

“You Know the Time!” | Romans 13:11-14
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(Discussion questions on page 10)

Good Morning!

I hope you had a happy Thanksgiving! I am glad to be recovering here with you this morning. My name is Michael Weeks. I am one of the Pastors here at the Falls Church Anglican.

Without the help of the Holy Spirit, our time here is going to be pretty useless, so let's pray and ask for God's help.

This morning, we are taking a pause on our Ephesians series, and because today is the first Sunday in Advent we are going to dwell on the theme of Advent. Advent is the season in the church calendar which is marked by waiting and preparation for the coming of Christ. Just as we are waiting and preparing for Christmas, which is the first coming of Jesus, we are also waiting for his second coming, when he will return to complete what he has started.

So, please turn to the [Title] reading, so that you can follow along with me, to make sure what I am saying is trustworthy and true. It can be found in the bulletin or on page 948 of the pew bibles.

Intro

Two weeks ago, Sam mentioned that time can increase or decrease the value of things. Something you once held dear when you were younger, may no longer carry as much significance.

It is also true that some things can increase or decrease the value of time.

There are certain objects or events that can either make time more precious to us, or make it something we would rather forget.

E.g.

- Days like “Thanksgiving” and “Christmas” are much more valuable to us than days like “Monday” or “Tuesday”.
- The time spent with my family, my amazing wife and mostly amazing kids, is much more valuable to me than time spent stuck in traffic, at the Annandale Road or Seven Corners traffic lights.

There are some times and things we value so much that they change our actions and behaviors.

- We might spend a whole lot of time preparing for them, such as putting up Christmas trees and decorating our houses for Christmas
- Or like preparing a nursery room for the birth of a child.
- Or we might do things such as sing carols or even over-eat, you know things we don't typically do.

Well, the advent of Jesus, his first and second coming, are events like this. They change the value of time.

Context

This is what Paul explains to the Romans in our passage today.

He urges the Romans, and subsequently urges us, to live differently in light of the time. There is an event, it is a past and future event, which changes the value of the time in which we now live. Because of this event, and because of the value of this time, we should live differently in light of these things.

1. The Reason for love
2. The Rule of Love
3. [Comments]

We are going to look at this passage in three parts.

- First, we will look at “the time” in verses 11 and 12, and explore the time Paul is talking about.
- Second, we will look at “the event” that has caused this shift in time.
- Third, we will look at “the response” that Paul encourages us to make, in light of the time and the event.

1. Point 1 - The Reason for love

So first, “the time”.

Paul states that the Romans know the time, that the hour has come.

It is a time that they are to wake from their sleep, because the night is over and the day has begun.

Look at these verses again with me,

¹¹ 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. ¹² 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.

What exactly is the time that the Romans are meant to know?

Is he trying to remind them to wake up at 6am like sensible people do and to not be lazy?

- Is this Paul in a classic dad moment, saying; “well, well, well, look who decided to join us.” As the Romans roll out of bed at 10 a.m.
- Or is this a pre-determined time everyone, except us, knows about?
 - o Like midnight on New Year’s Eve?
 - o Or that Friday night is for High School Football?
 - o Or the bottom of the ninth?

Biblical Context

In order to answer this question, we need to bring in the wider context of the Bible.

All throughout the Bible there are references to “the time”.

OT - THE DAY OF THE LORD

But most notably, the Old Testament constantly references a particular time, known as “the day of the LORD”.

“The day of the LORD” is the time when God has promised to come.

It is a significant day, because when he comes he will finally and ultimately punish evil and restore the world back to the way he had created it to be.¹

The Day of the LORD is the day of final judgement, when as the prophet Amos says, “justice [will] roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.” (Amos 5:24)

Or Samwise Gamgee put it, it will be when “all the sad things come untrue.”²

Listen to what the prophet Zephaniah tells the people of Israel about the coming day of the Lord.

Zephaniah 1:14–15,

*14 “The great day of the Lord is near,
near and hastening fast;
the sound of the day of the Lord is bitter;
the mighty man cries aloud there.*

*15 A day of wrath is that day,
a day of distress and anguish,
a day of ruin and devastation,
a day of darkness and gloom,
a day of clouds and thick darkness”*

It is to be a fearful and awesome day!

Horrible for those deserving punishment, but wonderful for those in need of vindication.

New Testament

In the New Testament “the Day of the Lord” continues to take shape.

Multiple times Jesus told his disciples to be prepared for the coming of the Lord.

- In Luke 12:40 he tells them, “*You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.*”
- In Matthew 10:15, he says of those towns that reject him and his messengers, “*Truly, I say to you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town.*”

So, the time and the hour that Paul is referring to in our passage, the day that he says is at hand, that is the Day of the Lord.

Listen to what he says about it;

the time has come because that day is drawing near.

The time for sleeping is over, it is time to wake up and get ready for the day when Jesus will return.

It is right at our finger tips.

