**Picking up from last week we continue with the theme of**

**LOVE -- as St Paul writes to the church in Rome and how it relates to the last days**

In The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy, Douglas Adams places his story *‘nearly two thousand years after one man had been nailed to a tree for saying how great it would be to be nice people for a change’*. This is, of course, a gross understatement of Jesus’ mission to us. However, how close is this to the practical focus of God’s revelation? If we think of time and its relation to actions and consequences, we know there is one constant in life and in the Gospels, this is God’s love and what it means to his people.

****St Paul in his writings to the church in Rome (and now to us) gives encouragement and instruction as our reading today opens up with: *Owe no one anything, except to love one another…………… ……….Love your neighbour as yourself. Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake up from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now……………….let us lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armour of light………………..* (full script at the end)

**This is encouragement to love and instruction to be ready for what is to come.**

Imagine:

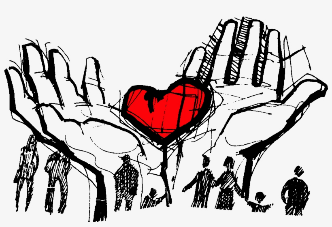
It is morning and suddenly you are awake. Your eyes snap open and you gasp a bit, but you do not know what woke you. You are in bed. The house is quiet. Must have been a dream. So you settle back down on your pillow. Pull the sheets up to your chin. You relax. That is one of the best feelings in the world isn’t it? Settling back into the warmth you have been storing up all night. Putting off the morning routine just a little longer. Feeling the warm sun peeking through the curtains onto your face.

Wait, what? The sun! You are awake. Your eyes snap open and you gasp a bit more and you know what woke you. What woke you is the fact that your alarm never woke you. The fact that you have overslept. In terror you throw off your sheets and all that beautiful warmth escapes into the cold room. But you can’t think about that because you have to think about what’s the minimum shower you need to be presentable, and which outfit takes the least amount of time to put on. You have to focus on what’s essential you need to make it through your day?

Maybe that has never happened to you. Maybe you have never slept in. Maybe your nocturnal clock is just that good. For the rest of us, it can be a familiar feeling of terror. Being late. Having no time to wake up. No time to prepare. No time to get ready.

Being ready for your day takes time. No matter what kind of day you are preparing for, it takes time to prepare. Maybe just seconds. Maybe an hour. Maybe the whole previous day, or days, or weeks. We all have to dedicate some time to getting ready for each day.

Paul writes about being ready for Judgment Day? To some degree, we have to prepare ourselves for every day. So, what about that final day? How do we get our minds and souls ready?

Where do we start?

We are ready for anything, even the last day, if we live our lives in LOVE, if we wake up with love, if we carry love into everything we do, then we are awake to life and all that it offers.

Love leads on to doing what is right, for others and for God. Love means keeping the laws, both moral and civil. Love means embracing enemies, forgiving others and much more.

From Paul’s letter to the Corinthians we have: *Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.*

We do have help in this – Paul writes ‘let us put on the amour of light’, in this we receive the love and light of God through believing in him and receiving from him; and thus passing this on.

(Isaiah 60:1-2) *Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you. See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the Lord rises upon you and his glory appears over you.*

Love then shines through.

Amen

**Romans 13:8-14**

8 Owe no one anything, except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. 9 For the commandments, “You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not give false testimony, You shall not covet,”[a] and if there are any other commandments, are summed up in this saying, “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.”[b] 10 Love works no evil to a neighbour. Therefore love is the fulfilment of the law.

The Approach of the Day of Christ

11 Furthermore, knowing the time, now is the moment to awake from sleep. For now our salvation is nearer than when we believed. 12 The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us take off the works of darkness and put on the armour of light. 13 Let us behave properly, as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in immorality and wickedness, not in strife and envy. 14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to fulfil its lusts.