

# Wake Up (The Apocalypse at Hand)

Romans 12:21-13:11

*Romans (no. 37 in the series)*

October 30, 2022

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*Video and audio versions available online:*

<https://relentless-love.org/sermons/wake-up-the-apocalypse-next-door/>

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*This document was prepared by Brett Eades using Peter's notes and the video version of this sermon. If you encounter any significant discrepancies or errors in this document, please let Brett know. Thank you!*

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## Prayer

And so, Lord God, we thank you that you are here, you're present. I especially thank you for that because God, I'm pretty sure that nobody here is going to fully understand this sermon—I don't fully understand the sermon. And that shouldn't surprise us because we're talking about you, but I thank you that you're not a thing, you're a person. And God, I don't understand my wife, but I see her, and I love her, and I trust her. And so, God, I pray that you would help us to see you, and to love you, and to trust you, and to know that you are speaking your word all the time, or nothing would exist. And so, Lord, I pray that you would help us to hear your word. And Lord, if not to entirely understand it, at least to see you because you're the living word, Jesus and you have revealed yourself to us. It's in your name that we pray, amen.

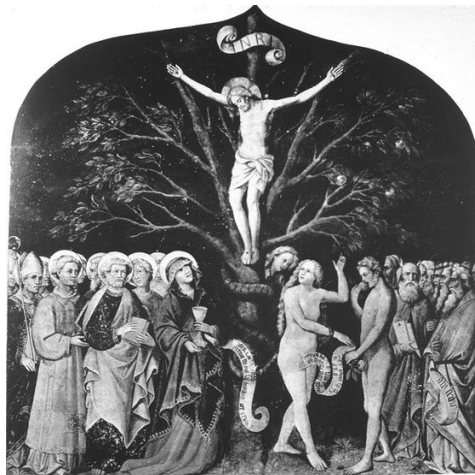
Last week we talked about Pontius Pilate, King Herod, Nero, and the antichrist. We talked about the "rulers and authorities, the principalities and powers!" We saw that Christ conquered the powers by surrendering power, that Christ conquered the authorities by subjecting himself to their abuse. And Christ still conquers through you, whenever you bleed the vengeance of God, whenever you forgive.

### **Romans 12:21-13:11:**

**Do not be overcome** [be conquered] **by** [the] **evil, but overcome** [conquer] [the] **evil** **with** [in] [the] **good. Let every person** [*psyche*: soul] **be subject to the governing** [*hyperecho*: higher] **authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God...** <sup>5</sup> **Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience** [*suneidesis*: consciousness]...<sup>7</sup> **Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.** <sup>8</sup> **Owe no one anything, except to love each other for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.** <sup>9</sup> **For the commandments, "You shall [will] not commit adultery, You shall [will] not murder, You shall [will] not steal, You shall [will] not covet," and any other commandment, are summed-up** [*anakephalaio*: "brought together under one head"]

**in this the word: “You shall [will] love your neighbor as yourself.”<sup>10</sup> [The] Love does no wrong [evil] to a neighbor; therefore [the] love is the fulfilling [fullness] of the law.<sup>11</sup> [And] this, you know [knowing] the time, that [for us] the hour has come [is now] for you to wake [egeiro: to be raised] from sleep [hypnos]. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed.<sup>12</sup> The night is far gone; the day is at hand.**

Paul talks as if we’re not saved and won’t be saved until we wake up. Which means that we’re all asleep. Are we asleep? In Ephesians Paul writes “Therefore it says [he says], “Awake, Oh Sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.” Like Jesus, Paul equates death with sleeping, and then talks as if we’re all dead. And when he writes “it says,” or “he says,” it’s a bit confusing to know exactly what he’s talking about, but I suspect it all goes back to this:



"The Fall and Redemption of Man" by Giovanni da Modena

In Genesis 2, on the 6<sup>th</sup> day of creation, God makes Adam, puts him in a garden, puts a tree (or trees) in the middle of the garden, and speaks an utterly fascinating word. He literally says, “Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you do not eat of it, for in the day of you eating of it—dying you do die.” It makes you wonder if Adam actually did eat. Then God, who is love, says “It is not good for the man to be alone.” Adam obviously can’t find God, who is his helper and is right there with him, in the garden. And so, God puts the Adam, which is all of us, into a deep sleep. *Tardemah* in Hebrew. And there’s no mention of God waking him up before he does what God says that he does not do—which is eat of the fruit.

The deep sleep or *Tardemah* is mentioned only a few more times in Scripture. God puts Abraham in a *Tardemah*, as Abraham watches God cut the covenant and walk between the slaughtered pieces. Isaiah prophesies that God has put Jerusalem in a *Tardemah*, and then over and over prophesies that she will awake for the “glory of the Lord will arise upon her, and nations shall come to her light.” She doesn’t wake up until Jesus rises from the dead (Remember? The people come out of the tombs and “enter the city”).

It seems that that this is what Paul was referring to when he wrote Ephesians 5:14, “Awake Oh Sleeper and rise from the dead and Christ—our helper—will shine on you.” And what he was referring to when he wrote Romans 13:11, “The hour has come (now is the time) for you to wake

from sleep... the day is at hand.” Paul actually believes that all of us are sleeping. And yet we’re conscious. And that would mean that we’re dreaming.

