

We, the redeemed, watch for Christ's return, alert, in expectant hope, through faith that lives by love.

1. Do you know what time it is? It's about time for a change. Things are going to change.
  - a. We are pressed for time, busy and occupied with many things.
  - b. It's hard to find time on our calendar for important things. Isn't it just amazing how much time the stuff of life takes! Doctor appointments and car appointments, and house repair appointments, and this little errand and that. One could spend a lifetime on the phone trying to straighten out things with insurance companies and the internet provider and the cable or dish TV providers. Don't they understand that we have a tee time at 9:00 and a meeting at 3:00 and dinner at 5:00? No, I cannot hold. I am calling long distance – like from Arkansas to New Deli! No! I cannot hold. I have a hair cut appointment and my barber does not wait for cell phones.
  - c. We ALL have an appointment with destiny – the day is surely drawing near! God's calendar has an appointed day of judgment (vv 1–3) and we are closer to that day than we once were.
    - (1) Our OT reading tells us that the Day of the Lord will be a day of destruction and judgment for the unbelieving world (Zeph 1:7–16). There will be those who in their complacency say “the Lord will not do ill; nor will He do good,” but make no mistake, it will be a day of anguish and distress, ruin and devastation, darkness and gloom, the day of a trumpet blast and a battle cry. All hell is going to break loose! So much for the image of God as the old grandfather that simply nods and winks at his grandchildren and who never punishes them for their sin!
    - (2) Jesus tells us in today's Epistle and Gospel reading that this day is surely approaching and that it will come suddenly on unsuspecting mankind like a thief in the night (Mt 24:43); The world will be concentrating on Peace and Security as if they can really achieve peace and security; others will scoff at the notion that the end is coming because they see things continuing as they always have; Others will try to use science to prove that such a prophecy as false. The world simply denies God's Word and the signs of the end revealed in the times and seasons . Still the Day of Judgment will come when you least expect it.

Paul warns that we should not seek security in anything of this world.
  - e. The Church of Christ awaits that day in eager expectation (v 4), just as a pregnant woman awaits the time of child birth. There's no escape, nowhere to flee – the baby is coming, ready or not! The labor pains signal the beginning of the end. But we do not live in fear. We live in eager expectation and hope knowing that on the last day it's going to be revealed who we are.

Though the world does not always recognize us for who we are, **WE KNOW we are sons of God.**

- (1) **WE KNOW** we are children of God through faith in His Son and as such we know what our Heavenly **Father expects: complete holiness** from each and every one of us. Not lives approaching holiness. Not holiness which is at least average or above, but holy sinlessness. On anything less, He will pour out His all-consuming destructive wrath.

- (2) WE KNOW that He has already unleashed His wrath on His own sinless Son and thus He has paid the penalty for the sins of all the world (Rom 8:1). Through faith we receive Christ's holiness as our own. And so we cling to nothing we have done, but wholly lean on Jesus' name.
- (3) WE ALSO KNOW that **Christ shall return to claim His Bride**, not in wrath (v 9), but for eternal love and joy.
- f. A soon-to-be bride recognizes that her past life is soon gone. She will take on a new name and live a new life with her husband. As the Bride of Christ we recognize that, though we live in this world, we are not part of it. It's all passing away. A new life awaits us . . .
- (1) and so we watch the passing of time from a **new perspective**.
  - (2) We know that one day, all time will give way to God's eternal endless day (v 1), where there is no longer any darkness – no death or grief or sorrow or pain or rejection or illness – nothing at all to do with sin.
2. Paul reminds us that as children of God **we have already been brought from darkness into light** ( 5).
- a. Those who **live according to the sinful nature live in spiritual darkness** (v 7) and they do the **things that those who live in darkness do** – all kinds of sinful things usually take place at night under the cover of darkness – adultery and robbery and cheating -
  - b. But not so us. Having been baptized into Christ (Rom 6:3), we are sons of light through faith.
    - (1) We no longer live as slaves to the darkness of sin that lives inside us.
    - (2) Christ has freed us from the guilt of sin and the power of sin by His cross and death and resurrection.
    - (3) We live in Him and He in us (Rom 6:6–7).
3. As children of light, we live clean and sober lives in Christ (v 6).
- a. We have put on the **breastplate of faith** (v 8a). With faith we trust Him for the forgiveness of sins. That's what it means to be a Christian. It is a **mistaken idea** that a Christian is someone who tries just a little bit harder than the next guy to be holy and on the basis of his effort, God cannot possibly deny him or her heaven. No!
    - (1) A Christian has **faith that clings to Christ** and His work so that come what may – political and economic upheaval, illness, suffering, and death - even the end of the world, he knows that Christ is his source of holiness that enables us to stand before Christ as His Bride – **“radiant, without any stain or blemish, holy and blameless”** (Eph 5:27).
    - (2) In that faith our lives become offerings of love for our neighbor. As Jesus the Son of God left heaven to come to earth and do war against our enemies, we also, as His followers are at WAR – against greed and poverty and sickness and injustice, against sin and satan. But again, we do not fear because . . .
  - b. We have put on the **helmet of salvation** (v 8b). Salvation comes from the word, “saved.” God saves us from what? From His wrath.
    - (1) We don't have to fear the wrath of God, since Christ has borne God's hatred of sin for us..
    - (2) We now live in the hope of a glorious eternal future, not the dread of unknown days or months and years ahead.

- c. We, therefore, live soberly in the light of day, anticipating the fulfillment of our faith when Christ returns to claim us as His own. As the Bride expects her husband, the Church expects her Bridegroom: He cannot come soon enough!
4. And so it's time for a change while there's still time for change. Not a change of political parties. That's not what change I am talking about. Christ is coming. He comes now through His Word and Sacrament to change us. The most unloving thing God could do for us would be to simply affirm that us in our sin. He does not say to anyone, "You're Ok, don't worry about sinful condition. I accept you, just the way you are." Yes, God loves us all. He loves us so much that He sent His Son to rescue us from our sin – to change us – not to confirm us in our sin but to change you so that you no longer conform to this sinful world.

Who are you thinking about that God is trying to change? The homosexual? The prostitute? The homeless alcoholic or drug addict? That man you heard about who shot and killed someone? Yes, he wants to change them. But God is also concerned about changing you – rescuing you from your greed and self-centered idolatry. He wants to **change us** – release us from our lusts and grudges and our self-righteousness. And He wants to keep changing us until we breath your last breath.

5. And He wants this change to be evident in how we conduct ourselves; how we relate to the world.
  - a. No more living like the sons of darkness – with the sinful nature out of control
  - b. No more anxiety and dread of the unknown – it doesn't scare us because we know what's coming for us – heaven, to be with the Lord forever.
  - c. Instead, being brought to life in Christ, we live in Him by faith.
    - (1) We live by love of the neighbor.
    - (2) We live in the certain hope of everlasting life.
    - (3) We encourage and build up one another in this most holy faith pointing to Jesus – to His cross and empty tomb and to His ultimate return.

This is how we live at whatever time it is.

[60 Minutes opening clip] Tick! Tick! Tick! Tick! As long as the clock is still ticking, there's still time for change. Amen!