Advent Midweek 1 – December 4, 2024
Text: Romans 13:11-14
Theme: WAKE UP!

During Advent this year, our epistles come from the book of Romans. By chapter 13, our text for tonight, the Romans have heard Paul's arguments for the sinfulness of all people and the desperate need for salvation. They have also heard that works of the Law will get them nowhere and only the cross of Christ has the power to save them. Now Paul calls on them and us to WAKE UP!

I'm a light sleeper generally. Many youth over the years have discovered that sneaking out of the cabin on retreats is not very easy with me. I had a group in Seattle who were particularly mischievous. They were so thoughtful that they rousted up a fan for me to help me be cool enough when I slept. It was a particularly loud fan, and I noticed that one of the boys chose to sleep on the floor instead of the bunk above my bunk and finally that the door was pushed to but not closed. They had taken every precaution for sneaking out. I appreciated their planning, so I let them succeed, but I followed them down the trail to a meadow, where they were about to light up a cigar pilfered from one of their fathers. They were very surprised to see me, got sent back to bed, and I thoroughly enjoyed the cigar when I got home!

You cannot sleep much when you are responsible for youth. I have had volunteers help me for whom a bomb going off would not have caused them to stir from sleep. I check on the kids for whom they are responsible and see all manner of nonsense going on while the leader sleeps in blissful repose. I feel like St. Paul, WAKE UP!!!

Of course, St. Paul speaks of "spiritual sleep" which is far more dangerous than physical sleep on a youth trip. He is concerned that once we become familiar with our faith and have been "in the faith" for a while, we might become lazy, sleepy, uncommitted. It is when we let our guard down that Satan is ready to pounce. Have we not seen exactly that in our world today? Paul was dealing with Christians who were surrounded by Roman hedonism. Do people today think that they invented all the sexual perversions that are mainstreamed today? No! There is no new sin under the sun. Nor is it new for people to deny that sin is sin. The people in the Book of Romans used the same reasoning that people use today.

"I want to do it so it must be okay."

"Everybody does it, so it must be okay."

"Why should we be bound by old laws that were written 3500 years ago for ancient Israel?"

The same old arguments have been being made since the Garden of Eden. Genesis 3 says,

"So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate."

There you have it. It's the same old argument. What does God know? This is good. This is pleasing to the eye. Love is love. My body my choice. The arguments just never change. That's why Paul is telling the Romans and us to WAKE UP!

During the season of Advent, we especially remember that Christ is coming soon. We don't know when, but we know that we want to be spiritually prepared for His arrival every moment of every day. We do not live in two worlds. We live only in the world of the Church and we venture out as aliens into the world around us. But never forget why you venture out into that other world. You go out only to proclaim the Word of God. Stay strong. Keep your faith well fed and keep watching for Jesus. He will come. He will come soon.

And on that day, when the trumpets sound and the Lord returns for us, we don't want to be caught spiritually sleeping. Worse than that, we don't want our faith to die so that we are not

included in the people of the Lord. People joke about that all the time but it's really no joke. They make light of going to Hell or living outside the Church. Paul says,

"The night is far gone; the day is at hand." The imagery is of the approaching sunrise when all the deeds of darkness will be lit up. Those who are striving to live in the light rejoice because all the darkness that constantly pursues us is washed out in God's light. Those who love the darkness will wail because they got it wrong. There really is a Messiah and He really has returned. For those who chose darkness, it will be too late.

So, listen to Paul. Do whatever you have to do to stay awake and use this time before the dawn to wake others up as well. That's called Evangelism and it's really not complicated. Seek out those who are wandering in the dusk and invite them into the light. Bring them here where they can hear and feel the love of God and know that all their sins are forgiven. Bring them here where they can eat at His table and be washed in the baptismal waters and know the true peace that only God gives.