Video clip: <i>Inception</i> Warner Bros. (2010)	
<i>A couple sits on a crowded city street, dining.</i>	
Cobb (Leonardo DiCaprio)	When we’re asleep, our mind can do almost anything.
Ariadne (Ellen Page)	Such as?
Cobb	Well imagine you’re designing a building, alright? You consciously create each aspect. But sometimes it feels like it’s almost creating itself, if you know what I mean.
Ariadne	Yeah, like I’m discovering it.
Cobb	Genuine inspiration, right? Now in a dream, our mind continuously does this. We create and perceive our world simultaneously. [He draws a circle made up of two arrows, flowing in a cycle.] And our mind does this so well that we don’t even know it’s happening. Well dreams, they feel real while we’re in them, right? It’s only when we wake up that we realize something’s actually strange. Let me ask you a question. You never really remember the beginning of a dream, do you? You always wind up right in the middle of what’s going on.
Ariadne	I guess, yeah.
Cobb	So how did we end up here?
Ariadne	Well, we just came from the, uh...
Cobb	Think about it Ariadne, how did you get here? Where are you right now.
Ariadne	[Ariadne looks around, perplexed.] We’re dreaming?
Cobb	You’re actually in the middle of a workshop right now, sleeping. This is your first lesson in shared dreaming. Stay calm.
<i>A coffee cup on the table in front of them rattles on its saucer. A series of explosions happen up and down the street as the couple sits untouched. The world around them continues to blow up, as she becomes aware that it is all part of a shared dream.</i>	
Ariadne	If it’s just a dream then why are you...?
<i>The scene changes to Adrian, waking from sleep with Cobb sitting next to her.</i>	
Cobb	‘Cause it’s never just a dream, is it? And a face full of glass hurts like hell. When you’re in it, it feels real.

“It feels real...” but it’s not real. The clip is from the movie *Inception*. Leonardo DiCaprio has entered Ellen Page’s dream with some weird new technology—and of course—she doesn’t know she’s dreaming. I love his question—a question we all ought to be asking each other. He says, “You never really remember the beginning of a dream, do you? So how did we end up here?” “How did you get here?” When she realizes that he’s not simply part of her dream—the world that she has constructed—that realization is nothing short of apocalyptic.

The 2022 Nobel Prize in Physics was just given to a group of men that experimentally verified Bell’s Inequality Theorem, which clearly indicates that Neils Bohr’s Copenhagen interpretation of Quantum Mechanics is correct in asserting that reality is not actually there unless someone is looking. In other words, we’re, like, all dreaming. And yet, someone appears to be dreaming all

of us, for we are interacting with each other as if in one dream. Indeed, Quantum Field Theory indicates that we're all fundamentally connected and even the same thing. I mention all of that just to say, maybe Paul really meant this stuff in Romans, and we ought to seriously consider these ideas, for it might just explain quite a lot: we're dreaming.

You know, when "I" dream, I exist in another "me." When we preached through Romans 5, we preached about "I" and "Me."

- "I" am the changeless observer that observes "me."
- "I" am spirit, and I observe "me," that is "my psyche, my soul."
- "I" am the breath of God in a bag of dust I call "me."

I think "I" control "me," and even create "me." And in a dream, "I" do. In a dream, I have absolute authority, and so I imagine "me" and assume that "me" is real when it's nothing but an illusion. It's based on what's real, and yet it's my image of me, and not me. Sometimes that's enjoyable—and so, I try not to wake. Sometimes that's terrifying—and I can't wake up. If you're like me, you've dreamed that you've failed in hundreds of ways and then wakened from your dream praising God and saying, "Thank you God that wasn't me, I am not that me." And yet, you and I fail all the time... well, what if you woke up right now, even though you think you're already awake—you know, when we dream, we most always dream that we're awake. So, what if you woke right now? You might just cry out "Hallelujah, Praise God, I am not that 'me;' I'm a another 'me.' the real me." So, when I dream, I create a false me, and I create a false you, and never actually relate to the real you, only my image of you. <sup>ii</sup>

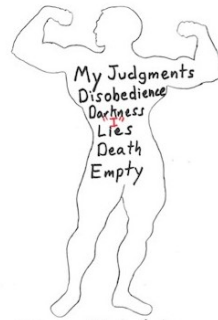
The Jesuit Priest Anthony DeMello, once said, "Nobody ever rejects you; they're only rejecting what they think you are. Nobody ever accepts you either. Until people come awake, they are simply accepting or rejecting their image of you."<sup>iii</sup> That's devastating and utterly liberating. Maybe every time you judge someone with your knowledge of Good and evil, you're just dreaming, and have no idea who anyone actually is, including yourself. When I dream, I create a false me, a false you, a false world, and maybe even a false Christ—an Antichrist, an Imitation Christ—a false authority, which is actually the false me, for I think that I create myself and save myself, and that's a false "god" and a false "me," a false god/man.

Well, I'm just pointing out that:

1. My consciousness can exist in a reality where I have absolute control—Where I am the sole authority—and we call that dreaming. AND
2. My consciousness can exist in a reality where I have to surrender control, to other authorities—And we call that being awake.

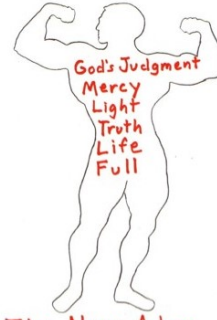
And you see, that would explain a lot.

The "Me" that I create



The Old Adam

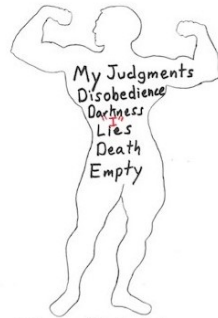
The "Me" that GOD creates



The New Adam

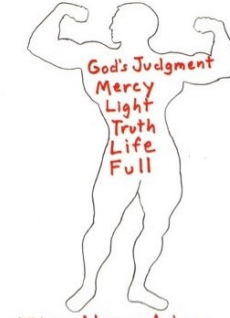
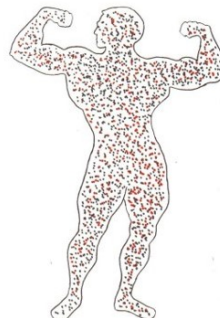
Hopefully you remember that Paul has been talking about the “old man” and the “new man,” in Ephesians. He calls them “the false” and “the true.”<sup>iv</sup> So maybe that Old Adam is my dream of “me”, and the New Adam is reality.

