

What is in your wardrobe?

The 23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

5th Sunday in Covid 19 2 Level 2

Romans 13: 8-14

⁸ Owe nothing to anyone—except for your obligation to love one another. If you love your neighbor, you will fulfill the requirements of God’s law. ⁹ For the commandments say, “You must not commit adultery. You must not murder. You must not steal. You must not covet.”¹⁰ These—and other such commandments—are summed up in this one commandment: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”¹¹ ¹⁰ Love does no wrong to others, so love fulfills the requirements of God’s law.

¹¹ This is all the more urgent, for you know how late it is; time is running out. Wake up, for our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. ¹² The night is almost gone; the day of salvation will soon be here. So remove your dark deeds like dirty clothes, and put on the shining armor of right living. ¹³ Because we belong to the day, we must live decent lives for all to see. Don’t participate in the darkness of wild parties and drunkenness, or in sexual promiscuity and immoral living, or in quarreling and jealousy. ¹⁴ Instead, clothe yourself with the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. And don’t let yourself think about ways to indulge your evil desires.

Matthew 18:15-20

Correcting Another Believer

¹⁵ “If another believer¹⁵ sins against you,¹⁶ go privately and point out the offense. If the other person listens and confesses it, you have won that person back. ¹⁶ But if you are unsuccessful, take one or two others with you and go back again, so that everything you say may be confirmed by two or three witnesses. ¹⁷ If the person still refuses to listen, take your case to the church. Then if he or she won’t accept the church’s decision, treat that person as a pagan or a corrupt tax collector.

¹⁸ “I tell you the truth, whatever you forbid¹⁸ on earth will be forbidden in heaven, and whatever you permit¹⁹ on earth will be permitted in heaven.

¹⁹ “I also tell you this: If two of you agree here on earth concerning anything you ask, my Father in heaven will do it for you. ²⁰ For where two or three gather together as my followers,²⁰ I am there among them.”

What is in your wardrobe?

Do you remember when your kids were little and would wake up in the morning way too early and way too energetic before you were ready for them. I remember on holiday once the kids waking up at 5 – the sun was up after all and me sitting on the beach with them at 5:30 (so Janet could have a sleep and yes I know – almost a saint I am). There I sat half a sleep while Kat and Andrew were having fun splashing in the water and I thought to myself – is this what every morning on holiday is going to be like?

I remember as well trying to dress them as children – an exercise in trying to get clothes on a moving target that wriggled and jumped and couldn't keep still. You remember those days too – don't you?

Then move on some years to your children as teens and it had all changed. No longer were they up to early and no longer did you have to dress them. Now it was a case of, as midday approached, of you nagging repeatedly: "Please get up and get dressed"! "Sort out that huge pile of dirty washing that you have hung up on the floor – and from which an unpleasant odour is coming – probably a dead mouse."

Paul in writing to the church in Rome must treat them as teenagers and say to them: "Get up, get dressed and sort out your dirty washing".

11 This is all the more urgent, for you know how late it is; time is running out. Wake up, for our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. ¹² The night is almost gone; the day of salvation will soon be here. So, remove your dark deeds like dirty clothes, and put on the shining armour of right living.

Slumbering Christians are a danger to themselves and the church. The word used for wake up (from your slumber) is the word we get hypnotised from. When you are hypnotised, the wrong power is in control.

1. Get up and get dressed -why?

V9-10 ⁹ For the commandments say, "You must not commit adultery. You must not murder. You must not steal. You must not covet."^[a] These—and other such commandments—are summed up in this one commandment: "Love your neighbour as yourself."^[b] ¹⁰ Love does no wrong to others, so love fulfills the requirements of God's law.

Paul is sounding an urgent call for two reasons:

- They were distracted by and drawn to the so called attractions of the way others were behaving – summed up by "not loving their neighbour" by "love doing no wrong to others" and were not resisting.
- They are not ready should Christ return depicted metaphorically in the following phrase: "*The night is almost gone; the day of salvation will soon be here.*"

It is encouraging for us that the disciples were often asleep "slumbering" when they should have been awake: the garden of gethsemane (Luke 22:45 -), they slept through his glory on the mount of transfiguration (Luke 9:32).

In the 1930's a weary Britain was getting back on its feet and not paying sufficient attention to the rise of Hitler. Chamberlain appeased Hitler and waved a piece of paper declaring "peace in our time" totally misreading the times and encouraging Britain to slumber when it should have been waking up. Churchill prophetically had these words to say: "England has been offered a choice between war and shame. She has chosen shame, and will get war".

There is an enemy of our souls – opposition to the kingdom of God we belong to and the King we serve. In are amid spiritual war. We must choose shame or war. If we sleep we lose, if we appease, we lose in shame. Better to wake up and fight. I think a phrase made famous by Jacinda Ardern is apposite here. "Go hard and go early".

2. Get up and get dressed – and wear what?

V12-14 So remove your dark deeds like dirty clothes, and put on the shining armour of right living. ¹³ Because we belong to the day, we must live decent lives for all to see. Don't participate in the darkness of wild parties and drunkenness, or in sexual promiscuity and immoral living, or in quarrelling and jealousy. ¹⁴ Instead, clothe yourself with the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. And don't let yourself think about ways to indulge your evil desires.

Now we are awake, alert, up and ready for the spiritual battle. What clothes do we put on for such a battle? First is the removal of dirty clothes – see v13. Then we must **behave differently**. Belief must affect behaviour. What we believe inwardly must be worn outwardly. And conversely, what we wear outwardly reveals our inward heart.

Christians must be seen to be different. To live a life (behave) in a way that shows we love our neighbour. Remember love has more meat in it than being "nice". Christian love is marked by the cross and the resurrection.

The word in Greek for "clothe" was used of an actor fully entering into their role being in "character" A method actor if I remember correctly so enters the part they are playing that they "live" in that part even when they are offstage. This is a good model for us; **to be clothed with Christ means to take on the behaviour, character and intentions of Christ.**

When tempted to boast we put on Christ's humility, when tempted to lust, his purity. Tempted to anger, Christ's gentleness, tempted to gossip Christ's silence. When in conflict with another where repentance and forgiveness are needed to put on Christ's process for resolving it. Matthew 18:15-20.

This passage also tells us to put on the armour of light. The Greek word used here is better translated as weapons. Refer to 2 Corinthians 10:4 and Ephesians 6. **We need to have mastery over the weapons God has given us.** A soldier who neither looks after his weapons nor knows how to use them is no soldier at all. Being willing isn't enough, being trained in our weaponry is essential. Without training we are a liability in the battle. They are weapons of protection (defence) and offence. They are prayer, Scripture, sacrifice, love, fruit of the Spirit and gifts of the Spirit.

Augustine who spent much of his youth living in dirty clothes tells of how he heard a voice instructing him to pick up a collection of Paul's letters. He read to Romans 13 and everything changed. God was telling him how to live and that in Christ it was possible to be free, to be clean and he wrote: "I neither wished nor needed to read further – light filled my heart". In that moment he surrendered to Christ, was saved, healed, and delivered and became the Western church's greatest theologian.

May these words flood our lives with light and be part of our journey of transformation.