

## Message from Robin+

*I don't think, friends, that I need to deal with the question of when all this is going to happen. You know as well as I that the day of the Master's coming can't be posted on our calendars. He won't call ahead and make an appointment any more than a burglar would. About the time everybody's walking around complacently, congratulating each other—"We've sure got it made! Now we can take it easy!"—suddenly everything will fall apart. It's going to come as suddenly and inescapably as birth pangs to a pregnant woman.*

*But friends, you're not in the dark, so how could you be taken off guard by any of this? You're sons of Light, daughters of Day. We live under wide open skies and know where we stand. So let's not sleepwalk through life like those others. Let's keep our eyes open and be smart. People sleep at night and get drunk at night. But not us! Since we're creatures of Day, let's act like it. Walk out into the daylight sober, dressed up in faith, love, and the hope of salvation.*

*God didn't set us up for an angry rejection but for salvation by our Master, Jesus Christ. He died for us, a death that triggered life. Whether we're awake with the living or asleep with the dead, we're alive with him! So speak encouraging words to one another. Build up hope so you'll all be together in this, no one left out, no one left behind. I know you're already doing this; just keep on doing it. 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 from The Message, Eugene Peterson*

I love Eugene Peterson's paraphrase of this week's lectionary text written to the church in Thessalonica. It seems so relevant to what is going on today. We have no idea when Christ will return, in fact, we are much more certain than the people of Thessalonica that it won't be any time soon. But that does not mean we are any less afraid of how things are in the world right now, and it does not prevent us from being idle just as the Thessalonians were. They did not think there was any need for work, for completion of projects or commitments, because Jesus would be right back. In their uncertainty and anxiety they were procrastinating.

This pandemic has all of us feeling uncertain and in a state of inertia. Why plan when we don't know if our plans will be canceled by an uptick in COVID cases? Why wear anything but sweat pants when we don't leave the house all day? Why not bake another pan of brownies because the healthy eating stopped last spring! We might not have very much posted on our calendars but maybe that's a good thing since Jesus does not call ahead and make appointments.

The Apostle Paul sees this inertia as inconsistent, exhorting the Thessalonians to get busy. He views the coming of Christ, whenever that happens, as a source of hope, because at that moment, we will be raised with Christ. That moment is also one of accountability, when we will face God and ourselves with all honesty. Now more than ever, as people of faith we are called to live in joyful anticipation of the coming of Christ, expecting Christ to appear not only at a particular moment in the distant future, but also in our lives at any given moment. That's what it means to be people of faith.

It might be worthwhile to think about how we would change our lives if we knew Christ were coming in our lifetime, in 2020, or this afternoon. We'd probably have to get dressed, but maybe we'd still make those brownies because surely Jesus loves brownies!

Where are you seeing Christ in your life right now? What are you planning to do next? Maybe we could choose to give to the upcoming Thanksgiving and Christmas meal project for the Hope Center, or clean out our closets and bring in some shoes for Kevin's Eagle Scout project or clothes for Martha Merritt's efforts to help the homeless. In a few weeks the Angel Tree will be ready for us to help provide Christmas joy to children and seniors in our community.

It may be 2020 and we may not have a clue what comes next, but friends, we are not in the dark, we are creatures of the Day, so let's act like it. Walk out into the daylight sober, dressed up in faith, love, and the hope of salvation that has been promised to us. And let's share this good news with our community.