

Is. 64:1-9 Ps. 80:1-7,16-18 1 Cor. 1:3-9 Mk. 13:24-37

Let us pray:

Rouse us awake, Lord!

now in the time of this mortal life.

Snap us out of our sleepwalking;

that keeps us from loving you wholeheartedly

and serving your people,

with nothing less than full consciousness.

May we be mindful and alert

as we await the second coming of Christ

who is always coming among us,

that on the last day...we may rise to life immortal,

in Jesus' name, **amen**.

Sonambulism occurs mostly in younger children,

and it's a condition that can affect adults too.

A bit of research reveals that Sonambulism involves

performing tasks that require a **high**-state of consciousness

but are acted out, often repetitively,

in a **low**-state of consciousness;

doing things of which we aren't aware and don't remember.

It can accompany night terrors,
of *wandering* in a distress state while asleep.

I've shared with you before,
that I've had first-hand experience of it
and listened to more than my fair share of tales,
told by my mom who relished regaling would-be-listeners
of my 'apparently' comical-verging-on-hysterical roamings.

But sleepwalking is a serious business
that can place the unaware individual into danger;
even risk of death.

I'd say that's true also on a theological level,
which I'll get back to.

A few of the more hazardous situations sleepwalkers
may find themselves in is cooking, eating, driving, and
wandering... out onto precarious perches, stairs,
outside into streets or wilderness.

These episodes can be induced by stress, even migraines.
The dangers are pretty self-evident.

One of my more spectacular episodes is what I've dubbed, "The Ants." [tell the tale]

But at other times, it was more benign.

I would sit up straight in bed, eyes wide open, but not seeing.

I was not awake.

Isn't that one of the problems for God's people now?

Recently, we heard a powerful sermon (not homily, lol) from

Tom Ward that took a hard look at God's people resting complacently on their dregs (the prophet Zephania, 1:12).

For me, that made a connection to distinguishing between deep sleep and the danger of sleepwalking.

Sonambulistic faith deflects rather than engages,

turns away from what our Lord beckons us to see.

Complacency and aversion to noticing injustices

that require action of us is exactly the kind of faith that

Screwtape would like Wormwood to develop, for those

familiar with C.S. Lewis' book The Screwtape Letters.

It is in the 6th letter of the book that the devil's nephew Wormwood is to influence The Patient in such a way as to "have no concrete, reasonable thoughts, only vague fears and mixed feelings. For devilish misguidance to work, Screwtape often reminds Wormwood, people must never realize that their present actions are harming their future selves." (<https://www.sparknotes.com/lit/screwtape-letters/section2/>)

Translated for purposes of today's sermon?

The Wormwoods of the world would like for to us sleepwalk.

But the vigilance we've heard demanded of us in readings, of being prepared and attentive to the Master's return means that we can't afford to remain in anything less than the ***fullest***-state of consciousness, and the acting out of that faith, fully woke! Anything less than that is sleepwalking, from a gospel point of view.

Sin is sleepwalking.

Sin induces a spiritually catatonic state, blocking us from being open to receiving *and* sharing God's love.

Sin is not measured in how many things we do wrong
or how many bad judgment calls we make
or how many laws we break
or how many oaths we utter.

Sin isn't counted by degrees or levels.

It's hypocrisy to utter words like,

“Thank God I'm not like that sinner over there.”

Sin is sin. We have to wake up to that fact.

We have to step away from the metaphorical top of the stairs,
step away from potentially scalding hot water,
step away from streets with cars whizzing by,
step away from *whatever* dangers await,
as we operate in a low-conscious state of faith.

It's connected - the state of consciousness
we are currently operating in
and how that impacts our future.

Now for a moment,

I want to acknowledge our loss of Father Jim among us.

His recent death leaves a very large gap in both congregations: St. Andrew's and The Friend's.

Next Sunday we will lay to rest his mortal body, ashes to ashes, dust to dust.

Our grief is made even harder, for all those who want to be there cannot due to the restrictions caused by the resurgence of the pandemic. Accompanying the immediate family will be Bishop Brown, Pastor Maggie, and myself.

We will utter words from the Book of Common prayer that have comforted and sustained those of faith for centuries.

Our prayers will affirm truths that though the Spirit, "happy from now on, are those who die in the Lord, for they rest from their labor." (p. 492)

When I hear those words, it suggests labor that is fully conscious of Christ.

Many of you have known Father Jim far longer than I, but it doesn't take long to know him, to know that his life was not one of *sleepwalking*, but of ***sleepwaking...***

eyes wide open seeing the Christ in all
being willing to cross over thresholds to embrace and engage
those whom we might see differently from ourselves,
but for whom God sees as all God's children.
Screwtape would be most displeased with Fr. Jim!

One often used phrase upon the death of a loved one
is "may he/she rest in peace."

But I tend to push back against that;
because I think, that if anything,
the Communion of Saints gone before us
works harder than ever on behalf of us remaining
in our earthly pilgrimage.

I imagine that those who are now with Christ are awake
to the highest extent possible!

There is NO possibility of sleepwalking.

I doubt there is need for sleep period,
for the saints who from their labors rest!

Certainly, those who have now returned to their true home,
'with God', are actively laboring for those whom they await.

I think that their prayer for us might be to awake from the drowsiness of contentedness with the world ‘as it is’ to ardent desire for God’s Kingdom ‘as it will be’.

It might be that the saints would like to throw off from us, the warm, cozy blanket of sin!

But I suspect that it’s more like, they hope to gently bring us back from the dangers of being ‘half-awake’ to show us what fully-awake looks like, as our Savior Jesus did while he walked this earth.

The Gospel-way can’t be sleepwalked!

We must seek to be fully awake and alive in Christ; in order to draw upon the full measure of His strength, to endure through the persecutions and hardships now, that we may continue awakened in His glory.

Let us encourage one another in vigilance, in this seemingly unending waiting period until that day the Son of Man returns.

Help one another to know,
that waking-up is a continual process,
a forever-journey in Christ towards God.

Would you rather wager on the shroud of sleepwalking
or wrap the cloak of Christ about you
which is the garment of love?
Throw off the veil of 'sin-sleep'!

Living in the in-between times,
endings descend upon us suddenly.
At no time does that impress more heavily upon us
than when we suddenly and unexpectedly
experience the loss in our lives of a beloved.
Love has the power to wake us up, fully. No more
sleepwalking; only sleepwaking. Amen.

Amma Susan