

"The Quartermaster"

Text: Romans 13:11-14

Fling wide the gates; prepare your heart to be a temple set apart from earthly use for heaven's employ, adorned with prayer and love and joy . So shall your Sovereign enter in and new and nobler life begin. To God alone be praise for word and deed and grace! (OSOC 218:3)

Dear Fellow Christians:

I suspect many here don't know, and really don't care, what a quartermaster is. But you should. This morning we'll learn why. Even if you do know, your definition will probably depend on which branch of the military you served in, or with which branch you are most familiar. Among land forces (like the army) the quartermaster is the individual who makes sure the soldiers are properly equipped, fed, and housed (or "quartered" – thus "quarter master"). Though certainly not the most glamorous duty, history is littered with military campaigns that failed due only to inadequate supplies of food, clothing, and ammunition. In 1812, for example, Napoleon's Grande Armée marched into Russia 700,000 strong. Russia responded with a strategic, "scorched earth" retreat, even burning Moscow to deny the French food and shelter. Starving and freezing, Napoleon's army was forced to retreat. Of the 700,000 French soldiers that entered Russia, only 40,000 survived. The lack of logistical support killed far more than actual battles.

On the other hand, if your heart is with the navy, your image of a quartermaster is most likely the officer that is responsible for navigation and the helm – the one who charts the course and steers the ship – obviously a critical element of every ship's crew.

As all of this relates both to our text and to you and me this morning, by one definition you yourself are the quartermaster. By the other, the quartermaster can only be your Lord. The text by which all of this will be explained is found in Paul's Letter to the Romans, the 13th Chapter:

^{ESV} **Romans 13:11-14** *Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. ¹² The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. ¹³ Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. ¹⁴ But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.*

This is the Word of God. To help prepare our hearts for the study of these his words, to remind us of their divine origin, and to gain the gifts Our God here offers, so we pray, **"Sanctify us in the truth, O Lord. Your word is truth."** Amen.

According to the army definition, you yourself are your own quartermaster. How so? Paul explains in the last verse of our text: ***Make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.***

The quartermaster's job seems pretty straightforward. His job is to ***"make provision for."*** It involves counting heads and making sure every individual has everything they need. If you were, for example, the Quartermaster General of the United States Army, you would have to know not only the number of soldiers but exactly what each of them could possibly need, both now and in every potential future. It's actually even more complicated than it sounds. Suppose you need to provide boots for 3 million soldiers. You can't just buy 3 million pairs of boots. The vast majority wouldn't fit. Nor will your budget allow you to buy 3 million pairs of every size. You have to conduct endless studies to determine averages; as in, what's the average number of soldiers who wear each size. Your procurement, how you make provision, will be determined by the outcome of that study. Same with pants, shirts, and hats. You need to know the average inseam, chest size, arm length, neck size, and head size. You need to know gender (real, not imagined.) You also need to determine the average life expectancy of each item so you can have replacements on hand. And you need to know the climate in which each item will be used. You can't send soldiers to the Middle East with cold-weather gear. You get the picture.

Moms are usually the quartermasters of the family – continually trying to stay ahead of who needs what and when. By the time we move out of our parents' house, we all have to learn what we need to provide for ourselves. And what we *don't* need to provide for ourselves. That's what Paul is talking about in our text. He gives both the do and the don't, the positive and the negative when he says, ***"But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires."*** It is in this sense that you are your own *spiritual* quartermaster.

To do that right, you need to know yourself *spiritually* every bit as intimately as you know yourself *physically*. And you need to be honest with yourself, about yourself. No matter how trim and fit you

wish you were, you wouldn't buy pants or shirts that you can't even button. No matter how tall you wish you were, you don't buy 40" inseam pants for your 30" legs.

So also our text requires brutal honesty when it tells each of us, individually, to **“make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.”** What in your life can you identify as a “sin enabler”? There really are no universal guidelines here – no “one size fits all.” Every single one of you is a unique individual, with your own individual strengths and weaknesses. That means every individual will need to be their own quartermaster, will need figure out what your sinful flesh craves, and therefore what you need not only to deny, but that for which you dare not even **“make provision.”**

Some examples might be helpful as to just what **“making provision for”** looks like. Making provision for sexual sins means putting no safeguards on your internet access, subscribing to immoral streaming services, and hanging out with immoral friends. Making provision for sobriety issues means hanging out in bars and going to parties where you know drugs and alcohol will flow freely. Making provision for materialism means spending an inordinate amount of time on Amazon, Market Place, and every sale flyer that finds its way into your inbox or mailbox. Making provision for anger issues means dwelling on real or perceived wrongs and refusing to forgive. Making provision for lack of contentment and covetousness means continually looking at what everyone else has. Making provision for any sinful desire includes simply toying with the fantasy.

