled with darkness.**

First, Paul says in v.11, “***Wake from sleep!***” He is saying WAKE UP spiritually! Don’t be lethargic. **Come alive to the Lord** and to His Word. **Get excited about Jesus,** and **get**

serious about the things of God! We may think it's not important or there's plenty of time but the return of Christ is nearer than when we first believed and the day is closer at hand! I mean, this is eternity we're talking about!! Eternity is a long time to be separated from God and in the hands of the devil! Paul says, *"Don't let the world, the flesh and the devil put you to sleep. It's time to wake up! Life is short, and the Lord is coming soon!"* (Romans 13:11-12)

The **second** thing Paul addresses is the need to **"cast off."** Paul says in Romans 13:12b to *"....cast off the works of darkness...."* Well, what does that mean? Is this talking about fishing? Casting? No, no, no. **"Works of darkness" are behaviors that are contrary to the teachings of Christ.** Paul explains, in verse 13, these works include **drunkenness, immorality/sensuality, quarreling and jealousy.** And "cast off" means to throw aside....to **stop doing**....to get rid of these behaviors. The people had become apathetic to obeying the teachings of Christ and were much more intrigued with the behaviors of the culture. However, if a person says they believe in Christ but their **actions** follow the ways of the world, which is the truth? **Our actions speak MUCH louder than words.**

In fact, Paul says, *"make NO PROVISION for the flesh, to gratify its desires."* (Romans 13:14) In other words, **be really mindful of what our weakness are.** If I know I will be tempted to drink into drunkenness, I better stay away from the drink! Or, if I am prone to quarreling, I better keep my mouth shut until I can control my anger. If a man is aroused by looking at a woman, he better look at something else.

It's like taking off a piece of dirty clothing. If we have dirt on our shirt or pants we take them off. As Christians, **we want to be clean so we have to remove these behaviors that lead us into sin.** And they might be different for each of us. I am so convicted talking about this subject because I have my own temptations and sins that I need to "cast off." **By ourselves it is impossible to do. BUT, Jesus has left us with the Holy Spirit** and when we believe in Him as our Lord and Savior, He sends us the Holy Spirit to lead, guide and direct us in all truth. He helps us to stay out of those murky areas where we probably shouldn't be....IF WE ASK HIM!! **If we make the Holy Spirit our constant companion He will help us to "cast off" those things that are not pleasing to God and help us to live lives that reflect His light and love.**

The **third** thing Paul says in this passage is in Romans 13:12, **"put on the armor of light."** Well, what is the "armor of light?" The "armor" imagery here suggests a **readiness to stand firm against spiritual challenges and temptations**, similar to the armor described in Ephesians chapter 6, including the breastplate of righteousness, belt of truth, the Gospel of peace, the helmet of salvation, the shield of faith....and the sword of the Holy

Spirit. So, **Christians are to get rid of the behaviors of darkness and embrace a life that reflects truth, holiness and life in Christ.**

Paul is calling these believers to stop doing things that look like the world and, instead, put on “*the Lord Jesus Christ.*” **He is calling them to behaviors like honesty, purity, love and grace.** These are the things Christ demonstrated and, as His followers, He asks us to do as well.

Think of how much time has passed from the time of Paul until now! We are DEFINITELY much closer to Christ’s return now than they were then. If we really look around us we will see signs of the end times.....the increasing “birth pangs” that will indicate Christ’s return is very near.

When I look around our world, I see that “Christians” have fallen asleep spiritually, just as those in Paul’s day had. **Paul’s words apply as much to us as they did to the Christians in the New Testament time.**

So, what does all this have to do with our Advent theme of HOPE? Well, when we wait for something, the Bible tells us in I Thessalonians 4:13, “*And now, dear brothers and sisters, we want you to know what will happen to the believers who have died^[a] so you will not grieve like people who have no hope.*” We KNOW what will happen when we die because the Bible tells us!! When Jesus Christ returns He will take all those who believe on His name to live and reign with Him. **Now, I don’t know about you, but I think that is an amazingly wonderful thing to wait for!! We wait with HOPE and ANTICIPATION!!!**

We want to be sure we are always on alert and ready when our Savior returns. The time is definitely closer than it was in Paul’s day! But what should we be doing while we wait so we don’t get into trouble??!!

We are encouraged to remain vigilant and actively engage in our faith while we wait.

Here are some things to keep us out of trouble:

1. **Keep our eyes open** – Stay alert to the signs of Christ’s return, as Jesus Himself instructed us to do (Matthew 24:42)
2. **Live a life of purity** – Avoid sin (Check out the 10 commandments) and honor the Lord in everything we do.
3. **Renew our mind** – Resist the pull of worldly distractions and seek the Lord daily.
4. **Encourage fellow believers** – Engage in worship, study the Word and build each other up in faith.

5. **Engage in compassionate service** – Share the Gospel in Word and action (help the needy, comfort the grieving, care for the sick, etc.)
6. **Cultivate deep fellowship with Christ** – Read His Word regularly, worship Him always and spend time talking and listening in prayer.

These actions will not only keep us growing spiritually while we wait, but also equip us to witness and share the HOPE of Christ's return with others.

Our HOPE is in the same Jesus Christ as the HOPE of the people in Isaiah's day and in Paul's time. **Advent is about looking back to the HOPE in a newborn baby Christchild and it is in looking forward to the HOPE of Christ Jesus' return.**

And, as we wait (with HOPE), there are three things we need to do: "*Wake up,*" "*Cast off*", and "*Put on.*"

Why? Because Jesus Christ is coming soon!

Amen.