Romans 13:12 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.

It is Advent. It is the beginning of the church year. It is a time when we are to prepare our hearts for the coming of Jesus, not only to prepare for the celebration of his first coming or Christmas, but also to prepare for the second coming of Jesus. I think each of us would agree at this point that preparation for the second coming of Jesus is by far the most important thing we could do.

Why do I say that preparing for the second coming of Jesus is the most important thing we could do? No, it is not because Trump won the election or that Hillary didn’t. Truth of the matter is that kings or princes, yes, even presidents are not the end all or be all of a nation, especially our United States or the end of the world. Preparation for the second coming of Jesus is important for the simple reason that our Gospel laid out for us: **“Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.”**

What that passage says is that Jesus could come at any time. He could come within the next minute. He could come within the next hour, day, week, month, year, and so on. Jesus could come at any time and you and I, well really, everybody in this world, needs to be prepared for when He does.

We need to be prepared because with His coming also comes something called Judgment Day. On Judgment Day, each person will be brought before God and judged. You will be judged as either one who was faithful to God and his Word or you will be judged as one who was an unbeliever and a hater of God. No second chances or next times. No excuses will be allowed nor will “I’ll do better” have a place. No measurement of man will be used. The judging will be done by the all-knowing, just, holy and righteous God and He will make no mistakes. The verdict of the day will be final!

Now, if you end up in heaven there is no problem. The wonder, joy, peace, love and happiness that God has prepared for us will be eternal and sure. On the other hand, if you end up in hell, the horror, the pain, suffering, torment and any other terrible thing you can think of will also be forever and ever.

It is those last few things that I think are the most pressing arguments for being ready when Jesus comes. When you grasp the fact that what happens will be final and eternal, it should also dawn on you that you would want to make sure you end up in the pleasant place for eternity. So how do we make sure? How do we get to heaven?

Our text for this morning gives us some real good advice. Let’s take a look at what it says under the theme: **NIGHT IS NEARLY OVER. 1st. Understanding Night and Day. 2nd. Put aside the deeds of darkness. 3rd. Put on the armor of light.**

**“The night is nearly over,”** our text says. That statement seems innocent enough if you simply understand the term night only in the sense of “the dark period of the day.” But it is clear from the text before us that the term “night” means much more than just the time of day when it is dark. That is evident from the use of such terms as **“put aside the deeds of darkness”** and **“put on the armor of light.”** All of this brings to mind the very simple question, “Just what is meant by night and day?”

The first thing to consider is the fact that when speaking of the figurative use of the words night and day, it is best if one allows Scripture to interpret Scripture. So listen if you would to how Scripture uses these terms, the synonyms of these terms and the meanings intended. In Proverbs 4:19 we read: **“But the way of the wicked is deep darkness.”** John 3:19 says, **“This is the verdict; Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.”** And John 9:4 says, **“As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work.”**

Already with just those passages we can see that Scripture often uses the terms “dark, darkness, or night” to picture for you and I the condition of the world and of man, or to picture the world of Satan and evil. So, through an understanding of Scripture’s use of these terms and their meaning we begin to see the full meaning of other phrases that are used. For instance, we are told in Isaiah that prisoners are **“those who sit in darkness.”** Clearly it is a term used to define man’s condition and when you pay attention to the context that Isaiah writes in you grasp it is a term speaking of man’s spiritual condition.

Consider if you would the fact that Scripture speak of man, natural and unconverted man, as being blind. The blind live in total darkness and can do nothing about it. The same goes for being called “dead in sin.” The dead are in total darkness and can do nothing about it. Both terms are used as spiritual pictures of man’s nature, that is that man is totally wicked and can’t by himself do anything about it.

Then comes the way that Scripture speaks of day or light. Because these terms are the exact opposite of night and darkness we can expect that God’s Word would use them in the same way. Such is the case. Consider the words of Luke 11:34-36. **”Your eye is the lamb of your body. When your eyes are good, your whole body is also full of light. But when they are bad, your body is full of darkness. See to it, then, that the light within you is not darkness. Therefore, if your whole body is full of light, and no part of it dark, it will be completely lighted as when the light of a lamp shines on you.”**

Consider what Jesus said to us in John (8:12) **“I am the light of the world.”** Through faith in Jesus we are then told, **“You are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness, and truth).”** It is very clear that in God’s Word, the terms light and day are used to picture whatever is of God, his good will and that good that God brings in us and to us.

