

Isaiah 2: 1 – 5

Romans 13: 8 – 14

The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber
Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ

This is the last Sunday in November, a month when we have been thinking about stewardship. Stewardship relates to how much time we give to serving God, how we use our gifts and talents to serve God and how we allocate our money in service to God. Each November we are required to focus on stewardship and consider either our time, our gifts or our money. This year the focus has been money.

As Andre said at the beginning of the month, ministers do not really like preaching on the subject of money and people in the pews do not like too much to be preached at about money! And so Andre has touched on the subject each week but fairly gently. And it will be the same today.

You see the first and foremost thing is our relationship with God and not the giving of money. If our relationship is right with God then we will want to give, our giving flows from our relationship.

So let us look at our text.

The hour has come to wake up

This might be read as atheists wake up, accept Christ now, come out of the darkness of unbelief, of false belief

But Paul was writing to the church in Rome, to Christians so he was referring to those who already knew God and proclaimed faith the Lord Jesus Christ. He was saying waken up from lukewarm faith, from apathy, from spiritual dullness, from being half asleep in a pew on a Sunday morning!

Many Christians are unaware that they are spiritually asleep! They might go to church on Sundays, go to church on other days to do things, believe in God and in Jesus Christ. They are outwardly religious but lukewarm about their daily spiritual walk with the Lord.

They are not fully awake, they are not fully alive in Christ. And they don't know what they are missing. Because Christ has so much more offer to those who waken up. He wants to have a personal relationship with each and every person and relationship is a two way process. He relates to us and we relate to him. He gives to us and we give to him. We pray to him and he listens. He speaks to us and we listen.

We are already children of God, children of the Light, we just need to live like it, dress like, fight like it.

Wake up, the night is nearly over, the day is almost here

There is a lovely picture here of the dawn, of the sunrise. A picture of new beginning and of light and of hope.

My bedroom window faces east and I look out across the skyline of Corstorphine Hill and the city of Edinburgh and the end of the Pentland Hills. And the sunrises are often awesome. A time of hope, what will this new day bring? A time that evokes prayer, thank you God for the beauty of this new day. A time of wakening up from sleep and getting ready for the day.

My new granddaughter now two weeks old is called Alba. It is the Latin word for dawn or sunrise. The Romans came to Scotland and were amazed by the land where the sun never set completely in the middle of the summer and so they named the country Alba. I was working in England on the day she was born and two hours after her birth I crossed the border into Scotland on the A1 at Berwick and saw the sign **Fàilte gu Alba**: (pronounced Fahl-chuh goo Al-uh-puh), Gaelic for welcome to Alba or Scotland.

Romans 13 tells us to failte gu Alba, to greet the dawn and waken up.

We are to put on two things. Paul says -

Put on the armour of light

When we waken up in the morning, we get dressed, we clothe ourselves for going to work or for leisure activities or for housework or whatever the day holds.

But Paul tells us that we are to wear the armour of light.

Paul likes to talk about our armour which helps us to stand firm and to fight against evil powers that might come against us. The clearest statement of this is in Ephesians 6 : **Stand firm then with the belt of truth buckled round your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit.**

And so we are to be clothed with truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation and the sword of the spirit which is the word of God or the bible.

Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ

Our clothes cover almost all of our bodies, especially in Scotland in winter! Our clothes are next to our skin providing protection and heat and comfort. We are to wear Jesus as closely as we wear our clothes.

We would not like to be caught in a state of nakedness. Dream interpreters will tell you that there are about 20 different types of dreams that people commonly have and one of them is dreaming about being naked in public. I think I would categorise that as a nightmare! The dream indicates a person who is or will be vulnerable or transparent. The thought horrifies us and we should feel the same about being found without Jesus, of behaving in a way that suggests we have not been clothed with the Lord Jesus Christ that day. If we are not clothed with Jesus Christ then we will be vulnerable, vulnerable to temptations and distractions and sin.

About ten years ago Rev Tom Cuthill came to Ratho to conduct a service at which I was licensed to preach the gospel. At that time a minister was licensed to preach the Word and one year later was ordained as a minister of Word and Sacrament. Licensing has since been done away with. Tom's message that night has stayed with me.

Tom was minister of St Cuthberts Church in Edinburgh, a well known and much liked minister around the city. He spoke of the time forty years previously, when he became a minister. He spoke about his first clerical robes and he said **“Since then I daresay I have worn out countless clerical collars and more than one set of clerical robes. I trust, however, that I have not worn out Christ as though he were a threadbare garment fit only to be discarded. You see, forty years ago it was not so much the outward trappings of ministry that I was being called to wear; rather, in the words of Paul, I was being called to put on Christ, to wear Christ like a garment in public and in private, in season and out of season, for the rest of my life. The essence of Christianity is Christ and the essence of being a Christian is putting on Christ and wearing him like a garment.”**

Tom shared a period in his ministry 14 years before. He went to Assisi on a three-month sabbatical – Assisi of course associated with Francis who just happened to have changed his peacock finery and noble robes – for he came from a wealthy family - for the earth-coloured rags of a beggar – his way of putting on Christ and wearing him like a garment.

