

*1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Advent*

*December 3, 2017*

*I Corinthians 1:3-9: “**While We Wait**”*

*I. For What?*

*II. Remember What We Have Received.*

*III. We Will Be Sustained.*

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I Corinthians 1:3-9

Dear Friends in Christ,

Some months ago I made a reference to Joe Battaglia's book "The Politically Incorrect Jesus." I have another one. Battaglia's wife has multiple sclerosis and is wheelchair bound. He's the main care giver. He notes how this has, of course, altered what they can and cannot do. He wrote, "I used to feel bad, until I had a change of perspective." And then this:

"In a convoluted sort of way, the less I have to choose from, the more freedom I find in the limitation.

"Look at it from another perspective. Everyone knows about gravity. It's the force that keeps us on planet earth.... Now, what you may not realize is that the mass of the earth is what creates gravity... The more mass, the more pull, the more pull and attraction, the harder it is to break free.

"Our culture encourages us to accumulate things, to have options, to focus on ourselves. The problem is that the more things we accumulate, the more mass we create. And the more mass the more pull. Soon we cannot pull ourselves away from the things we've accumulated because they have such a hold on us. They control us; we do not control them. We attempt to break free, but the pull is too strong." (Joe Battaglia, "The Politically Incorrect Jesus," Broadstreet Publications, 2014, pp. 121,122)

We're examining "Lessons From Our Advent Journey." This first Sunday of Advent we examine . . .

## WHILE WE WAIT

### I. For What?

The question some might ask is, "While we wait for what?" Paul writes: "I give thanks to my God always...as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ..." (4a & 7b) "The revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ" is, of course, a reference to His return.

I want to repeat a couple of Battaglia's insights:"Our culture encourages us to accumulate things, to have options, to focus on ourselves...the more mass the more pull. Soon we cannot pull ourselves away from the things we accumulated because they have such a hold on us." Ask the average Americanized church goer if he or she is looking forward to Christ's return and you'll probably get a far away look and a not so positive response! How about us? Are we weighted down with this world's pull? Let's face it: What Advent and Christmas are for God's people can get a bit fuzzy.

The "pull" we must have in our lives are these words of Jesus:

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days (*the tribulation the world has been in since Christ's Ascension; the days we're in, including the short season and the vile, increased activity of Satan*) the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn (*the world that despises and rejects everything about Christ will cry in horror of the reality that they've despised and rejected God*) and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. (Matt. 24:29-31)

Now, we include with that these words of Peter concerning the revealing of Christ:

...what sort of people ought you (us!) to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God (*the revealing of Christ*), because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. (II Pet. 3:11-13)

## II. Remember What We Have Received.

Therefore, while we wait we are to remember what we have received. Paul writes, "I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus..." (v. 4)

How on earth could any one who claims Christ look at anything of this world and see it as something equal to or greater than the Grace of God given us through the life, suffering, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ? Oh, I know, some will say, "But we hear that all the time." No we don't! We hear it on Sunday mornings or Wednesday evenings. What we hear most of the time are the same old monotonous, bleating nonsense and vileness of this corrupted world! What we must hear all the time is that Christ was willing to enter this world, remove the guilt and condemnation of our sin and make us citizens of eternal life!

On the evening of September 8, my wife and I were considering Luther's words from the devotional book, "Through Faith Alone." (CPH, St. Louis, 1999) The devotion focused on these words of David: "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise." (Ps. 51:17) I want to consider a number of statements Luther made concerning this verse.

First, Luther wrote: "...the gospel demonstrates its power when we are sinful and weak. It's a message of joy that can only be experienced when sorrow and distress are present." That's a repugnant statement - an unacceptable statement - for those who labor for and chase the high life. Then he goes on to say, "But we want to have the message of life and joy without any sorrow or death. What fine theologians we think we are! We must learn that as Christians we have to live with death all around us, with regret and a trembling conscience - between the teeth of the devil and hell." The reality of what Luther says - and more importantly what the Scriptures and the reality of life say - the reality isn't going to go away just because it's too negative and we don't want to think about it, or hear it! Realities have a horrible way of hitting us when least expected.

Luther then wrote, "In spite of all this, we must hang on to the message of God's kindness. Then in all circumstances, we can say, 'Lord, you want only the best for me.'" We hang on to this, and must hang on to this, while we wait. Luther then comforts us by focusing on the direction of Psalm 51. He wrote: "In the Psalm, we read that God finds no sacrifice more pleasing than a broken heart...God's true nature is to love people who are troubled, have mercy on those who are broken-hearted, forgive those who have fallen, and refresh those who are exhausted." (Martin Luther, Through Faith Alone, reading for September 8)

This is the great love of God that we have received. This is the love the world rejects and runs away from it. It's this: "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast." (Eph. 2:8,9) Saved. Saved!! It's the issue of Scripture, of Baptism, of the Lord's Supper. Jesus said it: "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son (that is, believe) shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him." (Jn. 3:36) Without faith in what He did for us we would be un-saved! Lost! Forever! No matter how wonderful and fulfilling a fantasy filled, dissipated worldly life might be.

## III. We Will Be Sustained.

In Christ we will not be lost. Our text says, "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. 7b-9)

And I ask you to think carefully about this Word of God from Psalm 34: "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all." It's the reality that confronts every one here: Afflictions. They are many. Some are very severe. They are everything from bodily afflictions to people conflicts to dying and death. "The Lord delivers" is the promise that God will see us through and, ultimately, take us unto Himself.

Listen: verse 22 of that same Psalm 34 states, "the Lord redeems the life of his servants; none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned." That's it! That's the great and glorious delivery. We have been redeemed by Christ's suffering and death for our sin.

We grow tired and weary from our struggles. At times, reviewing the history of where we have been, what we have done, how we have acted and reacted to a multitude of situations can drive us into despair. But the promise of the Lord is firm and unchangeable. The promise is this: "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." (Rom. 8:1) And the writer of Hebrews gives great comfort in the statement "...it is impossible for God to lie...". (Heb. 6:18)

We must dwell on this - and present it to others - *While We Wait*.

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott