

Wednesday of the First Week of Advent, December 2, 2020

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Waiting for the Revealing of Our Lord Jesus Christ

1 Corinthians 1:3–9

³Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

⁴I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, ⁵that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge—⁶even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you—⁷so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁸who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Christians who lived in Corinth had many weaknesses. They were careless about distinguishing between right and wrong. They were self-centered. They were sure of themselves. There were divisions, rivalries, and conflicts among them. The church in Corinth was, quite frankly, a mess.

Yet St. Paul begins his first letter to the Corinthians by reminding them that grace and peace is theirs and by thanking God for them. Pride would have them think that they are God's gifts to the world, but St. Paul gives thanks instead for the gifts they have from God. As he pointedly asks later in the letter, "**What do you have that you did not receive?**" (1 Cor 4:7). They have nothing to boast about; everything to thank God for.

Their story, like ours, is intricately interwoven with Jesus and His story. Jesus is the golden thread that holds their past, present, and future together. He is the same thread that holds us and our stories together. St. Paul sets before them and us the advent hope that is ours as Christians:

WE WAIT FOR THE REVEALING OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

We wait

- I. first, as **those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints** (1 Cor 1:2);
- II. second, as those **enriched in Him, not lacking in any spiritual gifts** (vv 5, 6);
- III. and, third, as those whom the **faithful God will sustain to the end, guiltless in the Day of our Lord Jesus Christ** (vv 8, 9).

I.

First, we wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ as **those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints** (1 Cor 1:2).

This is how St. Paul addresses all the Christians who would hear his letter, including us: **“To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours”** (1 Cor 1:2). The church isn’t defined by its divisions or its careless practices or its high opinion of itself but by its sanctification in Christ Jesus. By faith, St. Paul sees the church and every member of it as she is in Christ: holy, called by God, set apart for His own special purposes. Though we cannot see it, we, too, believe that the church is holy.

When did we become holy, called by God, and set apart? What stitched us into the story of Jesus and gives us purpose in Him? It begins with the Holy One. The angel Gabriel told Mary that her child **will be called holy** (Lk 1:35) because He was conceived by the Holy Spirit. When we first heard the Holy Gospel of Jesus and received Holy Baptism, we were brought back into God’s great story, into the story of Mary’s Holy Son. We came to know Him as our Savior and His blood as the means of our salvation. Through the Gospel and in baptism, we were sanctified and called by God. He has set us apart for His special purposes. This gift of God gives meaning and hope to the church and to each of our lives. We belong to the kingdom of heaven. As the church, we find our identity in God’s call. That’s where it begins. And we are going somewhere together, to a future that will be revealed in Jesus Christ.

II.

Second, we wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ as those **enriched in Him, not lacking in any spiritual gifts** (vv 5, 6).

St. Paul says, **“I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, that in every way you were enriched in Him in all speech and all knowledge—even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you—so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift”** (vv 5–7). This is where we are now. We have been blessed by God and are being sanctified in every station of life, in every good and worthy vocation, in all privileges and every hardship.

We are a community of disciples through baptism. We continue to learn the way and will of Jesus, our King, by remaining devoted to His Word and true doctrine. Advent is a particularly rich time of devotion to the Word. I encourage all of you to make use of the new devotional in the narthex so that we hear His Word together daily. We are growing in the knowledge of God and His new life. In this way we are being confirmed in the Gospel message and baptismal gifts. In this message, we know meaning, we experience purpose in life, and we savor hope. Even in the cold, dark, bitterness of this world, Christ is sweet, and we live now as those looking forward to a future sweetness yet to be revealed in Him.

III.

Third, we wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ as those whom the **faithful God will sustain to the end** (vv 8, 9).

St. Paul says, **“You are not lacking in any spiritual gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord”** (vv 7–9). God called us in the past. He equips us in the present. And He will complete the whole process in the future. This is our story, our confidence, and our hope. Jesus shapes our beginning, our middle, and our end. He has promised His grace for this very reason—that He might keep us and the whole Christian Church with Him for eternity.

No matter how cold and dark it gets, we don’t despair. We don’t give up. We continue on with our lives in this world knowing that God has promised to carry us all the way through and to finish what He has already begun in us. **God is faithful.** The fellowship and communion that we have with Jesus Christ His Son now looks toward the full consummation of that fellowship at the end. We will see our King enthroned. We will sing His praises. We will live in His presence forever. He will sustain us to the end of our lives, to the end of the world, guiltless and blameless by His blood.

Advent prepares us for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, for His coming in glory as the Great King. He is the head of the Church and intends finally to lead us Home. Now, as always, and into the future, we depend solely on the grace and peace that is ours from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

The peace that passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Phil 4:7
