Wake Up!
Romans 13:11-14

## Introduction

[Give examples of people you have observed fall asleep in church or people who work the graveyard shift and have a hard time staying awake, especially during the sermon]. Even though they were tired, they made the effort and came to church, and when we would stand and sing those hymns together, they were fine. But as soon as we would sit down for any length of time, like during the sermon, those poor [people] just couldn’t keep their eyes open. Have you ever felt that way during a sermon? I have.

Well, sometimes we not only sleep through part of the sermon, but spiritually we sleep through life. You know that people who walk in their sleep can have their eyes open and walk around and even talk, but they are not awake. So we sometimes walk and talk, but we are not awake to what God is telling us. We are daydreaming. But God in this Bible passage is telling us, “Wake up! Smell the coffee! Get dressed! “Clothe yourselves with Christ” (v. 14)! Because “the night is nearly over; the day is almost here” (v. 12).” So, wake up!

## Illusions That Deceive Us

First of all, we need to wake up from the illusion that heaven is for good people, and I am one of them. We Lutherans should know better; but it seems so logical. When we look around at other people, it is easy to see their faults and their moral failings. But when we look at ourselves, we pass over our own faults or we make excuses. [Give an example of someone who accused someone of lying, but they themselves lied to someone else]. You see, when we look at our own failings, there are always extenuating circumstances. So we tend to think of ourselves as pretty good people, who deserve to go to heaven.

But if we start to think that way, we are dreaming. The hard reality is that no one on the face of this earth is good enough to go to heaven. Some sin more and some sin less, but everyone sins. Jesus says, “Wake up! All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3:23) If we were good enough to get to heaven, then Jesus would never have been born in Bethlehem. Remember that the angel said, “You shall call his name “Jesus” (which means “God Saves”) because he will save his people from their sins.” (Matthew 1:21) Our natural tendency is to trust in ourselves. We need to wake up to our sins and trust in Jesus!

Secondly, we need to wake up from the illusion that I have lots of time. We say, “I’ll seek God later. I’ll talk to my neighbor about Jesus later. I have a lot to do today, so maybe I won’t go to church or read my devotion. There will be time tomorrow. Or the next day.” We have learned from the Hispanics to say, “Mañana” to God. After all, Jesus has not returned for over 2000 years. There is time.

But if we think that way, we are dreaming. The hard reality is that Jesus is right at our door. “The night is nearly over; the day is almost here” (v. 12). It is time to wake up! Jesus says that in the time of Noah, the people kept eating and drinking and getting married, but when they least expected it, the flood came and swept them all away. It will be the same, says Jesus, when he comes again. (Matthew 24:38-39) Every day you can open the paper and read about people who have died in car crashes or fires or unexpected accidents. They had no idea that their lives would end that day. But in the blink of an eye, they died and had to present themselves before the throne of God. For them, the day of judgment already came. When will it come for us? Jesus tells us, “Wake up!” (Matthew 24:42)

Perhaps some of you have read the famous book, “The Screwtape Letters,” by C.S. Lewis. Lewis imagines that a young, inexperienced demon is asking advice from an older, experienced arch-demon on how to keep a person from God. The young demon says, “How about this? I will tell him there is no God.” “That will not work,” replies the experienced demon. “Every man knows in his heart that there is a God.” Even atheists pray in the trenches. The young one says, “I will tell him that it is unimportant.” The older one replies, “That will not work either. Every man knows that God is important.” The younger one suggests, “I will tell him that there is no hurry.” The older demon says, “Then you will have his soul!” We need to wake up and see that time is short.

In third place, sometimes we are not living in a dream, we are living in a nightmare. Did you know that at Christmas time there are more suicides than at any other time of the year? Why? Because parties and lights and decorations and presents may make us smile for a moment but they cannot give real peace to our hearts. Even in the midst of so much celebration, sometimes we feel lonely. At Christmas time we remember our loved ones who have passed away. At Christmas time the pressure is on to buy gifts, address cards, decorate, prepare food, do this, do that, hurry, hurry, hurry!

But Jesus wants us to wake up from this dream also. Because the reality is that Jesus loves us. This is the true meaning of Christmas: that God loved the world so much that he sent us his only Son, so that whoever believes in him would not perish but have eternal life. We may feel alone, but the reality is that Jesus loves us. We may feel pressured, but the reality is that there is peace when we look to Jesus. All our problems will soon pass away, but Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

## Time to Wake Up

Whether dreams or nightmares, God says here that “the hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber!” (v. 11). The reality is that everything will pass away. The good things of this life will pass away. The bad things of this life will pass away. Even time itself will come to an end. But Jesus Christ and his love will never pass away. It is time to wake up and see clearly our sin and our Savior, our failings and his forgiveness.

The Christmas tree points us to the “tree” of the cross. The reality is that Jesus Christ died on the cross for our moral failings. The reality is that Jesus Christ rose from the dead to give us a new beginning.

So I suggest that we have an early Christmas gift exchange. Let’s give a present to Jesus. What do you think Jesus would like? Should we get him an Ipod? Maybe a Christmas fruitcake? How about a tie? No, Jesus tells us right here what he wants for Christmas. He wants us to package up all that is bad in our life: our yelling, our bad attitudes, our little white lies, our gossip, our laziness, our selfishness, our panting after material things, our lack of self control, as it says here, our dissension and our jealousy (v. 13), everything! We are to wrap up all the deeds of darkness (v. 12) and give them to Jesus. What a crummy present! But that’s what he wants!

And then Jesus will give us a present too. Hey, maybe he will give us an Ipod! No, Jesus is not like Santa Claus; he doesn’t give out toys that break or wear out. He gives us forgiveness. He gives us eternal life! He gives us love and real peace and hope.

In Venezuela, at Christmas and New Year’s, it is the custom to buy a new set of clothes and to show them off. Sometimes, a poor person would go without food in order to scrape together enough money to buy at least a new shirt or new, expensive shoes. Well, I want all of you to get a different set of clothes this Christmas. It says here, “Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ” (v. 14). By faith, “wear” the forgiveness of Jesus! And then live for him and not for all those things which do not last.

## Conclusion

We all need a good night’s rest; otherwise we could end up snoring through the sermon! But God does not want us sleeping spiritually.

Even though we are Christians, sometimes we go around like we are spiritual sleepwalkers. We walk around and talk, but we are not awake to reality. The reality is, that our time here on earth is limited. The reality is that we are not “good” people, we have failed morally. The reality is that Jesus loves us and has saved us. “The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber” (v. 11). You snooze, you lose. Wake up, and clothe yourself with Jesus. Amen.

Rev. Richard Schlak

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