¹ See: <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/the-day-of-the-lord/>

² Sam Gamgee to Gandalf, *The Lord of the Rings* (chapter 4, Book Six)

Just as it us beginning to feel a lot like Christmas.
The days are shorter and colder, as the leaves continue to fall from the trees.
So also, it is beginning to feel a lot like the Day of the Lord.

The king is coming!
He is coming to claim his kingdom.
To bring light to the darkness and set the captives free.

The time, is now,
we must prepare for the final day and the final judgement.
For the day quickly coming, when we will all appear before God our maker, and give account of our lives.

2. Point 2 - The Rule of Love

But why the urgency?
The people of God have been waiting for this day for thousands of years?
What has happened that has changed the value of the time and given Paul so much urgency?

Look at again at what Paul says in verse 11,

"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."

Wait a minute Paul.
What do you mean salvation is nearer?
How can it be nearer?
As a student of the bible, I know that I am already saved through faith in Jesus Christ.
That my salvation was won for me when Jesus died upon the cross.
And that the Spirit now dwells within me and is already at work in me, sanctifying me and sealing me for the final day.
How can my salvation be any nearer than it being inside of me?

The salvation that Paul referring to, is not just the personal salvation of sinners, though that is certainly included in what he means, but he is thinking much, much bigger than that.
He is thinking about the universal, end of time event.³
When the whole of creation will be redeemed and made right.
When God comes to complete his work of redemption, finishing what he has begun in Jesus' death and resurrection.
This salvation is nearer because God has already come and begun that final day.

See, the first Advent, Jesus' first coming, it does two things to the Day of the Lord.

1. It initiates it.
and
2. It transforms it.

I. Jesus initiates the Day of the Lord

³ C. K. Barrett, *The Epistle to the Romans*.

First, through his first coming, in his birth, death, and resurrection, Jesus initiates the Day of the Lord.

He flicks the switch and sets those “end time” events in motion.

That day that the people of God have been waiting for, when he would come and visit his creation.

That happened in Jesus Christ.

The God of universe has already come, the one who created all things, who holds all things together by his word.

He took on flesh, and he walked among us.

And by doing so, he set in motion his plan for redemption.

He began the work of uniting all things in heaven and on earth under his rule.

The reason for Paul’s urgency isn’t because he is thinking in days or years, as though he was expecting Jesus to return in his lifetime.

For no one knows the hour or the day.

And “with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.”⁴

No, he is thinking about God’s great story of redemption.

Paul can say that our salvation is nearer to us now, than when we first believed, because it is the very next event on God’s calendar.

An event occurred which fundamentally changed the value of this time for Paul.

That event, was the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Paul no longer has to wonder if that day will ever come.

He has no doubt about it, because the proof is in Jesus.

Christ has already risen from the dead and ascended to the right hand of the father,

The holy Spirit has already been poured out,

and the gospel is spreading throughout the world.

He knows the next thing to come, is the return of Jesus.

II. [Jesus transforms the Day of the Lord.](#)

Jesus initiates the Day of the Lord, but he also transforms it.

No longer is the day of the Lord **only** a day of great fear and trepidation.

Though it is still that for those who disrespect God, for he is a consuming fire, worthy of all honor and glory and power.

But now, through the death and resurrection of Jesus, the Day of the Lord **is also** a day of great celebration.

At the cross of Jesus Christ, the punishment, the justice, the verdict that was meant to be given to us on that last day, it has already been put on him.

⁴ 2 Peter 3:8

It was put on his shoulders as he was nailed to the cross.
The full weight of God's final verdict of us, was put on him.
All our sin, all our shame, all our guilt, all of it, was put on him!

All, so that we might have the forgiveness of sins.
So that we might appear before our judge and hear the verdict of not guilty.

Illustration

Just think about this for a moment.
Imagine you get caught committing a serious crime.
You know something really bad, like jay-walking or using too many apostrophes in an email.
You are put on trial for your crimes against humanity, and scheduled to be brought before a judge.
As you wait in jail for your trial, you begin thinking about the horrible things you did, and the punishment that is surely coming your way.
But then that day comes to appear before the judge.
And low and behold, you know him.
The judge is your father.
And he looks at your case and throws it out of court.
Because he has already paid it.

For those who trust in Jesus, the day of the lord has been transformed,
and it is now something to look forward to with great excitement.
It is the day when we will be reunited with our heavenly father,
and enjoy fellowship with him just as it was meant to be.

But as we have been hearing in Ephesians 1:14, we are still waiting to acquire possession of that day.
We have the deposit, the kingdom is all but ours, but we still wait for the time we can walk through the front gates.

And so, we live in this in-between time. What the Bible also calls the last days.
When the night is over and the day has begun.
And because of Jesus, we now belong to that day.
So, it is the time to wake from our sleep, for the day is at hand.

The return of our king, the second coming of Jesus, is an event that looms large on our horizon,
and which changes the very value of the time we have on this earth.

No-one knows the day or the hour.
He could return this very day, and I hope he does.

