

Wake Up! A New Day is Dawning!

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Isaiah 2:1-5, Romans 13:11-14, Matthew 24:36-44

Isaiah 2 This is what Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem:

² In the last days

the mountain of the LORD's temple will be established
as chief among the mountains;
it will be raised above the hills,
and all nations will stream to it.

³ Many peoples will come and say,

"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,
to the house of the God of Jacob.
He will teach us his ways,
so that we may walk in his paths."
The law will go out from Zion,
the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

⁴ He will judge between the nations
and will settle disputes for many peoples.
They will beat their swords into plowshares
and their spears into pruning hooks.
Nation will not take up sword against nation,
nor will they train for war anymore.

⁵ Come, O house of Jacob,
let us walk in the light of the LORD.

Romans 13: 11 And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. ¹² The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. ¹³ Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. ¹⁴ Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.^{c1}

The Day and Hour Unknown

Matthew 24:36 "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son,^a but only the Father. ³⁷ As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. ³⁸ For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; ³⁹ and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the

¹ *The Holy Bible : New International Version*. 1996 (electronic ed.). Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

Son of Man. ⁴⁰Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. ⁴¹Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.

⁴²“Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. ⁴³But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁴So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.”²

Are you discouraged by the state of the world these days – what with a war in Afghanistan and terrorism in the air and an economy in the dumps, and unemployment sky high and the constant political bickering? Are the troubles in your own life getting you down? Are things looking pretty dark – pretty bleak for you right now?

Listen to Isaiah: “*A new day is coming!* Wake up! Watch! Be ready! Hope is on its way!

When Isaiah wrote his words the people of Israel were weary of one bloody war after another. Times were brutal back then. There seemed to be no end to all the suffering and misery. The people were ready to give up in despair. But the prophet's vision of a new day of peace and justice kept them going. It gave them courage when the chips were down. There was light at the end of the long dark tunnel. They just needed to hang in there in faith. God would bring in a new day. “*Look to God!*” Isaiah said, “*God is about to do a new thing; just wait and see!*”

And that hope has sustained God's people down through the centuries despite great trials and hardships. To Christians undergoing persecution, Paul writes: “*The night is nearly over - the day is almost here.*”

Yes, our lives can seem pretty discouraging and pretty hopeless at times. But you and I can handle the darkness of the night much better if we know that dawn is coming. We can handle the ups and downs of life in this world better if we know that it is all leading to something grand and glorious. I love the passage in Paul's letter to the Corinthians where he writes encouragingly:

^{2Co 4:8} **We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair;**

^{2Co 4:9} **persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. . .**

^{2Co 4:16} **Therefore we do not lose heart. . .**

^{2Co 4:17} **For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.**

Again Paul writes (1 Cor. 2:9):

**“No eye has seen,
no ear has heard,
no mind has conceived
what God has prepared for those who love him” —**

² *The Holy Bible : New International Version*. 1996 (electronic ed.). Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

We can handle sickness and suffering and hardship if we know that it leads to glory – that we have a home in glory-land that outshines the sun; we can endure all things if we know that all shall be well in the end, that all things shall work together for good... The hope of a better day can enable us to get through anything! Hope is a great motivator.

There is the story of the seasick passenger who was leaning over the rail of the cruise ship and had turned several shades of green. A crewman came along and tried to cheer him up by saying, *"Don't be discouraged, sir! You know, no one's ever died of seasickness yet!"* The nauseous passenger looked up at the crewman with woeful eyes and replied: *"Oh, don't say that! It's only the hope of dying that's kept me alive this long!"*

Only the promise of a new and better day keeps us going when all is dark. In fact, we Christians believe that new day has already begun to dawn in Jesus Christ.

In the baby in Bethlehem something incredibly new has come into this dark world and his light is already beginning to push back the darkness. The darkness will never overcome it. And the new day will come in all its brilliant fullness and Isaiah's vision will finally be fulfilled when Christ returns in all his glory.

When will that be? No one knows. Today's gospel lesson affirms that: *"No one knows about that day or hour, but only the Father."* It will be in God's own time, and for that reason we must all be ready and watchful. But that the day will come there can be no doubt. The world and our lives are in his competent hands. God is faithful to his promises!

But that vision of a hopeful new day in Christ is not something we should just wait around for; it is something we have to act upon. After sharing his great future vision of a new world, Isaiah comes down to earth and says, *"Come, let us walk in the light of the Lord."* That is, we should practice kingdom-living *now*. With God's help you and I ought to live the future vision today.

Isaiah prophesies of a future time when people from all over the world will climb the mountain of God in Jerusalem and come to the Holy Temple, seeking out the Word of the Lord for their lives. It's a beautiful image. But we do not have to wait for that day. We don't even have to go to Jerusalem to the Temple Mount. We can come to this place --Mukilteo Presbyterian Church-- earnestly seeking the Word of God and its implications for our lives, listening carefully and putting it into practice.

Isaiah prophesies of a future time when people will finally live in peace. But we can practice peace now in our relationships; we can practice peace right here in this church body and in our families and places of work, turning our swords into plowshares, working at reconciliation.

Everything we say and do as Christians ought to be a sign and a foretaste of that future vision of God's coming kingdom.

--Every time we speak a word of forgiveness in a situation of bitterness and hatred, we are giving the world just a little foretaste of how it will be when God's purposes are finally realized here on earth.

--Every time we give to the poor or to the hungry, we are not only alleviating present human need but we are pointing to that God's future banqueting table where no one will hunger and all will gather in peace and love and mutual concern.

--Every time we sing from the heart, "*Come, Though Long-Expected Jesus, born to set thy people free....*" we are joining Isaiah in the prayer that one day the whole world will indeed walk in the light of the Lord.

The important thing is that we begin to walk in the light now. We can't just wait around for the vision to be fulfilled. Let's think about this: our lives should proclaim the coming of God's new day: people should be able to look at us and should catch a glimpse of what life will be like in God's coming kingdom.

That's what Paul was trying to say to the Romans who seemed to think it didn't matter how you lived:

¹¹ ... The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. ¹² The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. ¹³ Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. ¹⁴ Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.⁶³

Here then is the message of Advent. It is filled with hope and anticipation and excitement - a bright new day is dawning in Jesus Christ. Be filled with hope and come - even now let us walk in the light of the Lord!

Come, Lord Jesus!

³ *The Holy Bible : New International Version*. 1996 (electronic ed.). Grand Rapids: Zondervan.