

## **Your Situation in Life**

Romans 13:11-14

The First Sunday in Advent, December 3, 2017

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands

It is important to remind ourselves from time to time about how the creation operates.

In the beginning God created heaven and earth. He made them by speaking them into existence. Everything exists and is maintained by the Word of God. That includes human beings. God maintains our existence by His Word. Since it was God who created us, when He created us, He created us perfect. There were no dysfunctionalities in us. Our bodies operated the way that they were supposed to operate. Our relationships with each other operated the way that our relationships were supposed to operate. Our vocation to the creation was ordered in a way that was a blessing to the creation and a blessing to us. In short there was no sin and there was no death.

Then the serpent introduced a false word into the creation. The serpent spoke a word other than the Word of God into the creation. The serpent did not create anything with his word. It is impossible for the serpent to create. All the serpent can do is contradict what God had already said. And contradict God the serpent did. Adam and Eve believed the serpent's word. By believing the serpent's word instead of the Word of God, they put their confidence in the serpent and not in the Word of God. When their confidence was in the word of the serpent and not in the Word of God, they no longer had faith in the Word which created them and ordered them in perfect harmony with each other and with the creation. The result was dysfunction. They no longer lived the way that God designed them to live with each other. They no longer lived the way that God designed them to live with the creation. Because they no longer lived the way that God's Word had ordered them to live, they lost functionality. In short they sinned and they died. If one is no longer ordered according to the Word of God one does not operate the way that one should operate. When one does not operate the way that one should operate, one dies.

This dysfunction was not limited to Adam and Eve. Since they were the head of all humanity, Adam in particular, and since they ruled over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, the dysfunctionality of sin and death was laid upon all of the creation. Since we experience the creation with death, we keep track of years and decades and centuries. We would not keep track of these things if there were no death. We would not notice the passage of time without death in it. With death in it we keep track of how old we are. We see the increasing affects of our age. One elderly person in our family recently expressed the wish that she would be my age. And I often wish that I were younger than I am now. It puts me further away from total dysfunction. It puts me further away from death. And since the creation experiences things with death in it, I can say it this way: that the dysfunction of Adam and Eve passed onto all men because all sinned.

God could have left His creation in this condition, but He did not. He worked with the creation. He made skins out of animals for Adam and Eve to cover their nakedness. Then later He warned Cain against Cain's anger knowing that it would lead to death. Even after Cain murdered his brother, Abel, God still gave mercy to Cain by putting a mark on Cain so that he would not die. When humanity spread over the face of the earth its evil and dysfunction spread with it. God decided to start the creation all over again in Noah's flood. God wiped the wickedness and dysfunction of the creation from the earth. He returned creation to the watery mass from which it came in the beginning. He started over with one man, Noah. He gave Noah the same blessing that He gave to Adam and Eve. But once the creation had restarted the dysfunction remained. Starting creation over again in that manner was not good enough. Then the dysfunction of man reached to heaven. Since we no longer live in harmony with the Creator, we

want to take His place, so we began to build a tower to heaven in order to take His place. God scattered us from there and there was no sign of His mercy until Abram.

God's plan to restore the creation began with Abram. He promised Abram unilaterally that Abram would become a blessing to all of the nations of the earth. Through His offspring this blessing would come. Somewhere in Abraham's descendents would be the One who would restore the creation to its functionality. There would be someone who would put things back to rights.

Then God brought Abraham's descendents out of slavery in Egypt which taught God's people that the blessing through Abraham would liberate them from slavery. They may not have understood it at the time, but the liberty that God was talking about was not simply social or political liberty from slavery although social and political liberation from slavery foreshadowed it, but rather liberty from the word of the serpent.

Then God established a king among the descendents of Abraham. The most famous of the kings was David. God promised David that as soon as one of his descendents kept all of God's will that the kingdom of David would become an everlasting kingdom. That means that the promise God made to Abraham would be fulfilled through one of David's descendents.

One gets the impression from the prophets that this will take place when the people return from exile for their idolatry, which it does, but not as soon as anyone expected. It took four hundred years.

