

*11 Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; 12 the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; 13 let us live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. 14 Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires*

A couple of years ago I was selected for a jury, voted foreman in fact. A man was charged with armed robbery. There was but one witness, the store clerk who claimed to have paid as much attention to the face of the thief as he did to the barrel of the gun pointed at him.

In all the testimony I remember one line from the sister of the accused. When asked to recollect her brother's actions that night, she said that he left home about 7pm.

“How did you know it was 7p.m. - the night we are talking about was eleven months ago?” the prosecutor asked.

“My brother always stays home in the day, leaves home as soon as it is dark.”

Her testimony became rather flimsy when the prosecutor pointed out that in December the sun sets considerably before 7 p.m.

Her testimony caused me to think of something I'd never realized. For a whole group of people, the setting of the sun is the signal that they must be about their business. Darkness is their milieu, they belong to the night and the night belongs to them.

“Besides this,” writes St. Paul, “you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; the night is far gone, the day is near.”

In Paul's time, most people would rise from sleep before dawn, they would prepare for the day. The sun would soon be rising; there was work to be done. Though it was yet dark the time for sleep was over, the new day begun.

What a wonderful picture of our Christian life, though darkness is still around us, we are awake, preparing for the day. Morning is near, a new day that never before has been: a special day when we will greet our Lord.

Paul continues: “Let us lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; let us live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in sinning sexually or living wildly, not in quarreling and jealousy. Instead put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.”

As those for whom the setting of the sun is the signal to pack a gun or a knife, tools for their work, so we are called to put on the armor of light. Love and peace and joy and faith, these will be our weapons. For these belong to the coming day.

Most of all we are called to put on Christ, to dress ourselves in Christ.

How do I prepare for a day of work? I shower. I dress myself in clean, fresh clothes. As a child I learned already that after bath or shower one does not take the already worn clothes, the dirty clothes and put them on again.

We are cleaned for our new day through baptism, and clean, we no longer put on the old dirty clothes of quarreling, jealousy, adultery, drunkenness. We dress ourselves in our Lord Jesus Christ, his love, his forgiveness, his mercy are all lived out in our words and deeds.

Martin Luther taught that every day we are to renew our baptism. Every day our sinful self with all its evil deeds and desires is to be drowned through repentance. Every day we return to our baptism, we strip off all clothing of the night, every word and deed and thought that is unworthy of the new day. Plans for revenge, words intended to hurt, greed and grudge holding, we take all of these off, discard them. Through Jesus, God forgives us - washes us clean. Every day we dress ourselves in the clothing of the new day.

“Let us lay aside the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light; let us live honorably as in the day.”

In our gospel, Jesus spoke of the days of Noah, of people eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, unaware of what was soon to happen. Our life can be the same, one day following the last, no repenting – turning - changing in us.

But Jesus calls us to prepare for the new day: to shower, to dress in the clothing of the new day, and one thing more.

Once the shower is finished, I'm dressed, then comes breakfast, food for the day.

So we who have put on clothing for the new day, take food for the new day here: the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is our clothing, he is our food, so that when dawn comes we will be ready.

“You know what time it is, now it is the moment for you to wake from sleep.”