

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

“None who wait for you shall be put to shame; they shall be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous. Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths.”

What better way is there to start off a new church year than to contemplate your mortality? What do I mean? Think about this very instant you are closer to your death than you were when you sang the hymn of the day. Or when this sermon is over you will be even closer than now and the breaths you are taking are that many more breaths closer to when you will breathe your last. Very uplifting right? Well, not so much. Time is fleeting and so are you. Yet for you who are in Christ, this is not something fatalistic rather is a call to repentance and place before you great joy and anticipation.

Listen again to those words from the Epistle reading that put you in this framework, “Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.”

There is a warning and instruction, an admonition, in this to you. God warns you, as he has the previous Sundays at the end of the church year, to be vigilant. You are to wake from sleep and stay awake. God doesn't say this to you with empty words. The reason you are told this is because the temptation from your fallen flesh is to be drowsy and sleep. It's to grow bored, complacent, apathetic, and any and everything in between as you go through this life. It's to walk in darkness toward death without giving thought to Christ and eternity.

God says something similar in Ephesians 4 when the Holy Spirit inspired St. Paul to write, “Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. But that is not the way you learned Christ!”

Those works of darkness are not who you are in Christ. Unbelief is living and walking in darkness. It's sin that does and wants you to close your eyes. The minute those things which sin against God start to define you and begin to rule over you in such a way as you no longer see a need to repent of your sin or just don't care, you've already entered back into the darkness of sin and death and cast away the light of life. Rather than waking and living, you lay down and sleep in preparation for the outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth, hell. Each breath you take closer to death has been lived as a living death already. Jesus said in John 11, “Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him.”

The urgency in this all is to know what this means for you. Be renewed in hearing these warnings of God and cast away the works of darkness because you see, the day is upon you. What does this mean? You are even closer to death now than you were at the beginning of this sermon. Life in this world is a life lived in a fallen world. See who you are by examining your life

Jesus was promised and came when the fullness of time had come. He walked in the light even as he is the Light and there is no darkness in him at all. And even from the time of his conception by the Holy Spirit in the womb of his mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Lord was getting closer and closer to something as he preached, worked miracles, and taught his people. He went forth each day fulfilling the law of God perfectly and obediently never once wavering or failing. His obedience to his Father who sent him was perfect and absolute. He knew what he must do and with each

First Sunday in Advent—Ad Te Levavi—December 1, 2024

breath he took he knew he was getting closer and closer to what he must do as the beloved Son of God. His time was here to head to the cross and he did so obediently and lovingly for you.

“Say to the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.’” The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them. Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!”

This is your Lord, Jesus. Awaken and greet him as he draws near. Repent and find your Lord who shows you mercy. Adore him with joyous songs and psalms. Jesus said in John 8, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” Again, in John 12 he said, “I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness.” To be baptized into Christ is to be a child of light, a child of the day. As you go through this world inching toward death, you do so as one who has eternal life.

You are closer to salvation than you were a few minutes ago. You are closer and closer to when your Lord returns in glory with his beams so cheering to guide you safely home. You are closer to eternal life. All of this is even as you have salvation, forgiveness, and life now. How shall you meet the Lord? “To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul. O my God, in you I trust; let me not be put to shame. Let not my enemies exult over me. Indeed, none who wait for you shall be put to shame.” That is your confession and your hope in your Redeemer, Jesus.

So, is your life any different in the here and now because of this? Know who you are in Christ and listen to what God teaches you. You see you have something because you have someone. “The Lord is your righteousness” as Jeremiah prophesied. All that is Christ, and his righteousness is yours through faith. All of it is, his whole life, his atoning death, and his resurrection from the grave are all yours. Now listen again to those words of the Epistle reading and see the great freedom that you have in Christ. And what you know you have in him as God’s word clearly teaches you.

“Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.”

What you wear as your baptismal garment every day is the armor of light; you are clothed with Christ. When you walk through the darkness of this fallen world you are not overcome. God’s word is a lamp to your feet and a light to your path. You are not groping through the darkness trying to reach out and grasp whatever you may think may offer some type of solace and false light in your life. Your eyes are fixed on the Light of the world and head toward him even as he is with you, and you have been enlightened by the Holy Spirit.

Facing things like temptation are seen by you as something you have the victory over and you see the end in sight and past them. Using some examples from the text of the Epistle, you see something like drunkenness as something is just a temporary fix to try and find some escape from the darkness. As a Christian you look at that and know it for what it really is and see the falsehood and hopelessness and deeper and deeper despair and slavery it brings. You look at quarreling and jealousy and see how ridiculous they are and serve only purposes of exalting yourself or hurting your neighbor and the poison they spread and continue to breed more of until relationships and people are darkened to the point they can’t see one another. No, you face these things with the armor of light. You face them as one who shines the light upon them and scatters the darkness and is free to lighten rather than darken. That’s who you are in Christ and what he has given to you.

First Sunday in Advent—Ad Te Levavi—December 1, 2024

“Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. The night is far gone; the day is at hand.” You are closer to the day of redemption dear people of God. There is a sobering reality to this as you know your mortality to be sure but there is great hope, anticipation, joy, and peace in all this for you as a Christian. You are drawing near to the eternal day where there is no darkness, no more suffering, no more sin, and no more death. Jesus has come and conquered. You are forgiven and you have the armor light. Greet each day as one who lives in the day light and go to bed each night knowing that the dawn is always on the horizon for you as Jesus promises you, he is coming for your redemption. He comes a light of consolations and blessed hope to you who love the Lord’s appearing.

It’s Advent dear saints of God and a what a wonderful thing it is to have this life here and now that is not a life of darkness but a life of light; forgiveness and freedom to truly live and enjoy what God has given you now. What a wonderful thing it is as well to live knowing the glory to come as you get closer and closer with each breath and step to when the Lord guides you and all his people, the church, safely home. Stir up Your power, O Lord, and come, that by Your protection we may be rescued from the threatening perils of our sins and saved by Your mighty deliverance. Come, Lord Jesus. Amen.

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.