And then the descendent of David came. The fulfillment of the promise that God made to Abraham was fulfilled. One came forth from David's line who corrected the serpent's word. He cast out the demons. He restored functionality to the creation. He healed the sick and raised the dead. He did this in a preliminary way so that people would put their trust in Him.

He has now ascended into heaven and promises to return to complete what He started. He started the restoration of the creation. He continues that restoration through His people who are descendents of Abraham by faith in Him. He will return again in glory for a final judgment to restore the creation to its final functionality. When He returns there will be no death and so the dead will rise. Anyone wicked or faithless who continued to believe the serpent's word rather than His will be permanently removed from the creation into everlasting damnation. The sick will all finally be healed. And we will live in harmony with the creation and with each other. In short there will be no sin.

You live in between His first coming and His second coming.

You live after His first coming when He was born in Bethlehem and His second coming when He will return on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory with all of the angels of heaven. You live in between the times when He first pronounced His judgments in a preliminary way so that we would believe in Him and the time when He will pronounce His final judgment at which time there will be no opportunity for repentance. You are therefore a people who are waiting. You are waiting each and every day for His return. You are waiting in the exact same way that a person who sleeps waits for the dawn. His return is nearer now than when we celebrated Advent last year. His return is nearer now than we when celebrated Christmas last year. His return is nearer now than it was yesterday. It is nearer now than when we were baptized. It is nearer now than when you believed at first.

And what does one do when one gets up in the morning. I get up and say my morning prayers. When Nathan gets up we say our morning prayers. He is starting to say them with me. We then wake Mommy up and have breakfast together. Mommy gets ready. Then I get ready. I take off my pajamas. I shower and get dressed. I assemble the things that I need to take to the study for the day. Breakfast dishes are done. Mommy makes the bed and is dressed for the day. Diapers are changed and Nathan is dressed for the day.

We leave our bed behind. We do not stay in it all day. We leave our pajamas behind. We do not wear them all day. People who wear their pajamas all day look incompetent, unprepared to face the day. I cannot afford to go the study and make my calls without showering first. Some of you have vocations that require a shower be taken at night, but even still, you go out to the shop or out to the field and the instruments of the night are left behind. One cannot work the ground from bed even with GPS tractors. One leaves behind the things of the night in order to live in the day.

In the same way Christ has shown to you that the night is almost over. The day is at hand. What He means by that is that His first coming was the preliminary judgment. He came and performed sufficient miracles that we could begin to see what the full restoration of the creation would be like. He also came in humility to render the judgment of forgiveness on our sins, by His death upon the cross. All dysfunction was loaded onto Him there and it killed Him. By doing so, He has in a preliminary yet full way restored the functionality of the creation. While we still sin and while we still get sick and die, He has restored the creation sufficiently that the new creation is coming when all sin, sickness, and death will be gone. He will bring about that complete new creation when He returns in glory. That is the day that we are waiting for. The world right now is still the night.

But the day is at hand. The Christ has told us that no one knows the day or the hour except the Father. What we do know is that there is a day and an hour. It is at some point in the future. When it comes, the day will have fully come. In order to get ready for life in the day put on the instruments of the day and put off the works of darkness. You don't live in the day with your pajamas on. You live in the day with your work clothes on whatever your vocation may be. So also you will not live in sin and death in the new creation, therefore put them off now while living in the old in order to prepare for your life in the new.

If you are uncertain what the works of darkness are that you shall put off in preparation to face the day, God gives you a list. This is not a comprehensive list. These are just examples of the types of things which you shall put off in order to prepare for the day. Put off orgies. This would include gluttonous and sexual over indulgence. Put off drunkenness. Put off fornications, that would be any sexual act outside of marriage. Therefore if you are unmarried and you are engaged in sexual acts, put those acts off. That means discontinue doing them in order to prepare for the day that is coming when the Christ returns. Put off debaucheries. In addition to sex without being married, take off the adultery from your life. Put aside your paramours. Put off from yourselves strife. In this case the strife refers to divisions within the congregation caused by pride and selfishness. Put off jealousy. In other words put off all those actions which speak to others that you deem yourself more important than anyone else. These are comprehensive and a good place to start. I have provided you with modest explanations of each of the dysfunctions that God tells us to remove in preparation for the daytime after Christ returns and restores the creation.