The "Me" that I create



The Old Adam

The "Me" that GOD creates



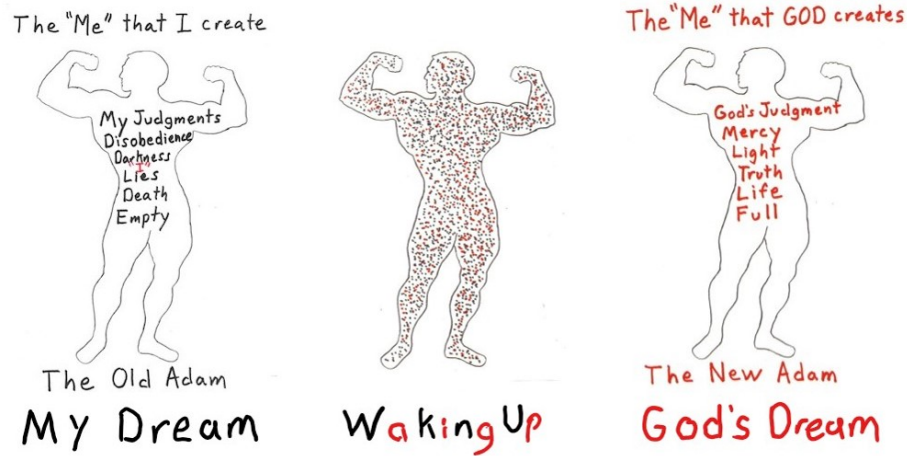
The New Adam

But at any particular moment I can be conscious in either “me”—my dream of me or the reality that actually is me... and that would explain Romans to me. In Romans 11, Paul wrote, from him, through him, and too him are all things. But I’m afraid, I worry, and I condemn, which means I must believe that some things are NOT from him, through him and to him. Which means that I must be dreaming.

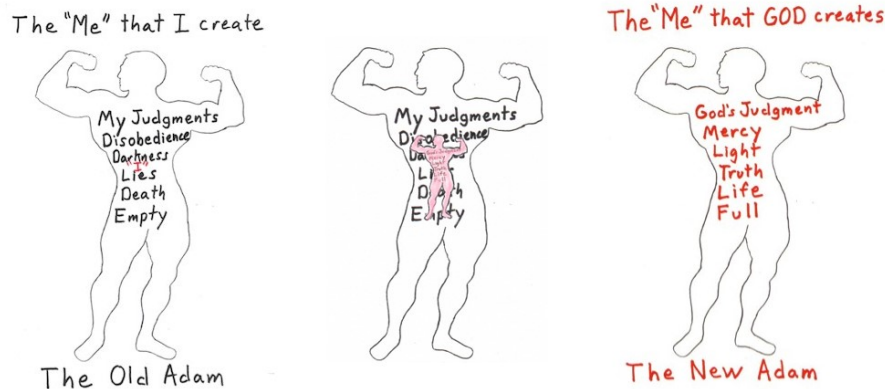
In Romans 8, Paul wrote, I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. And yet, I feel separated. Well maybe, when I feel separated, I’m dreaming.

In Romans 6, Paul wrote, The Old Man was crucified with him... so you must consider yourself dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus... And yet I still sin—So is Paul telling me to lie to

myself? I doubt it. It must be dreaming and Paul is speaking a word into my dream—a Word that will wake me up, to who I am.



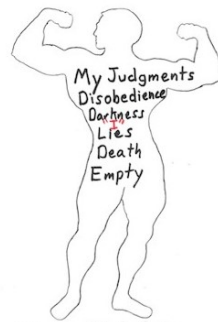
Which means I'm not my own dream, I'm actually God's dream, and all my confusion right now is due to the fact that I'm just beginning to wake up. You could think of each red dot as a moment in which I make a waking decision in light of that truth, or in communion with the Truth. And each black dot as a moment in which I make a decision in the dark, dreaming that I am the Truth. You can think of yourself this way, as a confusing mix of good decisions and bad decisions, that is God's judgment and your judgment.



Or you could think of yourself this way, with all of the good decisions, trapped in all of the bad decisions. Romans 7:22 Paul wrote, I delight with [or in] the law of God in my inner man" as if the law was alive in his inner man, encased in his outer man... the way the inner sanctuary was encased in that old stone temple. It's like his true self is trapped in the illusions of his false self, the man that he thinks he has created, or must still create (his ego).<sup>v</sup>

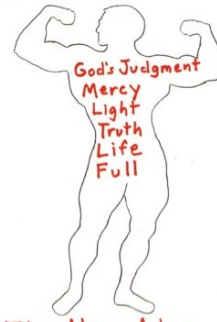
And so, Paul can dream he is his own authority in the outer courts of the temple that is his soul; he can dream that he creates himself, saves himself and justifies himself; he can dream that he is the old Rabbi Saul. Or he can subject himself to the authority in the inner Tent, the inner Sanctuary, the inner Man; he can be conscious that he is a child of God, that he is the beloved, in whom the Father is well pleased.

