

9-6-20

Sermon- Does Anybody Really Know What Time it Is?

Scripture- Romans 13:8-14, CTW- Ps 149

Hymns- 677, 779, 343

Theme- Like Jesus in his sermon on the mount, Paul considered attitudes as important as actions. Just as hatred leads to murder, so jealousy leads to strife, and lust to adultery. When Christ returns he wants to find his people clean on the inside as well as the outside. How do we accomplish this?

### **I. Introduction: What is your attitude when you wake up?**

I'm a morning person and waking up is easy for me. But I am aware that there are others who are allergic to mornings.

They just keep hitting the snooze button and try to stay in bed as long as they can.

Mark Lowry is a Christian comedian, singer and songwriter. He jokingly suggests that people who have a hard time getting out of bed should rename their bed "The Word."

That way when someone calls them early in the morning and they are still in bed, they can say: "I can't talk right now, I'm in the Word."

But why am I talking about sleep at the beginning of this sermon? That might be pretty foolish if I hope to get your attention!

**A. We are talking about this because in Romans 13:11, Paul says "it is time for you to wake up from your sleep."**

Turns out that sleep is not only something that we can experience on a physical level, it is also something that can happen to us spiritually.

Before we get into Paul's illustrations and important teachings here, let's be reminded of the context of this section.

This fourth section of Paul's letter to the Romans began in **Chapter 12**, where Paul called on believers to offer themselves completely to God as living sacrifices.

This call included a resistance to conformity to the world through a spiritual renewal of the mind. This renewal of the mind should cause us to think of ourselves in the right way (**12:3**), to use our gifts for the good of the body of Christ (**12:4-8**), to display sincere love (**12:9-21**), and to submit ourselves to the governing authorities and to pay our obligations of taxes and respect (**13:1-7**).

Today as Paul continues the letter in **Chapter 13:8-10**, we see him returning to his main theme of love. Paul states: 8 Do not owe anyone anything, except to love one another, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. 9 The commandments, Do not commit adultery; do not murder; do not steal; do not covet; and any other commandment, are summed up by this commandment: Love your neighbor as yourself. 10 Love does no wrong to a neighbor. Love, therefore, is the fulfillment of the law.

**B. Do you see how Paul cleverly plays on the notion of "debt" that he introduced earlier to create a transition back into the topic of love?**

Christians are expected to pay their "debts" and they are not to be in "debt" to anyone, but Paul wants us to understand there is one kind of debt that will never be paid in full: the debt of love.

For Paul's point here, love is a debt that can never be paid in full.

Think about it, does God ever give us permission to say, "I've loved that person enough, so I'm going to stop loving them now?" No, God does not.

b. We all realize that some people are easier to love than others, and that the way that God wants us to keep on loving people is going to require a divine love from a divine source.

How many times in your relationships have you looked up in the sky in frustration and said Lord, give me the strength to love this person!

God calls us to love all people, including the unlovely people of the world. We owe them a debt of love because of God's love for us.

## **II. Paul then encourages us with the truth that love is the fulfillment of the law.**

It helps to clearly understand what God wants from us.

Remember the time that Jesus was asked what is the most important commandment of all God's commands? Jesus answered simply: "Love God with all you heart, mind, strength and spirit, and Love your Neighbor as yourself."

### **A. Love is what everyone needs and it is the guideline we need for knowing how to treat others and how to obey God.**

In God's plan, when we truly love as God loves, then we will keep God's other important commands. So many of God's "Thou Shalt Nots" ultimately flow from love.

For instance if we truly love our neighbor, we won't sleep with his wife, or we won't kill him, or we won't steal his money, or begrudge him his prosperity.

In verse 10, Paul concludes: "Love does no wrong to a neighbor."

When we truly love someone, we don't want to do anything that will hurt them.

Our Christian calling is one that is a commitment to real, concrete, sincere love that has no end and is a continuing debt that we owe to all people.

In the end, only God and His love can keep us loving people the way God wants us to love them.

Now we turn our attention to the final verses of this chapter, **verses 11-14:** 11 Besides this, since you know the time, it is already the hour for you to wake up from sleep, because now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. 12 The night is nearly over, and the day is near; so let us discard the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. 13 Let us walk with decency, as in the daytime: not in carousing and drunkenness; not in sexual impurity and promiscuity; not in quarreling and jealousy. 14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and don't make plans to gratify the desires of the flesh. (**Rom. 13:11-14**)

This short paragraph brings to a conclusion the survey of Christian lifestyle issues that Paul began in chapter 12, verses 1 and 2.

**B. In Chapter 13, Paul emphasizes the need for immediate action because the time is short and illustrates the process of transformation with the simple process of changing one's clothing.**

Take another look at verse 11: Besides this, since you know the time, it is already the hour for you to wake up from sleep, because now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed.

The Christian Standard Bible says: "**since you know the time...**" The NIV says: "**understanding the present time...**"

The New Living Translation says: "**for you know how late it is; time is running out...**"

**Paul is really trying to ask them: “Does anybody really know what time it is?” (The Chicago Bible.) “It’s time to get with it, people!”**

The alarm has already gone off and we keep hitting the snooze button!