It was a time in Tom’s ministry when he was acutely conscious of his desperate need for spiritual renewal. Spiritually he was at a low ebb, feeling arid and dry. The cobwebs were draped around him, he said. In the words of Paul to the Romans, he was in a slumber from which he could not waken up. He prayed “Lord, you know my need. Do with me as you will in this holy place.” Then it began to happen – in Tom’s words –

Moments and experiences in which I found myself ambushed by grace, moments and experiences where the veil between heaven and earth, time and eternity became as thin as gossamer. On one particular day I was in my room. I had decided not to venture outside as a dark, menacing thunderstorm was about to break over Assisi. Almost at a loss to know what to do, I found myself praying – and in the course of my praying I was granted a vision – a vision of a robe. I was then given to understand that it was the robe of Christ and, what is more, it was the seamless robe of Christ. And I realised that who I am, what I say, what I

believe, what I do must be all of a piece – like the seamless robe of Christ.

You might remember that it tells us in John 19 that the soldiers at the foot of the cross drew lots to decide who would get Jesus' robe - **When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes, divided them into four shares, one for each of them, with the undergarment remaining. This garment was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. "Let's not tear it," they said to one another. "Let's decide by lot who will get it."**

The seamless robe was an expensive garment, possibly a gift given to Jesus by Mary his mother as traditionally Jewish mothers gave a seamless robe to their sons when they set off from home to follow their own lives. Or it might have been a gift from one of the wealthy women who supported Jesus in his ministry. The inner garment appears to refer to a shirtlike tunic made out of linen or wool and reaching to the knees or ankles. These garments were usually made by sewing together two superimposed squares or rectangles of fabric, stitching along three of their sides. Holes were left for the head and arms.

A more expensive type of tunic was made in a similar way but using "only one long piece of cloth, folded in two, with a hole cut in the middle for the head" and hemmed. This kind of tunic needed to be stitched at the sides.

Completely seamless garments, like the one Jesus wore, were unique to Palestine. They were woven on upright looms which creating a cylindrical piece of fabric with no seams. A seamless tunic would likely have been a rare possession, and the soldiers considered it a desirable one.

Tom was shown a powerful truth in that seamless robe. It suggested to him that Jesus himself was a totally integrated being. Who he was, what he said, what he did, were like the seamless robe – all of one piece. There was no contradiction, no breakdown between who he was, what he believed, what he said and what he did. Jesus personified total and complete integrity.

If we seek to clothe ourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, then it needs to be with that seamless robe. We must then seek to live with

Christlike integrity. That means living a life that is free from all falseness, pretence, insincerity, ambiguity and contradiction.

If we wear Jesus Christ like a garment we carry him with us into every situation. We can then ask ourselves "What would Jesus do in this situation?" WWJD as it said on so many bracelets in the 80s, Jesus worn on the wrist. What would Jesus want me to do in this situation?

Let's come back to money. I feel I should mention it!

Some time ago I went out for dinner with two friends, one a non-believer and the other a Church of Scotland elder. We had a lovely meal in a family run restaurant, pleasant service. When the bill came, they had made a mistake and charged for two meals instead of three. My non-believer friend said, excellent, that will be a cheap dinner, one third off! I turned to my Church of Scotland elder friend and said "We can't do that!" and she said "Of course we can, it's their mistake!" I was not popular with my friends when I went up to the reception and told them they had made a mistake and undercharged.

Two weeks ago I was working in Derby for two days and Michael and my two large dogs went too. When we checked out of the hotel, I noticed they had charged £7 for items we had not had. I pointed this out, the receptionist was very apologetic and went off to change the bill. While she was away I realised that they had forgotten to charge anything for the dogs. It was a very dog-friendly establishment – dog beds provided, bowls and even doggy biscuits – and the charge would have been £30. An argument ensued in my head – like the devil on one shoulder and an angel on the other – they won't notice, that's £30 you saved – it's dishonest, they provided a service and you should pay for it! And I did! And the receptionist looked quite bemused when I thanked her for taking £7 off and asked her to put £30 on!

We face decisions every day, dilemmas, choices, challenges to our integrity, traps we might fall into, temptations placed in front of us.

Are you comfortable or uncomfortable about the amount of money you give away each week, in the offering and to other charities? Do you spend more on a fish supper or a night at the cinema than you put in the offering bag? That is all I want to say about money because it is a matter for each individual.

We are called to clothe ourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, to wear the seamless robe. Put on the Lord Jesus Christ every day as a protection, trusting in him and hoping in him and loving in him. Cherish him as your treasure. The armour of light is faith, hope and love.