

## **“Ducks Are Made Go Fly”**

August 4, 2019  
I Thessalonians 5:1-8

Thank you for an opportunity to preach God's Word again today. Please find with me the Book of Romans chapter thirteen.

“It's a beautiful day in this neighborhood. A beautiful day in the neighborhood. Would you be mine? Could you be mine? It's a neighborly day in this beauty wood. HOWDY, NEIGHBOR.”

Most of you have heard of “Mr. Roger's Neighborhood.” Mr. Rogers always began with the very same words “It's a beautiful day in the neighborhood. Would you be my neighbor?” And those words always lent themselves to an educational show that children of all ages could identify with; which, by the way, ran from the 60's to the 70's to the 80's and into the 90's.

When it comes to preaching, I do want to encourage you and, of course, challenge you. I do want you to know that I'd like you to be my neighbor. But, an important part of preaching and teaching is rebuke. So, be forewarned. Today, my message will sound more like a rebuke than a neighborly encouragement. And that's because this is the reality. We all need a word of rebuke; not every time we meet; not all the time; but some of the time, for sure.

So, have you heard about the duck?

According to the parable by the Danish theologian Soren Kierkegaard, titled “Parable of the Wild Duck,” one spring, a duck was flying north with a flock. In the Danish countryside that particular duck spotted a barnyard where tame ducks lived. The duck dropped down and he discovered these

ducks had wonderful corn to eat. So he stayed for an hour....then for the day....a week then went by and a month. And because the corn and the safe barnyard were so fine, our duck ended up staying the whole summer at that farm. Then one crisp fall day, some wild ducks flew overhead, quacking as they winged their way south. He looked up and heard them -- and he was stirred with a strange sense of joy and delight. And then, with all his might he began flapping his wings and rose into the air, planning to join his comrades for the trip south.

But all that corn had made the duck both soft and heavy - - and he couldn't manage to fly any higher than the barn roof. So he dropped back to that barnyard and he said to himself, “Oh well, my life here is safe and the food is good!” After that in the Spring and in the Fall, that duck would hear wild ducks honking as they passed overhead -- and for a minute, his eyes would look and gleam -- he'd start flapping his wings almost without realizing it...but then it dawned upon him that he really didn't have any desire to fly so high anymore. So, he stayed where he was even though ducks were meant to fly.” [Taken from Soren Kierkegaard's parable (the Danish theologian & philosopher) “The Wild Duck of Denmark.” Found on <http://www.1stpres.cc> “Ducks Are Made To Fly”]

Can you think of a word you might use to describe the point of this parable? Was the duck sick? Or, was he lazy? Or, was he complacent? I'm thinking more along the lines of complacent? Maybe even complacently lazy? And, what would you suggest that that duck do in order to overcome his complacency?

I've titled today's message “Ducks Are Made to Fly.” Shall we pray?

Did you know that, on the night before Jesus' arrest, the night before the most important day in the life of the LORD, that the Apostles slept while Jesus prayed?

Matthew 26:36 *"Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. (37) And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. (38) Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me.*

*(39) And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt. (40) And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour?"*

I wonder, if those three Apostles had known that, in the very next morning, Jesus would be arrested and then, later crucified if they would have made sure to stay awake and obediently watched as Jesus had asked them to.

"Sleep" as you might know, is used just three ways in Scripture. One, physical sleep; the time your body needs to lay down on a bed and rejuvenate.

Two, the sleep of death. Psalms 13:3 *"Consider and hear me, O Lord my God: lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death; ..."*

I Thessalonians 4:14 *"For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. (15) For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.*

*(16) For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: ..."*

Then, there's a third way sleep is used in Scripture. Paul uses the word "sleep" to describe complacent Christians.

I Thessalonians 5:5 *"Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. (6) Therefore **let us not sleep**, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. (7) For they that **sleep sleep** in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. (8) But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation."*

Ephesians 5:11 *"And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. (12) For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret. (13) But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light. (14) Wherefore he saith, **awake thou that sleepest**, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."*

And then Paul uses it again, as you are about to see from Romans chapter thirteen. Here's Romans 13:11 [Read Romans 13:11-14).

I think it's difficult; maybe one of the most difficult things, for a Christian to recognize his or her complacency. And here's why. You don't know that you've been sleeping until you wake up. And if complacency is hard to acknowledge, it's even more difficult to correct.

Somebody once said, "Jesus Christ came to comfort the troubled and to trouble the comfortable." I'm about to say something that will trouble the comfortable.

Have you ever heard of the "Sleeping Church?"

Here's one description of a "Sleeping Church." Here are the signs that we've fallen asleep spiritually. And, I warn you, these signs of a sleeping Church will sting a bit.