That's how every individual serves as his or her own quartermaster. You have the power to provide or deny. You have the power to flirt *with* or flee *from*. Our text obviously advocates flight: **“So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.”**

Remember, though, the navy's definition of the quartermaster is different. There the quartermaster is the one who charts the course. That's not you. That *can't* be you. That has to be your Lord. David put it this way in Psalm 31:14-15, ***I trust in you, O LORD; I say, “You are my God.”¹⁵ My times are in your hand.*** To the Thessalonians Paul wrote: ***Now may our God and Father himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way to you,¹² and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you,¹³ so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.*** (1 Thessalonians 3:11-13) And again in 2 Thessalonians 3:5: ***May the Lord***

direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ.

That's all part of what it means in our text when Paul says simply, **“But put on the Lord Jesus Christ.”** To **“put on the Lord Jesus Christ”** actually conveys a wealth of meaning. At its core it involves trust. We trust Jesus to have paid our debt of sin on Calvary's cross. As it relates to our text, that means we trust that he also paid for our sins when we *did* make provision for our flesh. It means we trust that the One who left heaven to suffer and die for us absolutely does love us. Trusting that love, we trust also that he wants only what's best for us. We trust that he wants us to escape the eternal torment of hell and to join him in his heaven. It means, finally, that we can therefore also trust his plan for our lives, trust him to chart our course.

In this we absolutely cannot trust ourselves. To put it another way, we can identify what is harmful – what is bad for us – and then make no provision for it in our lives. But we cannot always know what is good or necessary for us. We cannot trust ourselves to chart the course of our lives. That we must leave to God.

There's a reason we are called sheep. Sheep need to be guided, directed, and disciplined. Sheep need a shepherd. David was thrilled to allow himself to be guided by his Lord, the Good Shepherd. So he wrote in that familiar 23rd Psalm: ***“The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.*** (Lit: *“I will lack nothing”*) ***² He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. ³ He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.”***

I would be very surprised to hear any of you claim that there has never been a time in your life when your Lord didn't guide you around, or even through, a very bad decision you made, or a very unwise course you charted for your life. Maybe you were once absolutely, positively, without a doubt sure of Mr. or Miss Right, only to shudder now at the bullet your God enabled you to dodge. Very few Christians would claim to be living exactly the life they envisioned when they were young. Fewer still would trade what they have now for that immature, youthful vision.

So it is that our text offers us a mixture of guidance as to what we can do and what we cannot - what *is* our responsibility and what we must *entrust to our Lord*. What we can do is really not difficult to understand. Our text summed it up with these words: **“So then let**

us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. ¹³
Let us walk properly as in the daytime.” Here again God’s Word contrasts that which is of the light with that which is of the darkness. Honesty compels us to admit that we do indeed know the difference. We know when and how we ***“make provision”*** for darkness to enter our lives, as we also almost always know how to ***“cast off the works of darkness”*** and what it means to ***“walk properly as in the daytime.”*** In case there is any doubt, Paul lists some of those works of darkness: ***“Orgies, drunkenness, sexual immorality, sensuality, quarreling, and jealousy.”*** Disturbing, isn’t it, to realize that removing the items he lists from our lives would pretty much destroy the storyline of about 90% of the movies made today.

During the season of Advent, which we enter this morning, we focus on two things: the entrance of Jesus into our world at Christmas and his inevitable, imminent return on the Day of Judgment. Since we don’t know when Jesus will return, and since it has been almost 2000 years, it’s easy to grow complacent, even skeptical. Like sentries nodding off on their watch, we need to be kicked in the ribs from time to time. Jesus *will* return. Since we know not when, the only safe course of action is to live ready and expectant. Though we don’t and can’t know the day, our text leaves us with a final, indisputable truth: ***“Salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed.”***

How tragic to “run the good race” for a lifetime, only to give up just short of the finish line. Recognize sin as the faith-eating cancer that it is and make no room for it in your life. Our Savior wants more *for* us than a return to the darkness of unbelief – and he certainly deserves better *from* us. Amen.

ESV **Isaiah 2:1-5** The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. ² It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it, ³ and many peoples shall come, and say: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." For out of Zion shall go the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. ⁴ He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide disputes for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore. ⁵ O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the LORD.