The cross transforms what was to be a horrible and dreadful day, into a wonderful and hopeful day.
A day that we should start preparing for.

Sum

So, so far:

1. The time that we live in is the last days, looking forward with great anticipation to the end.
2. The event that completely changes the value of this time is the next event on that calendar of redemption, the day when our Lord will return. Which has been initiated and transformed by Jesus.
3. That brings us to our final point, “the response.”

3. Point 3 - [Comments]

In light of this time and this event, what is our response?

What might it look like to live in light of the end, knowing that Jesus could return at any moment?

Look at the rest of this passage, verses 12 to 14 with me,

¹² 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. ¹³ Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. ¹⁴ But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.”

Paul says that our response should be a complete and total change in the way we live.

We are to cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light.

We are to walk properly as in the daytime, not like we did before.

And we are to put on the Lord Jesus Christ, making no provision for the flesh.

I. Radical Change

This is strong language that Paul is using.

This is not just a slap on the back and an attaboy, you are doing well keep it up.

This is a call for radical change.

One of my favorite Australian sayings, that I don't use enough over here, is “she'll be right.”

To slow it down for all of you that aren't fluent in Australian, the saying is; “she will be alright”.

But pronounced, “she'll be right”.

The “she” here is anyone or anything.

It is used for any occasion where there isn't much you can do and you just have to trust that everything will turn out all right.

Maybe your car is starting to make some strange noises, but you have a long road trip ahead of you. She'll be right!

Paul here is not saying she'll be right.

It is quite the opposite, she most certainly will not be right.

This is DEFCON 1! Sound the alarms, prepare for battle!

The time is now to make a change to your life.

As drastic a change as light is from darkness.
Because there are no second chances.

II. Natural Change

But just as drastic a change as this is,
it should be as natural for us as changing in and out of your clothes.
Just as natural as coming home from work, taking off your work clothes, and putting on your comfy clothes.
Or as natural as taking off your pajamas to put on your daytime clothes.

Notice that just like with changing your clothes, in order to put on the weapons of light and to put on the Lord Jesus Christ, we need to take some old things off.
We need to cast off the works of darkness.

We need to put to death those things that are associated with the old way of living,
the way lived when we were under the power of sin,
when we were seeking satisfaction in the things of this world rather than God.

Because when we get to that last day, there will be no neutral people.
There will be either those who appear before the judge wearing sin stained rags.
Or there will be those whose clothes have been washed in the blood of the lamb!
Who have been clothed in Christ, and his righteousness.

What Paul is talking about is the work of repentance.
It is the hard work of taking assessment of your life and realizing where you might be falling short.
Of reflecting on your behavior, your thoughts, and your actions, and seeing what part of your heart and mind still needs to be brought under subjection to Christ.

But repentance requires more than just stopping a behavior.
Notice again, that it is not enough to just put sin off.
We must also put something on.

We not only turn away from sin, we also turn to Christ.
We fill our time, not with selfishness and self-indulgence,
but rather we spend our time loving God and others.

We do this not because it earns us favor with God.
We don't continually have to put on good works in order that we will be accepted on the last day.
Our salvation is not contingent upon our works, but on his work on the cross.
We are saved by grace through faith. This is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.

But we do this in response to the grace, the mercy, and the love, that God has poured out on us.
And as we have heard from Ephesians, when you hear the word of truth and put your faith in Jesus, the Holy Spirit gets implanted within you, as a seal upon your heart.

And he works in you and on you.
Changing your heart of stone, into a heart of flesh.

Because of what Jesus has done for us, we now belong to the day.
Our time for nighttime revelry is over.
We are now to walk as those who live in that day.

Conclusion

So, friends, you know the time. The hour has come.
God has appointed a day when we will all appear before our maker and give an account for how we have lived.

Now, if you are here, and you are not a follower of Jesus, welcome!
We are so glad you have joined us. We would love to get to know you.

We don't care what clothes you are wearing today, but know this,
we are 100% committed to making sure that you will be wearing the right clothes on judgement day.

But if you are here and you call yourself a follower of Jesus.
Then hear this echo of Jesus' words, from the Apostle Paul, to take up your cross and follow Jesus.

I am not sure what are struggling with at the moment,
but I pray that in the power of the Spirit you would cast off the works of darkness.
And make no provision for the flesh.
And put on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let me pray for us.

Discussion Questions
Romans 13:11-14

What does the text say?

1. Why are we meant to wake from sleep?
2. What are we meant to take off?
3. What are we meant to put on?

What does the text mean?

4. What is the time/hour/day that Paul is talking about?
5. What is the “salvation” that he is referring to?
6. What does it mean to put on the Lord Jesus Christ?

How do we apply it?

7. What areas of your life are you making provision for the flesh?
- What ways might you be trying to satisfy your worldly and fleshly desires?
8. (Reflection Question) What works of darkness do you need to cast off?
9. What are some practical ways for you to put on the Lord Jesus Christ tomorrow?