- The absence of conviction of sin
- A lack of the fear of God
- Little sense of outrage over the godlessness of society
- No awareness that 50 million babies have been killed by abortion in the United States since 1973

- Watching pornography and feeling justified
- Avarice, greed and lack of financial integrity
- Indifference to the need for Church-wide prayer  
“*What, could ye not watch with me one hour?*”
- Neglect of the LORD’s Table
- Indifference to the teaching that the Bible is infallible
- No more willingness to “run the race” with the whole heart
- Unaware that the Church has little or no credibility
- Indifference to the biblical view of marriage
- Little or no concern that some of our neighbors and friends are going to Hell
- An ability to hold grudges and a spirit of unforgiveness
- Indifference to talking to people about Christ
- Thinking things are good enough. “I’m satisfied with the way my Christian life is going.”
- A serious lack of knowledge of God’s Word and little concern to remedy it

[Adapted from and found on <https://www.premier-christianity.com> “RT Kendall: How the Church fell asleep and why it needs to wake up.”

I know; this list it’s scary, but it’s true. We are complacent. So, let’s be honest enough to admit it. Our Church, you and I, we are the ones who need to hear the voice of Jesus. Ephesians 5:11 “*Wherefore he saith, **awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.***”

I hope, by now, that you are expecting me to say something from the Book of Romans about your daily Christian life. And here’s what I want to say. It’s never enough to know what the Word *says*. It’s only enough to *do* it. Romans thirteen is about *doing* something.

So, what is complacency anyway? When we’re complacent, we focus on the wrong things. We focus on satisfying

the desires of the flesh. And we neglect the desires of the Spirit.

“Complacency is an attitude. If I’m complacent, I’m in danger and I’m not aware of it. If I’m complacent, then I’m satisfied with the way things are. If I’m complacent, then I have no willingness to change.” That’s complacency. Then there’s that preacher who never minces words. “*Among the many who profess the Christian faith, scarcely one in a thousand reveals any passionate thirst for God. Complacency is the deadly enemy of spiritual progress.*” (A.W. Tozer)

So, folks, let’s admit it. And let’s confess it to the LORD. And let’s ask the LORD how to give us a renewed thirst for Him.

First, wake up; verse 11

Romans 13:11 “*And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.*”

Can you hear the Voice of the Holy Spirit here? Romans 13:11 “*And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.*”

Ephesians 5:14 “*Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.*”

Can you remember the last time someone told you to wake up? If so, you know that immediately you have to make a choice. The answer to complacency is in your will. “*Will you wake up or will you go back to sleep?*” Romans 13:11 “*And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.*”

It’s high time. High time means “something needs to happen that should have happened by now.” Paul’s point is that Jesus’ return is imminent. It’s possible that He will descend in the clouds and rapture His Church today.

Romans 13:11 “*And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is **our salvation** nearer than when we believed.*”

This term here in verse eleven; “salvation” refers to the day Christ returns. It means “deliverance.” Paul says it’s nearer than when we believed. Jesus could return today.

So, like the Apostles who slept while Jesus prayed, you may be sleeping while Jesus is about to come this afternoon.

I Thessalonians 5:2 “*For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. (3) For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.*

*(4) But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. (5) Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. (6)*

***Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.***

*(7) For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. (8) But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.”*

If you don’t wake up, how will you respond if the last trump sounds and Jesus returns today?

When Paul says wake up, here’s what he means. Recognize your own personal complacency.” Don’t look around and wonder why somebody else is complacent. Look within and simply admit what you already know is true.

First, wake up; verse 11

Second, put your armor on; verse 12

Romans 13:12 “*The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. (13) Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and*

*drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.”*

And, complacency is an attack from Satan. Darkness has a way of tempting you to think that what you’re doing won’t be seen. What are you doing that might be described as “the works of darkness”? Are your sins hidden from everyone else? And are you thinking it’s OK to keep these sins going? When will you bring them into the light of confession?

When you get up, you get dressed. Most of us don’t sleep in our work clothes. But, what if you’re a soldier? Won’t you get dressed so that, when the enemy attacks, he’ll be repulsed by you personally?

A soldier dresses in soldier clothes. And here’s what he takes out of his closet; a belt, a shirt, boots, and a hat. And the Christian soldier takes his belt of truth. He takes himself in front of the Truth, meaning he opens His Bible and reads and studies it. He puts on the shirt of righteousness, meaning he takes Christ’s righteousness and his own. He puts on his boots, meaning he intends to tell someone the Good News of salvation. For a helmet, he takes the helmet of his salvation. He settles it in his mind that he’s saved and he’ll never be moved from that assurance. And he lifts up his faith as a shield. And he prays.

Here’s how Paul said it to the Ephesian Christians. Ephesians 6:10 “*Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. (11) Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. (12) For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.*

*(13) Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. (14) Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and*

*having on the breastplate of righteousness; (15) and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;*

*(16) Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. (17) And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: (18) Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; ..."*

The LORD calls it "the armor of light." Romans 13:12 *"The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light."*

Get up and put on the armor of light. And those who wear the armor of light are not seen by flesh and blood. They are seen by the invisible beings, the forces of darkness, the devil, the rulers of his darkness, and those who trade in spiritual wickedness.

Folks, according to the Holy Spirit, this is the answer to complacency. "Cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light."

