

John Sampson
"The Day Is Near"
Text: Romans 13:11 - 14
Preached at KVCC
Advent 1, December 1, 2019

Will you pray with me?

God, may the words of my mouth, and the meditations of all of our hearts, be acceptable to you, our rock, and our redeemer.

Amen.

Today we start the journey again.

Today, we begin again the journey to Bethlehem, and the birth of Jesus, the one we may come to call the Christ, the anointed of God. If we choose to call him Christ it is because we will come to recognize that he offers us the greatest of all gifts. It is because we will come to understand that he shows us what it means to truly love – to truly love God, and to truly love one another.

And so we begin today to prepare ourselves to welcome this gift-giving teacher into our hearts, and into our world, by hearing the words of Paul.

Wake up, he says, the day is near.

Wake up, not from literal sleep, but from the spiritual sleep that rules our lives. The sleep that is the inertia of our daily routine, of the ways we treat each other without even thinking much about it, of how we use the beautiful world all around us as nothing more than a resource to fulfill our desires. Paul asks us to wake up, and to see how in our spiritual sleep we have allowed ourselves to put our

wants, and our bottomless need at the center of our lives, and to see what that is doing to each other, and to the Creation.

Wake up and see the state of the world, and the state of our lives.

But also wake up because the dawn is breaking, the dawn of love.

It is coming again, just like it came all of those years ago back in a nothing village on the edge of the Roman empire, just as it came to a couple of nobodies named Mary and Joseph. Yes, that same love is breaking like the dawn again, breaking in our lives. But we need to wake up to see it's first rays creeping over the mountains that surround us. Because, just like all those years ago in Bethlehem, if we aren't actively opening ourselves to love, we'll miss it. Our sacred stories about the birth of Jesus tell us something true, even if they may not be historically accurate. They tell us that love will be born somewhere where we're not looking, in an unexpected place, and at an unexpected time.

Wake up because if we aren't spiritually and intuitively and emotionally awake we can't see where love is being offered to us, and where we are being asked to love.

Wake up.

This is the first step in our preparation for Christmas.

So, on this morning, as our journey of Advent begins, we will begin to wake up from our slumber, by sounding our spiritual alarm clock.

I invite you to come into a posture of prayer and meditation. After a moment of silence I will ring the church bell three times. And as I do so, I invite you to wake up and look into your own lives, into your own hearts, and into the heart of the world, and I ask you to find

where love is trying to be born. Look and see where love so desperately needs to be born. Look with your inner eyes, and look with courage, and honesty, and humility. It's only in this way that we will actually be able to see.

And once you are able to see, then, on the final toll of the bell, invite love to be born in the place that you have found it is most needed. You see, Advent, this journey we begin this morning, is only about remembering the past to the extent that it helps us understand our present. Advent is much more about preparing the present for the birth of a miracle that will transform our hearts, here and now, if we just let it, if we are awake to its possibility.

So let us begin this journey again to Bethlehem, to an empty manger, and to the birth of love. Wake up! The day is near. Amen.

[Sound bell 3 times.]