The "Me" that I create



The Old Adam

The "Me" that GOD creates



The New Adam

And now I can't connect all of these dots for you. But real quick, I just want to point to some dots, and say, "I think they all connect."

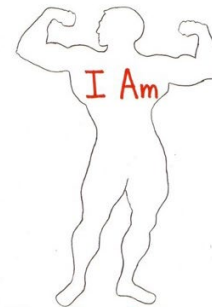
- The New Man is eternal, and the Old Man is an illusion in space and time.
- The New Man is God's Judgment and is of the age to come, meaning he is the same yesterday, today and forever; he doesn't change, but is the manifestation of I am that I am.

The "Me" that I create



The Old Adam

The "Me" that GOD creates

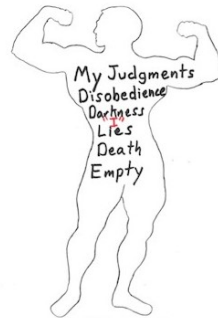


The New Adam

- The New Man is who I am, and the Old Man is who I am not.

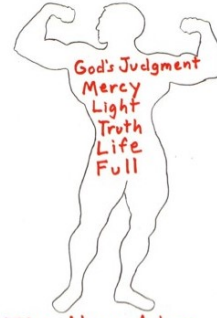


The "Me" that I create



The Old Adam

The "Me" that GOD creates



The New Adam

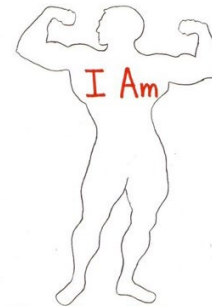
- The Old Man is the product of my judgments in space and time.
- The Old Man is the tupos (the imprint) of the New man.
- The Old man is my dream of me that is not me.

The "Me" that I create



The Old Adam

The "Me" that GOD creates



The New Adam

- The Old man is who I think I should be, and who I am not.
- The Old man is the product of a lie.

In the garden God said to the man—who is all of us—he literally said, “You do not eat of the tree of the knowledge of Good and evil, for in the day you eat of it, dying you do die.” “You do not eat,” said God. So, do you or are you dreaming?

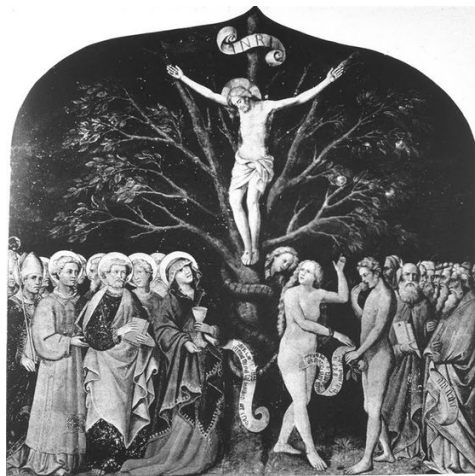
At Neils Bohr’s funeral, Albert Einstein said, “People like us, who believe in physics, know that the distinction between past, present, and future is only a stubbornly persistent illusion.” In Biblical lingo: Eternity is reality, and chronological time is an illusion; it’s a dream. According to physicists the only way we can discern the flow of time (*chronos*: chronological time), is through the experience of increasing entropy<sup>vi</sup>... or to put it in common lingo, the knowledge that, in this world, everything dies.



The second law of thermodynamics stipulates that in a “closed system” entropy (chaos) always increases—that is: everything dies—and to observe this requires time, chronological time.<sup>vii</sup> In Eternity, everything just is, so existence is never in doubt. So, I am and would never even consider, being not. But in time, everything is contingent upon something that came before, and so I might be, and could also not be. In time, everything is an effect, dependent upon a cause. So, if I wanted to imagine that I am the cause of the effect that is me, I would need to forget eternity, and dream a fantasy in the illusion of space and time. Perhaps, when Adam took the fruit, he became a “closed system,” and was trapped in time—that is, the flow of time, unidirectional time: Chronos.<sup>viii</sup>

I’m just saying that, perhaps, we really have been, and now are, and forever were “raised up together, and seated together with Christ in the heavenly places,” just as Paul writes in 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthian 6. And perhaps “the things that have been made” will be “removed,” just as stated in Hebrews 12, and only the unmade will remain, and we will remain—which means that we actually are eternal.<sup>ix</sup> And yet, God is allowing us to dream an evil dream, in order that we would wake and know the Good, who is the Life, who is our Helper—know him for the first time which will be all of time—the eternal now (something our minds cannot conceive currently).

It seems impossible to describe in our current confused condition, but it sounds like we are children asleep on our Father’s lap having a dream that has turned into a nightmare. But children who are being wakened by a WORD whispered in our ear, so we would rise from sleep and exclaim “Oh Daddy, there’s no place like home, there’s no place like home, no place like home.”



*"The Fall and Redemption of Man" by Giovanni da Modena*

And check this out: even if this entire world is a dream, there are eternal things in this world which are not a dream. And of all the things we will see when we wake up at home—I think the most glorious will be the wounds in the body of the Word of God, the Son of Man.



*Gibson, Mel (Director). (2004). The Passion of the Christ [Motion picture]. USA: Icon Productions.*

He is absolutely eternal—the same yesterday, today and forever—and yet he received those wounds, those eternal wounds, in this temporal world of space and time. He is our helper, made fit for us, and waking us from a nightmare. He is reality. He is The WORD of God.

So, the Word of God is: “You do not eat, for in the day, of you, eating of it--dying you do die.”<sup>x</sup> The lie of the snake is: “dying you do not die<sup>xi</sup>.” That is, “You are trapped in a perpetual nightmare from which you will never wake up.” But God said, “You do not eat...” So, do you? Or are you dreaming? Are you evil or Good?