ESV **Matthew 24:37-44** For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ³⁸ For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, ³⁹ and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ⁴⁰ Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. ⁴¹ Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left. ⁴² Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. ⁴³ But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁴ Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

ESV **Romans 13:11-14** Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. ¹² The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. ¹³ Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. ¹⁴ But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

But put on the Lord

Jesus Christ

and make no provision
for the flesh in regard
to its lusts

Romans 13:14

**ST PAUL LUTHERAN
CHURCH**

BISMARCK, NORTH DAKOTA

ST. PAUL EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

2510 E. Divide Ave. Bismarck, ND 58501

Parsonage and Office: (701) 223-4885 Cell: (701) 425-5483

Website: www.bismarcklutheran.org

Mick Johnson, President Angela Pfennig, Organist
Michael Roehl, Pastor

The First Sunday in Advent – November 30, 2025

The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

The Opening Hymn – 229

"Come, O Long-Expected Jesus"

The Order of Service – Hymnal page 1ff. (Blue Hymnal)

The Scripture Lessons: (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

The First Lesson: (Isaiah 2:1-5) It often takes eyes of faith to see the truth. This is certainly true in our first lesson this morning, where the Holy Spirit through Isaiah gives a preview of the rise of Christianity and the peace which comes to those who know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. God grant us always such wisdom and insight.

The Psalm of the Day – Psalm 38 (Page 69)

The Second Lesson: (Matthew 24:37-44) As we enter the season of Advent and, with it, the beginning of another church year, we need to be reminded of the dangers of complacency and false security. There is a temptation to imagine that since Jesus didn't return in the year past, he will not return in the year to come. The same thought must have gripped the minds of those in Noah's day as they watched the ark being built for 100 years. As the flood waters came suddenly, so will Jesus. The only safe and reasonable course of action for God's children is to live both ready and expectantly.

The Confession of Faith -

The Apostolic Creed (Blue Hymnal page 5)

The Pre-Sermon Hymn – 213

"O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"

The Sermon – Text: Romans 13:11-14 (Printed on the back page of this bulletin) "The Quartermaster"

The Offertory – (Blue Hymnal page 7)

The Post-Sermon Hymn – 214 (Stanzas 1-3)

"On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry"

The Prayers of the Day, Followed by the Lord's Prayer

The Benediction

The Closing Hymn – 214 (Stanza 4-5) "On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry"

Silent Prayer

Welcome! - We warmly welcome any visitors who might be with us this morning and invite you to join us every Sunday at this time. St. Paul is a congregation in fellowship with the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) – a conservative Lutheran synod with churches and missions throughout the United States and around the world. We are glad you are here. Thank you for letting us share the Word of God with you. Please record your visit in our Guest Book, and come again.

Attendance – Sunday (38) Average (37) Wednesday (10)

This Week at St. Paul:

Today	-9:00 a.m.	– Sunday school and Bible Class
	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service
	-11:00 a.m.	– Fellowship Hour
Wednesday	-5:45 p.m.	– Confirmation Class
	-7:00 p.m.	– Midweek Advent Service
Saturday	-6:00 p.m.	– Church Christmas Party
Next Sunday	-9:00 a.m.	– Sunday school and Bible Class
	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service with Communion
	-11:15 a.m.	– Fellowship Hour

CLC News – Pastor Ben Libby is considering the calls to both Messiah of Eau Claire. Holy Cross of Phoenix. Pastor Em. Michael Eichstadt is considering the vacancy call to Holy Cross of Phoenix. Trinity of Spokane has called Pastor David Naumann. Jonathan Schnose is considering the call to Living Hope of Appleton, WI.

Church Council Notes – All Council members plus the Pastor met on 11/23. Offerings were \$2,404 under budget in October and are now \$6,179 under budget YTD, resulting in a General Fund deficit. The 1st draft of the 2026 budget calls for a 6.3% increase, due mostly to rising insurance costs. The Council will continue to investigate alternate insurance options. Work continues on updating all church policies. Next Council meeting 12/11. Annual Voters meeting 12/21.

2026 Usher/Cleaner List – The 2026 list is being prepared. Please contact Phil Pfennig with any changes/requests.

Church Christmas Party – Our Annual Christmas Party is scheduled for this Saturday at 6pm. See the sign-up sheets on the mailbox table and address any food-related questions to Cindy O. or Angela P..

Advent Services – The first of our three midweek Advent services is this Wednesday at 7pm. Confirmation start time has moved to 5:45pm.