

Advent 1
November 27, 2016

“The Best Part of Waking Up”

ROMANS 13:11-14

And do this, understanding the present time: The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.¹² The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. ¹³ Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. ¹⁴ Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.

Those of you who enjoy coffee, don't mind getting up when the alarm goes off at 6:00 AM in the morning. You know that in a few minutes a cup of coffee will be there for you to help you face a new day. The Folger's coffee company captured the joy of that first cup of coffee in the morning with the well known slogan "The best part of waking up, is Folger's in your cup."

Today, on this first Sunday in Advent, with these words from Romans 13 impressed on our hearts and minds, we know the best part of waking up is knowing that Jesus could return before the day comes to an end. This belief and hope totally changes every day of life here on this earth."

One day closer to Jesus' return

The best part of waking up each morning is knowing that we are one day closer to that day when Jesus will return on clouds of glory. Paul writes to the Christians living in Rome, "And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer than when we first believed." Let's understand the present time in which we are living. Every day of this present time, whether it is going well for us, or whether it is filled with difficulties is one day closer to the time that Jesus will someday come to destroy this present world and give us a new heavens and new earth. When you have this kind of hope, the problems of this life seem small by comparison.

Jesus knows the exact hour and moment when he will return to take us home. He gives us all sorts of signs to remind us that this could be soon. We hear about these signs in Matthew 24 where Jesus says, "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginnings of birth pains." The best part of waking up is knowing that someday these signs will be fulfilled.

The best part of waking up is also knowing that as long as this world exists, the gospel of the kingdom will be preached as is happening all over the world even as I speak. In our Old Testament Lesson for today, Isaiah pictured the church in the last days as a holy mountain rising above all other mountains. He tells about people streaming into this mountain or

this church from all nations on earth. "Many peoples will come and say, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord.'" The best part of waking up is seeing this happening all over the world just as it was predicted.

The best part of waking up to a new day is to know that if Jesus were to return, everything from the past will be destroyed. Just as the great world flood destroyed the original world corrupted by sin, so fire will destroy this present world in which we are living. From the remains of this present world there will be a new heaven and new earth created for us miraculously by our God. It sure is good to know the time is coming when Jesus will wipe away every tear from our eyes. We live in the anticipation of that hope. It makes our sufferings of this life seem small by comparison as we are told in 2 Corinthians 4. "For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all."

The best part of waking up is to know that I am ready to meet Jesus when he comes in glory, not because of what I have tried to do to make myself worthy, but because of what he has done for me. Paul writes in verse 14, "Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature." Every day is another day to admire the beautiful white robe of righteousness given to me by Jesus and given to me in my baptism. Galatians 3 says, "For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ." Isaiah 61:10 says, "I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness."

When we wake up in the morning, we dress ourselves in the clothes that we will be wearing for that day. Every day is a new day to wear the robe of righteousness that you have in Christ that covers you of all your past sin. We love the hymn verse that says, "Lord, when your glory I shall see, And taste your kingdom's pleasure. Your blood my royal robe shall be, My joy beyond all measure! When I appear before your throne, Your righteousness shall be my crown; With these I need not hide me. And there in garments richly wrought, As your own bride I shall be brought To stand in joy beside you."

Because you wear these royal robes that qualify you for eternal life, you want take an aggressive approach to any sin that might show itself in your life. That is a privilege as you face each new day before the Lord comes to call you.

One day more to serve in Jesus' kingdom

In the 1970's there was a popular saying, "Today is the first day of the rest of your life." When it comes to living in Jesus' kingdom here on this earth before he calls us home to his kingdom of glory, it is a privilege to walk in the light instead of living in the darkness. "The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies or drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy."

Every day is a new day to say "no" to the darkness of sin from my past life and to say "yes" to the new life Jesus wants me to live. Every day I wake up I still have my sinful nature that tries to lead me away from the Lord. I have Satan suggesting that living in

the darkness is so much better than living in the light. I have the world always trying to pull me back into the darkness. The best part of waking up is knowing Jesus is there with me to equip me for this battle.

The world will offer its orgies, and drunkenness and sexual immorality and debauchery. These are things done in darkness. If Paul were writing today he would certainly include other sins of darkness such as pornography, sexting and sexual immorality among those who are not married. He would include in addition to drunkenness, other forms of uncontrolled behavior such as drugs and other mind altering substances. He even includes in these sins dissension and jealousy, sins that have even ripped apart Christian families and Christian congregations.

The best part of waking up is that we can go to war against these sins that pop up in our lives with the strength Jesus gives. The Christians living in Rome were very familiar with Roman soldiers and the equipment they had for battle. The Christian soldier, the soldier of the cross is also well equipped to face whatever the new day brings.

Paul writes to the dear Christians in Ephesus, "Therefore put on the full armor of God so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword the Spirit which is the word of God."

The best part of waking up is to know Jesus is right there helping you defend yourself as a soldier of the Christ. Listen to the optimism and hope that comes through in the words of the *Lorica* by Patrick of Ireland. "Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me, Christ in me, Christ on my right, Christ on my left, Christ when I lie down, Christ when I sit down, Christ in the heart of everyone who thinks of me, Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me, Christ in the eye that sees me, Christ in the ear that hears me." We wake up each day believing Jesus will help us live in the light and stay away from the darkness. Psalm 27 says, "The Lord is my light and my salvation- whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life- of whom shall I be afraid?" This comforting psalm ends with the words, "Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord."

Tomorrow morning, the alarm clock will go off, and it will be the beginning of another day of work, another day of school, another day of living here on this earth. As you look at the time on the clock, remember that this may be the last day on this earth. Let that help you make it through the hard days. As you look at the clock, let it help you face each new day as an opportunity to live in the light and say "no" to the darkness. Christians of every age have faced each new day praying, "Even so Lord, Jesus, come, come quickly." Amen.