Well, that was a long detour, and like I said I cannot connect all those dots, but when we took the detour, I was just pointing out something that isn’t confusing but rather clear.

1. My consciousness can exist in a reality where I have absolute control, where I am the sole authority—and yet in that reality I am utterly alone... I’m dreaming... And
2. My consciousness can exist in a reality where I have to surrender control to other authorities. I’m not the only authority; I’m not alone; I’m awake.

Right now, I think I’m awake, and yet I do seem to have total control over part of my reality—and I call that part of reality, “me” or at least “my body.” I just think a thought and my hand moves; but I can’t just think a thought and make your hand move, and so it’s tempting to see you as my problem. And yet, the fact that I can’t control you clearly implies that “I” am not alone. So maybe I’m still dreaming and being tempted to not wake up. Maybe I’m being tempted to sleep, so I won’t hear the truth, praying in my garden, “Nevertheless not my will (that’s the thing that does the dreaming), but thy will be done.”

“Dream, dream, dream... dream, dream, dream... I can make you mine, taste your lips of wine, anytime night or day... Only trouble is, Gee Whiz, I’m dreaming my life away...”

You know it’s my dreams of Susan that are the biggest threat to the real Susan, my marriage to Susan, and our life together. It’s our dreams of church, that are the biggest threat to the true church, the church that is always at hand, that is right NOW—where eternity touches time.

It was our dream of a Messiah that caused us to crucify the real Messiah and plunge the entire creation into darkness. It's nice to dream but dreams can turn into nightmares.

At one point in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* in the Chronicles of Narnia, the children, and the crew sail toward a dark island, when out of the darkness, they hear the sound of screaming. A man is swimming toward their boat. He's in the grip of an absolute panic. The crew pulls him up from the sea and on to the deck. Lewis writes:

*The moment his feet reached the deck, he said: "Fly! Fly! About with your ship and fly! Row, row, row for your lives away from this accursed shore!... This is the island where dreams come true!" "That's the island I've been looking for this long time," said one of the sailors. "I reckoned I'd find I was married to Nancy if we landed here..." "Fools!" said the man, stamping his foot with rage. "That is the sort of talk that brought me here, and I'd better have been drowned or never born. Do you hear what I say? This is where dreams—dreams, do you understand—come to life, come real... Not daydreams, dreams!"<sup>xii</sup>*

They all think about that for a moment, and begin to row with all their might, away from their dreams.

When my children were little, they dreamed all sorts of things, and what a nightmare it would be if those things came true. Coleman wanted to be a backhoe—not “drive a backhoe;” “be a backhoe.” Becky dreamed of being a mermaid—that’s half woman, half fish: a monster. John wanted to live at Chuck E Cheese—that’s a dream that will turn into a nightmare. And Elizabeth wanted to rule the world. Actually, each of them, at some point, dreamed of being me, which means they couldn’t be loved by me and there would be no “we.”

You know, it’s the rulers and authorities, who are most able to make their dreams come true, or at least force people to do their will and delude themselves into thinking their dreams have come true. And yet, in Scripture, and maybe everywhere, they—the authorities—seem to be the most miserable, lonely, and the most likely to go insane.<sup>xiii</sup>

Remember Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon? He congratulates himself on his great power and authority, then he goes insane, until he learns that God is king, and makes kings, and breaks kings, and remakes kings, and then he starts worshipping God, in joy. Even David and Solomon had to learn that lesson. Pilate looked at the Truth, and asked, “What is Truth?” and then crucified the Truth, and then, according to legend, he took his own life after going insane.

In Acts 12 Herod kills James and imprisons Peter for it pleases the Jews. Then, he sits on his throne, and some people shout, “the voice of a God,” and Herod doesn’t argue, and that’s just insane. So, at that, an angel strikes him, and he’s eaten by worms. His best friend in Rome had been a boy named Caligula. Once he was made emperor of Rome, he declared himself to be God, appointed a horse to the senate, and died insane. The authority in Rome when Paul wrote to the Romans was just about as miserable, lonely, and insane as hell—his name was Nero. And perhaps, most insane, is that I dream of being like all of them—an Authority, an absolute

Authority—miserable, lonely, and insane as hell. That’s a dream that turns into a nightmare from which I cannot wake myself with myself for myself has become my own dream—my own authority. So how do we wake up?



*Gibson, Mel (Director). (2004). The Passion of the Christ [Motion picture]. USA: Icon Productions.*

Last week we preached on Romans 13:1-9 and we talked about the way in which Jesus, the presence of Supreme Authority, subjected himself to the authorities, and in this way conquered all the authorities. He didn’t simply do whatever they said, and yet he made himself subject to all their decisions, and in this way, he transformed all their decisions. Paul quotes Isaiah in the next chapter saying, “Every knee will bow (that would include Nero’s knees, Pilate’s knees, and your knees)—every knee will bow, and every tongue give praise.” That means: Jesus will conquer the empire.<sup>xiv</sup>

And do you remember how it started? He cried, “Father, forgive them.” That would at least include the people that nailed him to the tree. “Father forgive them, they know not what they do,” and “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit” And seeing this, the Roman Centurion (the man who had just taken Christ’s life on the tree, the Roman authority) dropped to his knees and surrendered, crying, “Surely this man was the son of God.” The son of all authority.

And do you remember how Jesus conquered Paul? The Centurion was Roman Authority. And Paul, himself, had been Jewish Authority. When Jesus appeared to Paul, in blinding light on the Road to Damascus, the first thing he said was “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” Do you see? He had subjected himself to Paul. He had made himself vulnerable to Paul in the very flesh of his body—his church.

