

**Sermon /10 September 2023/Romans 13:8-14/Time to Wake Up**  
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Good morning, everyone!

Do you know what time it is? It's time to wake up!

Wake up! Quit hitting the snooze button.

Wake up!

That's what time it is. It's time to wake up.

Because, as Christians, we've got a lot of work to do. Wake up! Get to it!

In his letter to the Romans, Paul puts it a little more eloquently.

Paul writes: "You know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light."

That's what I said. Wake up! Jesus is our compass, our true north, our guide. We follow Christ! We are Christians! So wake up! We must stop wasting our time doing things that take us away from Christ and his teachings. Leave the dark. Follow the light. Follow Jesus. That's what time it is.

Wake up! We've got chores to do.

That's what time it is.

Have you ever been to a church where there's a clock at the back of the nave? You know, one of those easy-to-read, standard regulation, black and white schoolroom clocks with the sweeping red second hand.... hanging back there on the edge of the balcony. The congregation can't see it...but the preacher can see it. The presider can see it.

I know that clock is in most churches to make sure the preacher doesn't preach too long. That clock hangs back there so the presider doesn't allow the church service to last longer than the prescribed time.

I wish the reason was because everyone in church was just so anxious to go out into the world and spread the Good News of Christ's love to everyone they meet. But I'll bet most people are simply anxious to get to brunch or watch a football game.

But wouldn't it be fantastic to have a clock in church to remind us what time it is? Because NOW is the time to wake up. It wouldn't matter what hour and minute the clock told us it was, because THAT would be the time to get moving... because THAT is the time to wake up.

My husband and I saw a play last weekend about the concept of time. In the play, a couple re-enact moments of their relationship several times over. Each time there are subtle differences in the words they say or the inflection of the words. The idea is that time is constant and the smallest change in a choice or a word can dramatically change the outcome of any situation.

It's true. Every single word we say \_\_\_\_ every single thing we do \_\_\_\_ affects us, affects the people and the world around us. And in the reality of our lives, as we perceive them, there are no second chances. There are no do overs. Unlike that play, we can't go back and re-enact something to change the outcome.

Paul addresses this in the first part of the scripture we heard today. Paul wrote, "Owe no one anything, except love." That's the key. Paul tells us that if we love one another - love our neighbor - we've got all our bases covered. If we love our neighbor as ourselves, then we have fulfilled all the laws.

We won't wish we had a do-over if we always lead with love. We won't NEED a second chance if we always act in love.

Love does no wrong to a neighbor.

Wow! Paul is really telling us how it is today! He's firing on all cylinders.

Now is the time!

Wake up!

Night is gone. Day is here.

Leave the darkness. Step into the light.

Love one another.

Love does no wrong to a neighbor.

Wake up. What does that mean? There are two connotations for the words "wake up." First, it means to stop sleeping and get moving. Second, "wake up" refers to paying attention.

For us it means both. The future of the Christianity depends on us. It's up to us to make sure everyone knows, hears, and understands the Good News of love, acceptance, forgiveness, grace, and salvation through Jesus for every single person on this planet.

We cannot sleepwalk through our lives accepting things the way they are. Hate, bigotry, racism, classism is running amok. We must work toward changing the direction of this world.

We cannot get comfortable under our thick, fuzzy, comforter of privilege. We cannot think that since we've got it good, we can relax. We act as if we don't want to risk losing anything. Jesus, the reason we are here, risked everything. His friends and followers risked everything. WE are

the friends and followers of Jesus. We are called to wake up, smell the coffee, drink the coffee, and get to work. And risk will be involved.

When? Now! The time is now. That is absolutely clear.

We must make the church...the Christian church...the Episcopal Church...this church of St. Mark's...a beacon of hope and love to the world out there that is lost and begging for Good News.

Get out of the night of our complacency. Step away from the darkness of the ego-driven, me-first and to heck with everyone else attitude of our culture.

Step into the light of love. Share that light. Reach out to a world in need.

Love. That's all it takes. Love.

Yeah. I know. Loving everyone isn't easy. There are neighbors who make it incredibly difficult to love them.

But you know what? Jesus didn't tell us to love our neighbors as ourselves only if it was easy. Jesus said, "Do it."

Paul didn't tell the church in Rome that waking up and putting on the armor of light was going to be a piece of cake. Paul said, "You've got to do it."

Wake up and do it! You know what time it is. NOW is the time.

Every single day when we wake up, we must "wake up." As you prepare for your day, imagine that you are putting on the armor of light. Clothe yourself in the love of Jesus and share that love with every single person you meet. In every situation, act with love.

Acknowledge that unsheltered person on the street. Say "hello." That's light. That's love. Don't ignore them. That's darkness.

If something bothers you, talk about it and work it out. That's light and love. Don't hold a grudge or a grievance. That's darkness.

Be a part of a solution to a problem. Light. Don't just complain about that problem. Dark.

Speak up against prejudice. Don't remain silent.

Be an active part of good organizations the work towards making this world a better place. Don't stay home thinking there's nothing that can be done.

Help others act with love toward their neighbors and be an example of that light. Don't think your siblings in this world are beyond change.

Now. Do it now. You know it. The time is now.

Wake up!

*A couple of weekends ago I had the privilege of attending the LGBTQ+ Pride Celebration in Raton. Raton – right up there on the Colorado border. Raton – population 6,000. Raton – which I'm told is a very conservative community. Raton had their first-ever Pride celebration this summer.*

*Holy Trinity Episcopal Church in Raton opened their little meeting room to the Pride committee so they could plan the Pride events. Jill, the vicar of Holy Trinity, met with some opposition from her own congregation and a lot of opposition from the community. Some of the other Christian denominations worked to get the Pride parade and festival cancelled. There were threats of protests at the church service Holy Trinity held and at the parade the following day.*

*We were told the protests were cancelled because those church leaders didn't want their congregations to look like bullies. You know, if they'd just acted with the love for their siblings in Christ and stepped out of the darkness and into the light, they wouldn't have to worry about looking like bullies because they wouldn't be bullies.*

*Jill, Holy Trinity, and the Pride committee of Raton know what time it is. It is time to wake up. It is time to leave the darkness behind and put on the armor of light. And they did. And it was beautiful.*

*It wasn't big. It wasn't all shiny and perfect. It was the Good News of Jesus Christ of love and acceptance for all put out there into the world.*

*Wake up! Be like Raton and Holy Trinity Episcopal Church. Now is the time. Change the world.*