

TEXT: Romans 13:11-14

THEME: ADVENT REMINDS US

1. Reminds Us to Wake Up
2. Reminds Us to Straighten Up
3. Reminds Us to Dress Up

CUE 16—ripped—¹¹ And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. ¹²The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. ¹³Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. ¹⁴Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature. *NIV*

Dear Waiting and Watching Advent Christians:

CUE 17—There was a woman who was doing her Christmas shopping at a crowded mall. She was tired of fighting the crowds. She was tired of standing in lines. She was tired of fighting her way down long aisles looking for a gift that had sold out days before. Her arms were full of bulky packages when the elevator door opened. It was full.

The occupants of the elevator grudgingly tightened ranks once again to allow a small space for her and her load. As the doors closed, she blurted out, “Whoever is responsible for this whole Christmas thing ought to be arrested, strung up, and shot!” A few others nodded their heads or grunted in agreement. Then, from somewhere in the back of the elevator came a single voice that said, “Don’t worry! They already crucified him.”

Now that Thanksgiving is finished and the rigors of Black Friday are behind us, in the Christian church year we begin a four-week period of preparation for the celebration of our Savior’s birth. It’s called Advent, which means “coming.” It doesn’t refer to the coming of Christmas sales catalogs or the coming of family and friends for Christmas celebrations. It refers to the coming of Jesus to be our Savior from sin.

We need to remember who is responsible for the whole Christmas thing. **CUE 18—**It is all about how God “**so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life**” (John 3:16).

Advent is a time to remember. During this time of year we are reminded that God came into our world to make a difference in our life and in our eternity. Advent also reminds us that Christ Jesus is coming again. **CUE 19—flash—**So, ADVENT REMINDS US to spiritually WAKE UP, STRAIGHTEN UP, and DRESS UP.

CUE 20—flash—REMINDED TO WAKE UP

All of us from time to time find ourselves lulled to sleep by what is going on around us in our day. We get desensitized to a whole lot of open sin. We text OMG and forget that we’re taking God’s name in vain. Living together without being married? It’s no big deal, except

that God says it is a sin. If a baby isn't wanted, isn't it better that it not be born in the first place? God doesn't think so. It's too expensive to care for the elderly in this country, but we can't call it mercy-killing or euthanasia; let's call it health care reform. God calls it murder. As we live in the world, we are affected by it probably much more than we would like to admit. With so much competing for our time, it's easy to fall asleep spiritually. Before long, we find ourselves neglecting those things that are necessary to stay in an active and meaningful relationship with Jesus. Our church attendance, Bible reading, prayer time, and proper managing of our time, talents, treasure, and testimony can all be negatively impacted.

CUE 21—flash—Advent reminds us to wake up. God's Word says, **“And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.”** Praise the Lord! Jesus is coming again and we are closer to that event today than we have ever been. It's time to wake up spiritually, be ready and alert, instead of just drowsily going along with the sinful flow of this world.

CUE 22—flash—REMINDED TO STRAIGHTEN UP

When we are lulled to sleep by the world, we have a tendency to live like the world and not like a child of God, like a Christ-follower. We find ourselves slipping backward instead of moving forward on our journey toward glory.

CUE 23—flash—Advent reminds us to straighten up. God's Word says, **“The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy.”** We are reminded that as followers of Christ, we are to get rid of all behavior that is not Christ-like. Would Jesus like watching TV with you...enjoy the sites you surf on the internet...listen to the music on your mp3 player...laugh at your jokes...share your emails and text messages...be your friend on Facebook? Christians, we need to wake up and straighten up our lives. But the beauty of it all is that we are not on our own. Jesus gives us the power to straighten up when we fix our eyes and our thoughts on him instead of the things of this world. Just as Paul did, I have experienced in my life that when I am weak, my Savior-God is strong. As you follow Jesus, you will find the same is true for you, too. That's a promise from the almighty God, who said, **“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9).**

CUE 24—flash—REMINDED TO DRESS UP

Advent reminds us to display outwardly what has already taken place inwardly. That's what is meant when we say that Advent reminds us to dress up.

CUE 25—flash—God's Word says, **“Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.”** As we clothe ourselves with Christ, our actions will reflect Christ. The way we talk, the way we live, the way we look at others will all be impacted significantly as we clothe ourselves with Christ and let him control our thoughts, words, and actions. When the thoughts come into our mind of how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature, the Holy Spirit reminds us that

our old sinful nature died with Jesus on the cross. When that old sinful nature tries to resurrect itself through our thinking, we can crucify it once again by remembering the love of our God, the sacrifice Jesus made to pay for all our sins on the cross, and the new life the Holy Spirit has created within us. That's how we put those sinful thoughts out of our mind...we don't even go there.

CUE 26—flash—Advent is a great time of the year! During the Advent season we prepare to celebrate God coming into our world the first time as our one and only Savior from sin. During the Advent season, we are also reminded that God is coming again to take us home to heaven. We don't want that last great day to catch us sleeping, living as a citizen OF this sinful world, instead of as a child of God living IN this world for a short time. So, dear friends, let this Advent season remind you to wake up, straighten up, and dress up! Amen.