And do you remember how Jesus conquered you? He made himself vulnerable to you. Every time you sin you violate him—the Will of God, the Life of God, the Truth of God, the Good that is God. Every time you sin, and your old man is a constant manifestation of sin. Every time you sin, you make yourself the authority, and you violate the authority of all authorities: God himself. And you can only violate the authority of God, the Word of God, the Judgment of God, because the authority of God has subjected himself to you. The Cross means: He loves you. And so, you can hurt him, and did hurt him.

And in this very place (the cross)—in the place where all your supposed good deeds are revealed to be the devil's deeds, the work of your own ego.

- In this very place, where you were not his people, you become his people.
- In this very place, where sin increased, grace abounds all the more.
- In this very place, where you took his life—he does not repay evil with evil, he repays your evil with himself, who is the Good, and so he makes you Good. He gives you his life and he is the life of Love— “Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things.” So, if you bear anything, believe anything, hope anything, or endure anything it's God in you, bearing, believing, hoping, and enduring in you, and even, as you; That's the New you, the True you—the You that is fully awake.

So, in this very place where you had fallen asleep and dreamed that you were God, you wake to the love of God, and you know the place for the first time. You even know yourself for the first time you discover the sinner to be the revelation of the saint... and so you praise God without ceasing, saying: “Thank you that I am me, and you are you, and my neighbor is my neighbor, for everything is good, it is finished, and I am forever home—I've always been safe at home, but I was sleeping: dreaming my own dreams but I repent. For you, oh Lord, are the best of dreamers, and I am your dream.”

On March 18<sup>th</sup>, 1958, a Trappist Monk named Thomas Merton was running errands in downtown Louisville Kentucky. Trappist monks normally separate themselves from ordinary life and ordinary humanity. But on this day, Thomas Merton did not. And he had a vision:

*“In Louisville, at the corner of Fourth and Walnut, in the center of the shopping district,” writes Thomas Merton. “I was suddenly overwhelmed with the realization that I loved all those people, that they were mine and I theirs, that we could not be alien to one another even though we were total strangers...”*

*It was like waking from a dream of separateness...  
The whole illusion of a separate holy existence is a dream...*

*This sense of liberation from an illusory difference was such a relief and such a joy to me that I almost laughed out loud. And I suppose my happiness could have taken form in the words: “Thank God, thank God that I am like other men, that I am only a man among others...”*

*It is a glorious destiny to be a member of the human race, though it is a race dedicated to many absurdities and one which makes many terrible mistakes: yet, with all that, God Himself gloried in becoming a member of the human race... I have the immense joy of being man, a member of a race in which God Himself became incarnate. As if the sorrows and stupidities of the human condition could overwhelm me, now that I realize what we all are. And if only everybody could realize this! But it cannot be explained. There is no way of telling people that they are all walking around shining like the sun...*

*There are no strangers! Then it was as if I suddenly saw the secret beauty of their hearts, the depths of their hearts where neither sin nor desire nor self-knowledge can reach, the core of their reality, the person that each one is in God's eyes. If only they could all see themselves as they really are. If only we could see each other that way all the time. There would be no more war, no more hatred, no more cruelty, no more greed...*

*At the center of our being is a point of nothingness which is untouched by sin and by illusion, a point of pure truth, a point or spark which belongs entirely to God, which is never at our disposal, from which God disposes of our lives, which is inaccessible to the fantasies of our own mind or the brutalities of our own will. This little point of nothingness and of absolute poverty is the pure glory of God in us... [That's not just "nothingness," but absolute "Somethingness"]*

*It is in everybody, and if we could see it, we would see these billions of points of light coming together in the face and blaze of a sun that would make all the darkness and cruelty of life vanish completely... I have no program for this seeing. It is only given. But the gate of heaven is everywhere.<sup>xv</sup>*

In Paul's words, Thomas Merton "Put on Christ;" "He woke up." To use John's terminology—he had an Apocalypse; the Apocalypse: He saw the resurrected Christ in his resurrected Body, his face shining as the sun. So how do we wake up?

Well, you can't wake yourself up; you must be woken up by a Word that enters your dream. And we just spoke a Word, and Jesus is the Word that has descended into each and every nightmare, like a seed in the depths of the earth. And now by that grace of God, with the faith you've got—even if it's the size of a seed—you can now agree to being wakened, by looking for the Light and listening for the Word all around you, and especially by subjecting yourself to the authorities at hand.

I don't mean to freak you out, but you're surrounded by little Neros, Caligulas, Pilates, Herods, Beasts, Harlots, and Anti-Christ—imitation Christs who think they made themselves and can save themselves. You're surrounded by the authorities who crucified Christ, and for whom he freely chose to suffer and die, and in whom he makes his home, like a seed planted in the depths of their being, behind the curtain in the inner sanctuary, whether they've come to realize it yet, or not.



<sup>21</sup>Do not be overcome [conquered] by [the] evil, but overcome [conquer] [the] evil with [*en*: in] [the] good.  
<sup>1</sup>Let every person [*psyche*: soul] be subject to the governing [*hyperecho*: higher] authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God...  
  
<sup>5</sup>Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience [*suneidesis*: consciousness]...

Romans 13:1 "Let every person be subject to higher authorities." Every person is an authority, and in Philippians Paul tells us to regard others as higher [*hyperecho*, same word], than oneself. So, the higher authorities are all around you. Everyone you meet is a higher authority. Subject yourself to them; love them; be vulnerable to them.

