

THE PRAYER OF THE DAY Stir up our hearts, O Lord, to prepare the way for your only Son. By His coming give us strength in our conflicts and shed light on our path through the darkness of this world; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE SERMON 'A Different Kingdom Leads to Different Lives' Romans 13

THE EPISTLE LESSON Romans 13:11-14 (*We are urged to be prepared for the Lord's coming again.*)

11 And do this, understanding the present time. **The hour has 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 orgies 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 sinful nature.**

INTRO - I don't know if you heard about our trip TO Israel, and the adventure we had. We missed 3 connecting flights on the way to Athens. We were supposed to get to Athens from New York at 9:30 in the morning. We got to Athens from Paris, apart from the rest of our group, and not even at 1:00 which was the first alternate, but at 6:00 p.m.. We came from a different city than expected, and arrived at a time that was unexpected. But, arrive we finally did.

I. In our lesson for today, our epistle, God calls his people, through Paul, to be ready for an unexpected coming.

A. One way that the coming of Jesus will be unexpected is obvious from our lesson.

1. Verse 11 says, **The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.**

2. The indication from this verse is that the time of Jesus coming will be unexpected, sort of like our flight to Athens.

3. For God, for Paul, there is an urgency that because Jesus comes at an unexpected time that people are not caught by surprise, but ready.

B. But there is another way in which Jesus coming will be unexpected.

1. Many have considered Jesus' first coming.

A.. He came as a child.

B. He came with love, and forgiveness and mercy, accepting sinners.

C. But, when he comes again he will come the final time, as judge, bringing salvation for believers, but punishment for sin of those not living in faith.

D. Think of it this way, when you were in school, did the teacher ever leave the room, and you acted differently than when the teacher was there? What happened if the teacher came at an unexpected time? You were caught, and you were punished.

2. Many are not ready for Jesus to come bringing judgement.

3. This is true in Paul's time, and in our time, because their lives are not lives that seek righteousness, but lives of indulgence.

- A. This is true not only for those who don't know Jesus, but for some who do know him.
- B. They can be almost offended that God would think of judging the world, never mind them.
- C. Jesus is coming at an unknown time, in a different way than His first coming, so His coming will not necessarily be expected. Paul, and God through Paul, issue a warning through our text.

II. When I was a child and my dad had to spank me, I remember him saying something to me a couple of times. He told me, 'this is going to hurt me more than it does you.' I'm not sure I believed him, but, now as a dad I know that is true.

A. Don't think that because Jesus is coming at an unknown time, in a different way than His first coming that he's TRYING to catch us. God does not want people to be judged, but to be saved.

B. First of all, God sent Jesus to suffer and die, not to catch people in sin, but to pay for sin, to save the sinners of the world.

1. My wife and I went Christmas shopping on Monday. We bought gifts for everyone on our list.

2. We did not pay money so we can throw the gifts away, but so we can give them to those we love.

3. God didn't send Jesus to die, so those he saved lose his forgiveness, but receive it.

C. Secondly, consider what God is doing through our lesson for today. This lesson is a warning to be prepared, so God's people receive the salvation Jesus has won.

1. Listen to the warning.

2. **The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.**

3. God doesn't warn us so we miss heaven, but, whether people are ready or not, he will come as Judge.

III. Because of this warning, Because of God's saving work through Jesus, we can be ready.

A. We can put off behavior that keeps us from receiving Jesus' forgiveness.

1. In verses 12 and 13 God tells us, **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 orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy.**

2. God calls us to put off sexual immorality, to put off drunkenness, to put off fighting and disunity, to put off lives that cater to the flesh..

B. We are called to live in the love which God has given us in Jesus.

1. Verse 14 says, **14 Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.**

2. So, we live in expectation of the salvation God has for us. If God treats us to live in forgiveness and love through Jesus, He calls for that to show with lives of faith and love, obedience and righteousness, living for God and others.

3. God is seeking to take us from the pain of this world, to His love in heaven.

4. God is wanting us to know that His love is His will for us, and to receive it.

C. Receiving God's love, we seek to live lives of His children.

1. We can never be perfect, God is not calling us to think we can be.

2. But we are forgiven, and he calls our lives that show we are thankful to our Lord as we serve Him and others, rather than living in self destructive ways.
3. People who focus on Jesus will be ready when Jesus comes as judge.

CONCLUSION - When we got to the airport in Athens we could have been met by no one, because we came from a place and at a time that was unexpected. Instead, the man who was picking us up was at the gate, carrying a sign with our name, waiting for us. He did not let our unexpected coming make him unready. God wants us to receive eternal life in heaven. In love, today, he warns us, and calls us to lives that focus on Jesus, and lives that reflect Jesus' righteousness and love.