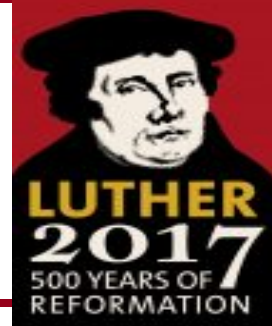


Urgent Living: The Time is Short!

Romans 13:11-14 Eph 5:1-20 Matthew 25:1-13

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There is an urgency to the Christian faith and life. We live in the End Times – *the Last Days*. **Time is limited; opportunity is brief.** We only have a fixed number of days left to live. St. Paul emphasizes this urgency in the book of Romans.

Understand 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. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. ROMANS 13:11-12

St. Paul uses three images to warn us of the urgency of the Christian faith and life.

1. You are to “**wake up from your slumber**”. To **fall asleep** in faith means that you are careless, neglectful, and even indifferent. You go through the motions of being a Christian, maybe even attending worship here today, but there is no faith in your heart. You fell asleep in the faith long ago. **Many Lutherans fall asleep in the faith the day after Confirmation.** Don’t let that happen to you. **Time is short – and your opportunity is brief. Understand the present time and WAKE UP! before it is too late!**
2. A second image that Paul uses is that of the nearness of the end. “**Your salvation is nearer now than when you first believed.**” Every day moves you closer to “meeting your Maker”. It will happen either by Jesus coming in great glory on Judgment Day, or it will happen the moment you die --- either way, you end up in front of God. **Time is short – and your opportunity is brief. Understand the present time and realize the End is near!**

3. A third image that Paul uses to teach about the urgency of the Christian faith and life is that of light and darkness. *“The night is nearly over; the day is almost here.”* We live in the dark and dangerous Last Days --- temptations are powerful; evil is always lurking around the corner; the world despises Christ and His Church; and our sinful nature is easily led into sin. The signs of the End are everywhere – and they remind us that the shameful deeds of darkness must be put aside! If you are living in the darkness of sin, then you will be caught unprepared when the brilliant light of Christ appears on the Last Day. *For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light. Time is short – and your opportunity is brief. Understand the present time!*

There is an urgency to the Christian faith and life. We live in the End Times – *the Last Days*. **Time is limited; opportunity is brief.**

Jesus teaches us about the urgency of the Christian faith and life in the **Parable of the Ten Virgins** today. All ten virgins were living in the End Times, the Last Days. But five of the Virgins were *unprepared*; they were *foolish*; they did not understand the time. They were *drowsy*, they *fell asleep* --- and they were **shut out** of the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus warns all of us to **“KEEP WATCH, because you do not know the day or the hour.”**

There is an urgency to the Christian faith and life. The Christian faith and life is **serious**; it is **critically important**: The Christian faith and life is *not a hobby*.

Maybe you are treating Christ and His Kingdom like it’s a hobby; maybe the Church is just another “club” that you belong to; maybe worship and bible study are just optional activities that you can’t fit into your busy schedule; maybe “churchy things” are just something for your kids to do while they are young.

If you are treating Christ, His Word, and His Kingdom like it is an inconvenience to you that interrupts your busy life – **then repent!**

- † **The time is short. Your opportunity to repent is brief.**
- † Wake up from your slumber!
- † You will soon stand before God!
- † The night is almost over!
- † Don't be caught "without oil in your lamp!"
- † This might be the last time you ever hear the Gospel!

St. Paul teaches us to understand the present time! Jesus teaches us to "keep watch!"

All these urgent words and images are meant to call you to repentance, faith, and holy living. Here is how St. Paul teaches it:

Be clothed with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh. ROMANS 13:14

In Christ, you are "clothed" with the righteousness of God. Jesus' life, death, and resurrection is credited to you as righteousness – you are justified by faith. Both righteousness and justification are legal terms that mean that you are declared "not guilty!" of sin, and set free to live a holy life. An Old Testament image pictures **righteousness, salvation, and forgiveness** as a **ROBE** that God puts on you.

I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a **ROBE OF HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS**, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. ISAIAH 61:10

The "**garments**" and the "**robe**" are given to you. It is a gift from God; **righteousness, salvation, and forgiveness** are gifts that God gives to you through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The "**robe**" image highlights that salvation is God's; it comes from outside of you not from yourself, and that God freely gives it to you by grace.

You are to put on that **robe of righteousness** each day: it is a **continual awareness** that you belong to Christ in everything that you do. It is an **eager desire** to listen and obey God's Holy Word in all areas of your life.

When you are clothed in Christ and His righteousness, then you will **not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.**

Your heart, mind, will and actions are focused on Christ and His Kingdom, not on the sinful world and the evils of the flesh.

So let us **put aside** the deeds of darkness and let us **put on** the armor of light. Let us **behave decently**, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. ROMANS 13:12-13

The truth is that your life will reflect your faith.

- † Your life and what you do and what you say will reflect if you **understand the present time.**
- † Your life, and what you do and what you say will reflect if you are **keeping watch** or not.
- † Your life, and what you do and what you say will reflect if you have been **clothed with the Lord Jesus Christ.**

Both Jesus and St Paul warn us to stay alert, vigilant, and aware as we live each day in these End Times. They both teach us that there is **danger** as we live our lives in these Last Days; **temptation** is powerful; the **devil** is real, and **apathy** can easily creep in to your life.

Understand 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**. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. ROMANS 13:11-12

There is an urgency to the Christian faith and life: the time is short and your opportunity is brief.

Amen!