Romans 13:5 Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath (Wrath is love and life bottled up like a blood clot is blood bottled up in a blood vessel.) One must be in subjection, not only to avoid wrath but also for the sake of conscience [*suneidesis*: consciousness]. (Paul just told us in the last chapter, "We, though many, are one body in Christ."<sup>xvi</sup> Are you conscious of that fact or still dreaming?)

**Romans 13:8-14a:**

**Owe no one anything, except to love each other for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.** <sup>9</sup> **For the commandments, "You shall [will] not commit adultery, You shall [will] not murder, You shall [will] not steal, You shall [will] not covet," and any other commandment, are summed-up** [*anakephalaio*: "brought together under one head"] **in this the word: "You shall [will] love your neighbor as yourself."** <sup>10</sup> **[The] Love does no wrong [evil] to a neighbor; therefore [the] love is the fulfilling [fullness] of the law.** <sup>11</sup> **[And] this you know the time** [knowing the time (*kairos*)], **that the hour has come for you-to wake** [*egeiro*: to be raised] **from sleep** [*hypnos*]. **For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed.** <sup>12</sup> **The night is far gone; the day is at hand** (like you could reach out and take a new day by the hand). **So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor** [*hoplon*: weapons] **of light.** <sup>13</sup> **Let us walk properly [honestly] as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy.** <sup>14</sup> **But put on the Lord Jesus Christ...**

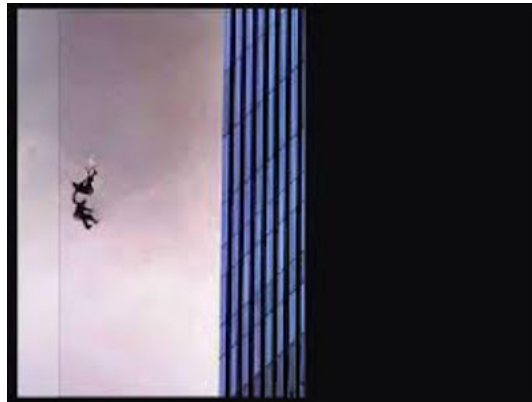
Thomas Merton put on Christ at Fourth and Walnut for he had a vision and then began to love others as he loved himself. St. Paul is giving us the same vision, and not threatening, but prophesying, saying you will love your neighbor as yourself. Not "as you should love yourself," but "as you do love yourself," And I do love myself. If I hate you, it's because you're not



working for me: the authority. But if I hate me, it's only because I love myself, and "me" isn't working for myself (that is, "I"). Even if I kill myself, it's only because I'm trying to protect myself from "me."

You see even in my arrogant dreams, I have inside knowledge about myself, and that is that I am far more than simply "me," a bag of dust. You could say I am worth the sacrifice of me, for I can know and be known by the Truth; I can love and be loved, and that's life; I am the Breath of God... even if I'm utterly disgusted with "me." I'm usually totally unaware of who I Am, but when all my accomplishments have been stripped away, I still am who I am. And you see maybe when all of your accomplishments have been stripped away, maybe I will see that you also are who I am. The divine in me, will recognize the divine in you.

At the cross, our accomplishments are stripped away, and Jesus looks at you, he looks at me, and he thinks "You are who I am, and we are." And, in the light of the cross, maybe we can do that all the time, that is anytime we love our neighbor as ourselves. We cannot make ourselves God, and yet, God has made all of us himself. That's the Apocalypse.



*Source unknown.*

I woke up this morning with this picture in my head. This is two people holding hands and jumping from the World Trade Center. The World Trade Center was where a bunch of authorities tried to rule the World, and in this picture all of that is crumbling to the ground.

This is two people holding hands and jumping from the World Trade Center. But the Apocalypse is not that planes would fly into the World Trade Center. The Apocalypse is the fact that these two people would choose to hold hands. You don't need the planes to have the apocalypse.

## Communion

For, on the night he was handed over to the authorities—that is us—he took the bread and broke it saying this is my body given to you (my 'me' given to you). Take and eat and do it in remembrance of me. And he took the cup saying, this is the covenant (an eternal covenant) in my blood, poured out for the forgiveness of sins; drink of it all of you and do it in remembrance of me.

In 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians Paul tells us that we must “discern the body” before we eat and drink from the table of the Lord. And this [points to PVC Pipe Man on the table] is the representation of that body that we’ve been messing with for the past several sermons. And now I’m going to make an incredibly complicated sermon profoundly simple. [Peter pulls a piece of pipe from a PVC Pipe Man]. This is who you think you are: “me, me, me” This is literally a metaphysical impossibility. This is a dream that has turned into a nightmare. [Peter reconnects the piece of pipe onto the Pipe Man]. And this is reality. This is waking up. This is “putting on Christ.”

So, as you come to the table this morning, discern the body. See people and see what is placed within them. And then, with the eyes of faith, see:

- What Paul saw on the Road to Damascus.
- What Thomas Merton saw at 4<sup>th</sup> and Walnut.
- What Peter saw on the Mount of Transfiguration.
- What Isaiah saw high and lifted up, enthroned in his temple.
- What John saw—the Revelation of Jesus; the Apocalypse<sup>xvii</sup>.
- 

And when you do:

- You will begin to look at your neighbor differently.
- You might take them by the hand and look them in the eye.
- You will hear what they have to say and speak what is honest.
- You will make yourself vulnerable to them<sup>xviii</sup>.
- You will invite the Apocalypse.<sup>xix</sup>

Let’s pray. We subject ourselves to you Lord Jesus, and we subject ourselves to you in the temple of our neighbor, and we invite the Apocalypse; we invite you to wake us up. For Lord God, we have made you very small.

