

Sermon for the 1st Advent: Rom 13:8-14

Dear friends of our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ – dear Lutheran brothers and sisters +

The time of Advent has dawned once again. First one, then two, then three, then four candles are burning until on Christmas Eve the entire tree is aglow with candles symbolizing the Light of very light – Jesus Christ the light of the world, who illumined the darkness and brought life and salvation into our darkness to those ailing in the furthest corners and perishing in the shadows of death.

Our time is running out, it's rushing by at high speed. Everybody is noticing that, but its just another sign that the Lord Jesus Christ himself is coming soon. Yet many are still daydreaming and going about their daily business as if they've got all the time in the world and as if God is long gone never to come again. Still every day his coming in glory to judge the living and the dead is drawing nearer. If that grand finale of our worlds history was close when St. Paul wrote this letter to the Romans, how much closer to our very doorstep must he be today? This message of God's apostle and messenger of salvation and eternal life is very urgent and of utmost priority for each one living on this world: *"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."* Therefore it's high time to recognize the signs of the times. It's vital to understand the present time, so that we don't in this temporary life and passing time miss out, what is crucial for the coming life hereafter and eternity, which lasts forever and ever. Just as there are two basic ways to lead your present life, so too there will be two – and only two – options in the life beyond the grave. There it's life or death and this which will go on without end – that's life in heaven or infinite death in hell, pain and damnation.

We know from the dire warnings of our Lord Jesus Christ, who together with the heavenly Father and in wonderful harmony of the Holy Spirit and perfect unity of the one mission and purpose wants all to come to the knowledge of truth and be

saved, that at the end of days there will be those, who are inside with him in glory, peace and infinite joy and those, who'll be outside in dire pain, severest suffering and desperation without end. Those on the right dressed with the finest bridal garments first shared with us in holy Baptism - the dress of Christ's righteousness and most precious justification by grace alone, washed clean in the justifying blood of the innocent lamb of God, purified and made holy once and for all, strengthened, kept and preserved in this saving faith through the very body given for us into death and his holy blood shed for the forgiveness of all our sins granting life everlasting and blessed salvation forever. While those on the other, left and doomed side are but dressed in the filthy rags of self-righteousness, pagan idolatry and godless vanity cast into darkness and frightful damnation, where the crying in anguish and gnashing of teeth will never cease. The first are the garments of light - the magnificent creations and gracious gifts of Christ. The other are but the doomed deeds and shades of darkness, gloom and perishing vanity.

Although our sinful flesh in perverted and endless craving strives and so deeply desires this doomed mode, because it appears so tempting to our spoilt and damaged senses, it's absolutely crucial to wake up from this disaster-prone motivation and sinful leaning of our old self - called Adam or Eve or whatever - opposing God's good commandments and the right and just ways of his divine will in carousing and drunkenness, sexual immorality and debauchery, dissension and jealousy. That's but the way of the fallen world known to St. Paul as well as to us - its the way of the lost sons and daughters, that of sinners since those very early and even then bleak days, when sin had already multiplied to such a horrid degree in rebellion and outrage against the living God and his blessed ways, prompting him to wipe out all humanity in anger and wrath in that first terrible deluge and to start all over with but the small nucleus of Noah & sons. It's a very similar story to that of the punishment and eradication of Sodom and Gomorrah, when God and Father of all graciously saved faithful Lot & daughters from

torching flames, fire and brimstone destroying that sinful pit. In our times sin & godlessness has multiplied even more - exponentially - practically snowballed. Those considered best in the world loudly proclaim the death of God and the new super race of sexless neuters perverting nature by making equal, what God has destined different. Besides damning to death little gifts of God's wonderful love and creativity in killing unborn babies in horrific numbers they also scheme to rid themselves of those, who they consider burdensome and whom they consider worthless, because they fall outside their value-adding-mechanisms. They add insult to injury calling these abominations euphemistically: Freedom of choice and Euthanasia!

Oh, if God's wrath was furious in Noah and Lot's times, and later when he did not spare those Egyptian hordes pursuing his fleeing people, but rather drowned them all - how much more and worse will his fury and rage be kindled by the horrors of our sins in these later days: Corruption, pagan idolatry and heathen polygamy like at Nkandla. Uncalled for violence and murder like at Marikana. Genocide in Rwanda, Zimbabwe and Sudan and the tyrants dream of getting away with murder. Still there is so much more general godlessness and dreadfulness, which doesn't make national headlines, but still is more than enough to enrage the righteous God and living Judge of all. Or do you think there is much decency left in our families and society? What about basic hospitality or common friendliness and plain generosity to those, who are not part of our family or tribe? Isn't it rather backstabbing, self-seeking, scandalous treachery and just plain evil all around? Decency - aseko: *"The LORD looks down from heaven on all mankind to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God. All have turned away, all have become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one."* (Psa 14:2-3 NIV)]

And that although the knowledge of God's holy will and law has been given into our inmost being, that deep down and in our conscience we know it's wrong to go against the will of the living God be it the commandments St Paul lists here -

5th: You shall not murder; 6th: You shall not commit adultery; 7th: You shall not steal ... up to the final 9th and 10th: You shall not covet. We know this also entails the 4th and the 8th and even those commandments of the 1st tablet: Love, fear and trust God above all – don't misuse his name – rather gladly hear, read, learn and live his holy Word. Yes, put on the living Word – which is Jesus Christ – and in live in his ways until he comes again to judge the living and the dead.

This is serious stuff, because it affects the ultimate destiny of every man and woman alive. That's why it's high time to wake up and come to godly terms with this our eternal goal set by him. Our Lord Jesus Christ invites us to be with him forever – join him at the celestial feast: Come to me all of you, who are tired and heavenly burdened and I'll give you rest and salvation + In comparison with eternity – our time in this life and place is relatively short and of little weight. Yet while it is still day, we should go about our divine calling and "*Love your neighbour as yourself.*" That's the definition of "decency". We should not harm him or her in any way. Rather we should wake up:

- clothe ourselves with the Lord IX (Confession as the crawling return to Baptism)
 - put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armour of light.
 - Behave decently to all people – without discrimination of race, sex or social standing.
 - Letting no debt remain outstanding, but love one another – even our enemies.
- Amen.

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