It’s time to wake up! Why? Because our salvation is nearer than when we first believed.

This is a reference to the second coming of Jesus – Jesus is coming and each day brings us closer to that great life-shattering event.

None of us know when Jesus will return, but all of us can say that every day that passes brings us closer to the day when Jesus will return.

**C. Notice that Paul then skillfully employs the imagery of day and night to describe spiritual realities.**

Verse 12 says: The night is nearly over, and the day is near; so let us discard the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.

When Paul says that the night is nearly over and the day is near, he is saying that this present time, when Jesus is physically absent up in heaven, is the nighttime and it is nearly over.

The day of Christ’s return is near, and Paul likens Christ’s return as the break of day, and it is time to take off our nighttime clothes and put on our daytime clothes.

The nighttime clothes are the deeds of darkness and the daytime clothes are the armor of light.

The day and night contrast is a helpful one as we understand that the nighttime is when people often indulge in their sinful behavior in darkened bars and bedrooms, and it’s when thieves and murderers often do their wicked work under the cover of darkness.

Why is the clothing of light that we are to put on described as “armor”? Because Paul needs us to understand that we are in a spiritual battle. We are engaged in spiritual warfare.

In verse 13, Paul contrasts daytime behavior that should characterize the Christian life and nighttime behavior that should not: Let us walk with decency, as in the daytime: not in carousing and drunkenness; not in sexual impurity and promiscuity; not in quarreling and jealousy. (**Rom. 13:13**)

Our walking in daytime decency doesn’t need any description other than what nighttime indecency looks like.

### **III. For further understanding, Paul lists six deeds of darkness and suggests that they go in pairs.**

#### **A. The first pair is carousing and drunkenness.**

Paul says Christians must not participate in these kinds of indecent deeds of darkness, because it takes away their sharpness, their readiness.

#### **B. The second pairing of sinful activity is sexual impurity and promiscuity.**

Here Paul refers to brazen, shameless sin – so he describes the person who not only engages in illicit sex, but flaunts his lustful attitudes and actions without shame.

These two pairings of sins caution Christians to avoid any kind of sexual relations outside of marriage, which include pre-marital sex, extra-marital sex, prostitution, and pornography.

As you know, the people of this world laugh at that standard.

The world laughs when abstinence is suggested as a way to avoid immorality, pregnancy, and sexually-transmitted diseases.

In some places in our country, teaching abstinence is being legislated against.

We get bombarded by the philosophies of the world and begin to think, "Well, maybe it's not as bad or as wrong as I have thought, and everybody is doing it, and it doesn't look like it is hurting them."

**C. The third and final pairing of the deeds of darkness are quarreling and jealousy.**

Are you surprised that strife and envy are listed with ugly sins like carousing, drunkenness, sexual immorality and promiscuity?

Inebriation and sexual immorality certainly don't belong in the life of Christians, but neither do quarreling and jealousy.

As people called on to love like God loves, envy and strife, quarreling and jealousy do not lead to loving relationships nor a loving environment in the church or the home.

Picking fights, criticizing others, gossiping and lying about them are hateful, destructive behaviors. They are actions driven from a darkened heart motivated by jealousy and envy.

In verse 14, Paul concludes with a final contrast: "But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and don't make plans to gratify the desires of the flesh." **(Rom. 13:14)**

You might ask: "Put on Christ?" Haven't we already put on the Lord Jesus Christ in baptism?

We know what Paul wrote to the Galatians, "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" **(Galatians 3:27)**.

So, if we have already put on Christ, why are we told to do it again here?

On a daily basis, we must be reminded to do what we did, once and for all, in our baptism.

#### **IV. Allow me to end with this illustration from the life of Augustine, the great 4th century theologian.**

**A. Before he became a Christian, Augustine was a brilliant young philosopher who was thoroughly caught up in this world system.**

For one thing, he insisted that sex drives were meant to be satisfied, and he did just that, any way he could.

But there was an emptiness about his life that began to distress him.

Christian friends challenged him to consider Christ, who could meet him where he was and give him strength to overcome sin.

Augustine obtained a copy of Paul's epistles, which in the fourth century, was not easy to come by.

He had it with him in the garden one day when he heard some children playing and singing outside the garden gate.

It sounded like they were saying, "Take up and read, take up and read."

It seemed that God Himself was speaking to him, so he picked up the scroll and began to read.

**B. He happened to read the very passage we are studying today:** Let us walk with decency, as in the daytime: not in carousing and drunkenness; not in sexual impurity and promiscuity; not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and don't make plans to gratify the desires of the flesh.

At that moment, the light dawned on his darkened soul, and Augustine decided to turn to Christ and after becoming a Christian and clothing himself with the Lord Jesus, he received the power to resist the sinful temptations of his flesh.



Later, after some time of walking with Christ, he saw a beautiful woman with whom he had been involved before he had become a Christian, and she was coming in his direction.

Augustine turned and began to run away from her. She ran after him calling out, "Augustine, why do you run? It is only I?"

Running even faster, he looked back over his shoulder and replied, "I run, because **THIS** is not I."

He knew he was a **new creation in Christ**, but he also knew that His life needed to change.

We would do well to follow his example. AMEN? Let Us Pray...