What are you supposed to wear if you take these things off? In other words what are the work clothes that we shall put on. First of all, put on the Lord Jesus Christ. This is done when you are baptized. If you are baptized, rejoice in your baptism, because in your baptism you put on Christ. If you are not baptized I invited you to speak with me in order to get baptized, that you may put on the Lord Jesus Christ.

But baptism is not magic. You are not magically wearing Jesus because you are baptized, nor are you pretending to wear Jesus when you are baptized. When you put on Jesus you put on the instruments of the light. The instruments of the light are those things which make it possible to avoid making a provision for the flesh in order to gratify its desires.

One does not simply go to an orgy. One does not simply up and get drunk one day. One does not simply up and commit fornication one day or commit adultery one day or go in to a prostitute one day. One does not simply go to church one day and start a fight. One does not simply wake up one day and find oneself jealous. There are things that lead up to these things. The things that lead up to those things are the provision for the flesh to gratify its desires.

There is the lustful image on TV or online. It is not pornographic, but it is suggestive. The image does not readily leave your mind. Or if you are a woman, there is a man who is kind to you one day, kinder than most men are. You find this attractive and you want more of it.

You enjoy a drink without getting drunk. Then you enjoy two drinks without getting drunk. Then it affects your behavior until finally you are drunk.

You have a good idea for the congregation. Other people do not greet it with enthusiasm. It hurts you that they don't. Or they do greet it with enthusiasm. They implement the idea in the congregation and it is a success. They give you thanks for your idea. Then you come up with the next idea and when they don't like it you are disappointed. They took the first one and not the second and without realizing it you have exalted your ideas above the place in life where God has placed you. You think you can save the congregation when God has already saved it.

And that root selfishness that thinks that it is God, that root lie, which the serpent told us in the garden and we believed it that if we just ate of the fruit of the tree we would be like God is what leads to all jealousy. This is why God may be jealous, but we may not. Jealousy is an expression of the notion in our dysfunctional hearts that we should be God. It makes us jealous of all kinds of things that we consider threats to our preeminence.

This is why putting on the Lord Jesus in baptism involves putting on the instruments of light. The instruments of light expose all of these things.

The instruments of light are the word of God. So for example with the sexual sins that God tells us to put away from ourselves in preparation for the return of the Lord so that we may live in the daytime of the new creation, our Lord tells us, "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, do not commit adultery, but I say to you that anyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart." That is an instrument of the light that you put on when you are baptized. That instrument of light tells you when things are getting started. So before you have even looked at pornography or committed adultery or fornication or gone to an orgy, you have the instrument of light to tell you that you have already lusted in your heart. It gets confessed then and there. It gets confessed as sin right there in the heart. It is exposed to the forgiveness of Jesus right then and there before it manifests itself in orgies, or fornication, or adultery, or prostitution or whatever.

Consider another instrument of the light that Jesus gave us when we were baptized, "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'You shall not murder and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment,' but I say to you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Anyone who calls his brother a fool will be subject to hellfire." This instrument of the light diagnoses our anger before it ever manifests itself in strife within the congregation. It calls attention to the anger in your heart which comes from the belief that you are more important than other people. Once that sin of pride is confessed in your heart, you will not move on to damage your neighbor's reputation in the congregation which is what strife is all about. Your anger will never be expressed in fits of jealousy and your family and your congregation will be at peace.

These are the instruments of light. The Christ gave them to you when He baptized you. After all His baptism is never done without the instruction that accompanies it. Jesus did not tell His apostles merely to baptize the nations, but also to instruct them and this way they would become disciples of

Jesus. These instruments of the light prepare you to live the day which Christ will bring about when He comes again in glory.

After all the night is far spent. Jesus rose from the dead. The Holy Spirit has come. The day is at hand. It is closer now than when you first believed.

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.