So our text very clearly has a message for us. **“The night is nearly over.”** The darkness, the sinfulness, the wickedness of this world is soon going to end. It will end because the very source of light, God himself, with all his wonder and glory will come and put an end to the wickedness. That day of ending this wickedness is called “The Day of Judgment.” So the message is urgent. Darkness is nearly over. The Light is coming. Sin and what is of sin is coming to an end. What is coming is the glory and majesty of God and good. So now that we understand our terms, let’s go back and contemplate that most important question. What can you do to prepare yourself for this event? Listen to what the Apostle Paul urges as he writes through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

**“So let us put aside the deeds of darkness,”** we are told. So that there would be no doubt as to what the deeds of darkness are we are given a list. Listen to what that list says: **“orgies and drunkenness, sexual immorality and debauchery, dissension and jealousy.”** To further top off the clear cut meaning of **“putting aside the deeds of darkness”** we are also shown that the deeds of darkness are the things we do to **“gratify the desires of the sinful nature.”**

**“Put the deeds of darkness off.”** If when the light comes you wish to be on the right side of judgment then you need to stop indulging in the desires of the sinful nature. God doesn’t say that is easy. God doesn’t say we can be perfect. God does say that we are to try though, try with everything He’s got.

You heard me! Try with what He’s got! If you were to ask the simple question, “How do we put off the deeds of darkness?” the simple answer ends up being, **“put on the armor of light.”**

Now light is whatever is connected with God. Put on God. We do that by faith. 1 John 1 says, **“We know that we live in Him and He in us, because He has given us of his spirit.”** Faith, as we learned in Confirmation class, is created and given to us by the Holy Spirit of God.

How about the Word of God? You want to have the armor of light, then use the Word of God. The Word of God is the means through which faith comes. **“Faith comes through hearing the message and the message is heard through the Word of Christ.”** That doesn’t surprise me, after all, the same Jesus who is called **“The Light of the World”** is also called, **“The Word.”**

Sinking in? To more fully understand this phrase **“armor of light”** consider the words of Ephesians where the armor of God is fully described. **“Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that come from the Gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the Evil One. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.”**

The armor of light is then those tools and gifts that God gives to win the battle against sin. It is the message of Jesus, that He is our Savior and the atoning sacrifice for our sins. It is the heart of God’s Gospel message that Jesus died for you and rose from the dead to clearly proclaim to all that we are forgiven and adopted into God’s family. We belong to God. We are God’s children. We have everything from God and in God there is nothing for us to fear or worry about. Because with the forgiveness of sins from Jesus and with the gift of faith from the Holy Spirit so that we believe in Jesus all things have been supplied. The armor is available to us. The armor fits us. The armor is for our good and salvation. In truth, the only reason you and I can’t totally beat down the sin in our lives is because all too often we don’t use the armor of God as we can. We leave it in the corner because we think we have everything covered. We think we are going to do this ourselves and we are wrong. So we don’t wear that helmet, use that sword or even have the readiness of the gospel on our feet. And so far I am describing those who have been called to faith and made God’s children. There are many more out there who don’t even know that God has given them armor and that God is the light for them.

This is important because this is how we are ready. We are ready because we have faith in Jesus. We are ready because we understand the forgiveness of sins and eternal life, because we know our total unworthiness in all of this but also fully grasp the total righteousness of Jesus for us. Our hope and confidence is in Jesus. Yep, we are sinners who forget the armor. We are careless and forgetful. All too often we like the darkness and think it a fun place to play. But always, found in our heart is that wonder and marvel of Jesus. He is our Savior. He is our Light and salvation, He is our Everything.

So our text urges and so I will make the same urgent plea. **“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.”** Yes, let us grasp the fragile nature of our lives. Let us understand that Jesus could come for us personally or the Day of Judgment could be right around the corner. Let’s focus our lives on Jesus and his love. Focus on what is good and right, wonderful and righteous. Let us burn into our hearts and minds the message of God’s love in Jesus. That’s the only thing that counts. That’s what chases away the fear and calms our troubled hearts. That’s what gives us a sure and certain hope, the comfort of the promises of eternal life and salvation in Jesus, our Light! Amen.