Let me show you what I mean. Let's say you are living quite comfortably and things are going well for you. It's nine p.m. and you hear a news report that a tornado is about to hit your town. It's dark and it's beginning to rain. The town you live in has never been hit by a tornado. So, you decide to go to bed, as usual. But, as soon as you get ready for bed, you hear the very loud sound of a locomotive booming your way. Complacency says "Go to sleep. It won't hit my house. I'm tired." But the Spirit says "Get up, Make a phone call. Find out where it is safe. And decide what you need to do. Your house might be gone by morning. Get dressed."

You see, the only answer to complacency is to prepare spiritually for the day. You already know what's ahead. You already know that the powers of Satan will send you temptations and you already know that you will meet someone who

needs the Gospel. So, rather than operate in complacency, wake up and get dressed. Decide what you will do.

Now, Paul says there are two things you especially need to pay attention to. Romans 13:12 *"The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. (13) Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting [carousing] and drunkenness, not in chambering [immorality] and wantonness [sensuality], not in strife and envying [jealousy]."*

You may not have a problem with honesty. You might not have a problem with carousing and drunkenness and immorality. But you might have a problem with strife and jealousy. Are you tempted with argumentativeness? Are you jealous? Both of these are temptations of the devil as much as carousing and drunkenness. If anything, the devil wants you to have conflicts without and conflicts within; strife with others and jealousy within your heart.

First, wake up.

Second, put your armor on.

And third, put on Christ; verse 14.

Romans 13:14 *"But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof."*

When you think of your armor, do you think of your armor as a Person? Do you think of your armor as the Person of Christ living His life through you?

The only thing available for dealing with complacency is to put on Christ so you can stop making provision for the flesh to fulfill its desires. The only answer to complacency is having on the right clothing. And the right clothing is a person. And folks, every time you act according to your feelings rather than acting according to what the Bible says, you reinforce your complacent spirit.

The main need in a complacent life is a Christ-life. It is Christ in me Who enables me. So, whenever you see a problem in your life, don't look for a technique to solve it.

Instead, look to a Person. Look to the Only One Who is able to do in you and through you all you need; the LORD Jesus Christ. We need an utter dependence upon Him. You all know what a Christian is. He or she is a “little Christ.”

So, when you wake up spiritually today and put your armor on; see yourself as you really are, a little Christ.

Do you remember what the prodigal’s dad gave him when he finally woke up and returned home?

Luke 15:22 “*But the father said to his servants, **Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: ...***”

And do you recall the parable of the women who forgot to get oil for their lamps? That’s also a parable about the coming of the LORD.

Matthew 25:1 “*Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. (2) And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. (3) They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: (4) But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.*

*(5) While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. (6) And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. (7) Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. (8) And the foolish said unto the wise, give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out.*

*(9) But the wise answered, saying, not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. (10) And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage; and the door was shut.*

*(11) Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. (12) But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. (13) Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.”*

No one knows when Jesus will return to rapture His Church. So, can you escape complacency? Do what the Bible says. Expect His appearance at any minute.

So, ducks are made to fly. You are either a flying duck or a complacent one?

Eric Liddell was born in China. His Scottish parents were missionaries there. Eric became an Olympic runner. He was nicknamed “The Flying Scotsman” because he was the fastest runner in Scotland. He won medals at the Olympics. Then, after the Olympics, he returned to China as a missionary. He once said this. “*There must be a constant and increasing appreciation that though sin still remains it does not have the mastery. There is a total difference between surviving sin and reigning sin, the regenerate in conflict with sin and the unregenerate complacent to sin. It is one thing for sin to live in us: it is another for us to live in sin.*

*It is of paramount concern for the Christian and for the interests of his sanctification that he should know that sin does not have the dominion over him, that the forces of redeeming, regenerative, and sanctifying grace have been brought to bear upon him in that which is central in his moral and spiritual being, that he is the habitation of God through the Spirit, and that Christ has been formed in him the hope of glory.”*

Folks, if you are here today and holding on to the attitude of complacency, you need to wake up, get dressed, and put on Christ *today*, not tomorrow. It’s a choice. It’s a matter of the will. So, what will you do? Will you remain in complacency? Or, will you put on the LORD Jesus Christ?

The man who wrote the duck parable I read to you earlier closed his duck parable with these words. “One fine Lord’s Day,” he said, “all of the ducks dutifully waddled to duck church, where the parson duck stood to deliver his homily. He opened his duck Bible to the place where it spoke of God’s great gift to ducks—wings. “With wings”, said the duck preacher, “we ducks can fly! We can mount up like eagles and soar the heavens! We can escape the confinement

of pens and fences; we can know the utter euphoria of unfettered freedom! We must give God thanks for such a great gift as wings!” To which all of the ducks in duck church stood to their feet with a hearty “Amen!” And then, they turned around...and waddled home.” [Found on <https://www.churchofchristreno.com> “The Duck Church” by Pastor Matt Hays March 9. 2013]. Shall we pray?  
Hymn # 738 “The Wonder Of It All”