## Benediction

I need to apologize. That sermon went way longer than I meant it to. But we’re getting toward the end of Romans, and I think Paul is painting such an incredible picture that nobody believes. Hardly anybody sees it, I think because we chop it up in so many little pieces and then we think well, that’s just poetry or just a manner of speaking. But I think he’s saying what all of scripture is saying, what Isaiah saw in the temple, what Peter saw on the Mount of Transfiguration, what Thomas Merton saw at Fourth and Walnut, what my daughter saw one night after worship—and that is, you are sitting next to the very presence of God, in a temple of flesh. So, believe the Gospel, in Jesus’ name, amen.

## Endnotes

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<sup>i</sup> KJV

ii You know all our most terrifying monsters look like people and yet we discover that they're not actually people—maybe they're false people of our own creation?

iii Nobody was mean to you. Somebody was mean to what he or she thought was you, but not to you. Nobody ever rejects you; they're only rejecting what they think you are. But that cuts both ways. Nobody ever accepts you either. Until people come awake, they are simply accepting or rejecting their image of you. They've fashioned an image of you, and they're rejecting or accepting that. See how devastating it is to go deeply into that. It's a bit too liberating. But how easy it is to love people when you understand this. How easy it is to love everyone when you don't identify with what they imagine you are or they are. It becomes easy to love them, to love everybody.

- Anthony De Mello, *Awareness* (New York, NY: Image Books, Doubleday, 1990), p. 97

iv Ephesians 4:25

v Or to put it the other way around, the way he puts it in Romans 1:18 (Barth's Translation), his ego has "imprisoned the truth in the chains of his own unrighteousness..." just as God felt imprisoned in the old stone temple, when he told David that he preferred the tent (see 2 Samuel 7).

vi Some physicists describe Entropy as an increase in information, for observing things or knowing about things, collapses probabilities into realities. So, the more we know, the more we die—which sounds rather biblical. And yet the more we are known, the more we live. Perhaps the first way of knowing is taking from the tree of knowledge and the second way is being known at the tree of life. In the first, I am the authority. In the second I surrender to another authority. 1 Corinthians 8:2-3: "If anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know. But if anyone loves God, he is known by God."

The second law of thermodynamics states that everything moves toward a state of greater entropy (increased chaos) in a closed system. When "man" took the Good who is the Life from the tree in the middle of the garden, Adam became a closed system. When the Word of God enters that system and rises from the dead in the sanctuary of the soul, then Adam is no longer a closed system.

vii And the messenger whom I saw standing upon the sea, and upon the land, did lift up his hand to the heaven, and did swear in Him who doth live to the ages of the ages, who did create the heaven and the things in it, and the land and the things in it, and the sea and the things in it—that time [*chronos*] shall not be yet [*ouketi*: "no more"], but in the days of the voice of the seventh messenger, when he may be about to sound, and the secret of God may be finished, as He did declare to His own servants, to the prophets.

- Revelation 10:5-7 (Young's Literal Translation)

viii Victor Hugo wrote, "Always night, never blue skies, never dawn; we march but so far we have not progressed an inch. We still dream what Adam dreamt."

ix "I perceived that whatever God does endures forever; nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it. God has done it, so that people fear before him. That which is, already has been; that which is to be, already has been; and God seeks what has been driven away. (Ecclesiastes 3:14-15)" So are you something "God does?" If so, nothing can be added to you or taken from you. So if you think you can add to yourself or take from yourself you must be dreaming, or you must be something that God has not done, which is nothing but the illusion of something, which is evil.

x Genesis 2:17 relying on YLT and Hebrew

xi Genesis 3:24 relying on YLT and Hebrew

xii C. S. Lewis, *Voyage of the Dawn Treader* (New York, NY: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1952), p. 156

xiii "Shall I tell you where the men are who believe most in themselves? For I can tell you. I know of men who believe in themselves more colossally than Napoleon or Caesar. I know where flames the fixed star of certainty and success. I can guide you to the thrones of the Supermen. The men who really believe in themselves are all in lunatic asylums." . . . If we said what we felt, we should say, "So you are the Creator and Redeemer of the world: but what a small world it must be! What a little heaven you must inhabit, with angels no bigger than butterflies! How sad it must be to be God; and an inadequate God! Is there really no life fuller and no love more marvellous than yours; and is it really in your small and painful pity that all flesh must put its faith? How much happier you would be, how much more of you there would be, if the hammer of a higher God could smash your small cosmos, scattering the stars like spangles, and leave you in the open, free like other men to look up as well as down!"

- G. K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*, p. 21

xiv CS Lewis once wrote "the only place safe from the danger of love is hell." But even hell isn't safe for Jesus has descended into every nightmare.

<sup>xv</sup> Thomas Merton, *Confessions of a Guilty Bystander*, pp 153-154

Forty years ago, I would've thought that Merton's words sounded like Buddhism or New Age hokum... but now I think they sound like St. Paul, and they look just like Jesus.

<sup>xvi</sup> Romans 12:5

<sup>xvii</sup> Apocalypse (Greek: *apocolypsis*) means "revelation" or "unveiling."

<sup>xviii</sup> To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything, and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly be broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no one, not even to an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements; lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. ...The only place outside of Heaven where you can be perfectly safe from all the dangers and perturbations of love is Hell.

- C. S. Lewis, The Four Loves

<sup>xix</sup> Will there never be an end of all our ceaseless talk about the *delay* of the Parousia? How can the coming of that which doth not *enter in* ever be *delayed*? The End of which the New Testament speaks is no temporal event. . . . What *delays* its coming is not the Parousia, but our awakening.

- Karl Barth, The Epistle to the Romans, page 500