

NEW BEGINNINGS LUTHERAN CHURCH

Last Sunday of the Church Year – November 24th, (11:11 am)

STAY AWAKE

Psalm 93
Isaiah 51:4-6
Jude 20-25
Mark 13:24-37

In Repentance We Are Alert to the Coming of Christ

The signs of the end are all around us, constant reminders that *"heaven and earth will pass away."* But all of these signs are centered in the cross of Christ, whereby He has conquered sin and death, that we might be raised with Him in righteousness through His Word of the Gospel, which *"will not pass away"* (Mark 13:31). He is *"the firstborn of the dead,"* who in His great love *"has freed us from our sins by his blood"* (Rev. 1:5). His salvation is certain because *"his dominion is an everlasting dominion"* and His Kingdom *"shall not be destroyed"* (Dan. 7:14). For this purpose, He came into the world, to reign in love through His voice of the Gospel, which is the truth (John 18:37). So is the righteousness of Christ *"a light to the peoples,"* which *"will never be dismayed"* because it is the justice of His cross and resurrection (Is. 51:4-6). As He *"is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory,"* so wait upon *"the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life"* (Jude 20-24).

Are You Sleeping Well?

Have you been sleeping well lately? How would you rate the overall quality of your sleep? When night falls, do you eagerly anticipate the comfort of your bed, or does it mark the onset of worry—tossing and turning, battling with your pillow and mattress?

If the old saying about needing eight hours of sleep each night still holds true, then by the end of our lives, we'll have spent about one-third of it in bed—not alert and watchful, but drifting through the mysterious labyrinths of our dreams, our metabolism at its slowest.

For some, sleep is a cherished friend. They gladly exceed their "quota," reveling in the peace of rest. Others see sleep as a necessary inconvenience — something to endure because the body demands it, but they'd rather be awake, learning, working, or accomplishing more.

*At first glance, the second perspective might even seem correct —especially considering today's Gospel. Jesus tells us: **"Be on guard! Keep awake!"** Is He implying that sleep is undesirable? Could it be that our Savior disapproves of rest, favoring unceasing activity instead?*

Of course, Jesus isn't speaking about physical sleep. He's warning us against **spiritual slumber** — against being oblivious to what truly matters while staying preoccupied with distractions. The Day is coming. Just as Saskatchewan winters unfailingly bring temperatures below -20°C, Christ will surely return to welcome believers into His heavenly kingdom. Those who remain spiritually asleep, blind to the truth of His Word, will face eternal separation from God.

How can we stay spiritually awake?

The answer lies in Christ. He promises, **“He will send out the angels and gather His elect.”** By faith, we are among those chosen, sustained in our belief through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Interestingly, while physical rest is vital for our health, the opposite is true spiritually. True rest comes not from spiritual idleness but from being fully awake in Christ. Spiritual alertness guards our souls, offering us peace that no amount of physical rest can provide.

When we consider the end times, Scripture gives us clear truths:

- The **end** will come.
- There will be **salvation** for believers
- And there will be **condemnation** for unbelievers.
- **Eternal life** is God's gift to those **who trust in Him.**

Jesus calls us to **stay awake, be on guard, and remain in Him.**

Reflecting on the challenges to faith, we are reminded of Jude's words in his epistle. He warns against those who might lead us astray, urging believers to **“keep yourselves in the love of God.”** Jude describes spiritual dangers that can infiltrate God's people, including pride, division, and complacency.

Here's a modern illustration of Jude's warning:

- *“So, how did the conversation go?”*
- *Well, he appreciated our invitation but doesn't want to join our congregation.*
- *Why not?*
- *He said we are grumblers, malcontents following our sinful desires; we are loud-mouthed boasters, showing favoritism for gain. He called us inward-looking, unable to reflect the simple, faithful love of the first Christians.*
- *Wow... So, what did you say to him?*
- *Nothing.*

– *Nothing? Why not?*

– *Because he was right.*”

Criticism like this is painful to hear, especially about a Christian congregation. While Jude wasn't condemning an entire community, he exposed attitudes that can hinder faith. Sadly, his description fits some churches today. When the love of the world creeps into our lives and congregations, it threatens to pull us away from the love of God. This spiritual sleepiness jeopardizes our foundation in Christ.

That doesn't mean we reject all aspects of culture. Tools like microphones, projectors, and modern technology can help us share the Gospel. But we must ensure that these tools enhance, rather than obscure, the unchanging truth of God's Word.

Jude closes his epistle with a beautiful reminder of God's sovereignty: **“To Him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of His glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time, now and forever. Amen.”**

In Christ, we are kept alert and grounded. He has conquered death, giving us life, mercy, and salvation. This enables us to show compassion to those who err, while standing firm in our faith. Jude advises us to **“show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.”**

Do you like to sleep? Have you been sleeping well? I hope your answer is “yes” when it comes to physical rest, for it equips you to face life's challenges. But when it comes to spiritual rest, I pray your answer is “no.” How excellent it is to stay spiritually awake, on guard, and in the Lord – ready for the day He returns!

On that Day, Christ will awaken those who sleep in death. Together with the living, we will enter His eternal home. There, in heaven – where beds will no longer be needed – we will rejoice and serve Him tirelessly, forever and ever. **Amen.**