

Sermon Draft for November 30, 2025

Text: Romans 13:11–14

Sermon: “It’s Time”

Today is the 1st Sunday in Advent. Advent 1 follows four highly eschatological Sundays that began with the celebration of All Saints, the recognition of our oneness with all who have died and risen with Christ and concluded with the final three Sundays of the church year, ultimately reaching the Sunday of the Fulfillment. The eschatology of these last Sundays is a natural one, for at this time of year nature is dying all around us, the days are getting shorter and colder, and it appears as if the world itself is dying. A most appropriate time for us to consider the judgment and the end of all things!

The entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem (Matthew 21:1–11), the more traditional of the two options for the day’s Gospel, is an eschatological text, for when Jesus enters Jerusalem for that first Holy Week, the end is near, the work of redemption is almost finished.

What a way to begin a church year in triumph, for Jesus enters Jerusalem as King, but also subdued, for he enters humbly, mounted on a donkey, and this King must die for the sins of the world. We begin the church year knowing from the start that Jesus was born to die. Already now on the First Sunday in Advent we have Palm Sunday, Good Friday, and Easter morning in our sights.

When we embark on a journey, we usually know where we're going and how to get there. If not, we could be in big trouble. Today we begin a journey, and we know where we are going and how to get there. We are going to Jerusalem, and we are traveling there in Christ. We know that because we have clothed ourselves with Christ. He has gone before us on the road to Jerusalem, so he has shown us the way. We followed him in our Baptism to his cross, rested with him in the tomb, and rose with him to a life that never ends. As we begin another year of God's grace, we know our celebration of Christ's Bethlehem is only a stop on our way to our destination in Jerusalem, on our way to a cross and empty tomb.

Yes, we are going on that journey because we are in Christ. And since today begins a new church year, begins that journey for us, now Advent, is the time to clothe ourselves with Christ, the time that proclaims to the world that Jesus was born to die. Now, Advent, is the time to clothe ourselves with Christ, because Advent proclaims that Christ is near (v 11).

One of our Advent hymns echoes these words of Paul in our text: “Hark! A thrilling voice is sounding! ‘Christ is near,’ we hear it say.” Each of the last three Sundays has addressed Christ’s coming, emphasizing that the time is near. Christ’s coming at the end of the world is always to be seen as soon, for it is never farther away for an individual soul than the moment of death. The last Sundays of the church year reminded us that we must be ready at any time for Christ’s coming in judgment.

On this First Sunday in Advent, however, we observe Christ’s coming differently: “***Our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed***” (v 11). Christ is near to save us! His first coming, not in glory but in humility, secured our salvation.

His being born to die prepared us for his glorious second coming. We have, of course, been saved since we first believed, but here Paul is speaking of Christ's return to gather his believers into the eternal joy of heaven. That salvation is nearer for us every day!

The first-century church lived in daily anticipation, almost a fever-pitch eagerness, of Christ's return to the extent that Paul even had to calm them down and reassure them a bit (2 Thessalonians 2:1–3). Perhaps we don't live with this same eagerness for Christ's return. We get so busy with things of this world instead of focused on what lies ahead in Christ. But Paul wishes us to share the same excitement as the early church.

Here is reason to “**clothe ourselves with Christ**” we are preparing for an eternal celebration! Christ is near to save us! We want to celebrate with our Lord wearing our best! It is by being clothed with Christ that we are able to look forward to his return as salvation rather than judgment. Being clothed with Christ is the fitting, the only fitting attire for such a once-in-all-history gala.

Nice illustration, being “clothed with Christ,” the sort of language Paul likes to use. But what does it mean? What does it look like being “clothed with Christ”? Paul explains by telling us what we wouldn’t want Christ to see us wearing. Advent, is the time to clothe ourselves with Christ,

Because Advent proclaims that Christ is here. Christ is here to see whatever it is we’re wearing. None of us could endorse the theology of the song “Santa Claus Is Coming to Town.” There’s that terrible sense of works-righteousness “He knows if you’ve been bad or good, So, be good for goodness sakes! Oh, you better watch out!” Especially troubling, perhaps, is that image of Santa seeing you when you’re sleeping, knowing when you’re awake. Scary! Do we forget that the one who really came at Christmas does see everything we do, does know everything we think?

We wouldn't want Christ to see us clothed in some of the rags we wear (vs 12–13). “Hark! A thrilling voice is sounding! ‘Christ is near,’ we hear it say. ‘Cast away the works of darkness, All you children of the day!’” So many things we “wear” are things we do as if cloaked in darkness, things we’d never want anyone to see, certainly not Christ. Do we use his name “Jesus Christ!” as if he really weren’t right here in the room to answer, to include in the conversation? Do we go behind a friend’s back with gossip or undercut him at work as we never would if Jesus were back there watching?

Our coming Savior does see all our works as in broad daylight. Paul knows we don’t wish to be seen that way. We desire to clothe ourselves with Christ because we want him to see us as he is. We desire to behave properly as in the day. To honor Christ in word and deed, to drink deeply of his Spirit in the Holy Scriptures and at his Table. To honor him with our bodies and take him wherever we go. To walk in peace with all those around us, as he himself is holding our hands. Christ is all of this . . . perfectly.

The Holy One of God, the name that is above every name, the Word that was always loving, saving, never flippant or hurtful. The Holy One who laid down his body, gave his blood to be shed, for our eternal good, never for his own pleasure. The Prince of Peace who reconciled God to man and man to each other by his sacrifice on the cross. That's what it looks like being clothed with Christ. Advent, is the time to clothe ourselves with Christ, because Advent proclaims that Christ is in you (v 14).

What Paul exhorts us to do is not just an imperative and it's not just in the future. It's not just something we ought to do but keep failing to do. It's not even something we have to wait for until Christ finally does come back on the Last Day.

In Galatians, Paul reminds us that "***all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ***" (3:27). That has happened; it's a done deal. Everything that Jesus accomplished by his first coming, his perfect life, sacrificial death, glorious resurrection, has been given to us in our Baptism. We are clothed with Christ by our Baptism.

We are righteous, beautifully dressed for the eternal celebration. We are people of light performing deeds of light. By our Baptism, Christ is in us and he is seen in us. Paul's Advent wake-up call, then, is simply to live as the people we are, to walk where we are destined to go.

And so the journey to Jerusalem begins. Christ is near to us! He is here with us because we are clothed with him and we sit at his Table. The light of Christ has dawned! Listen to that thrilling voice, calling us to cast off the works of darkness and clothe ourselves with light.

In Jesus precious name! Amen