

INI - SDG

1st Sunday in Advent

November 30, 2008

Hecla

Text: 1 Corinthians 1:3-9 *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus, that you were enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and knowledge, even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you, so that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will also confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom you were called into fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Theme: EAGER FOR ADVENT

- What keeps us from being eager
 - Love of the world
 - Sin, guilt, and fear
- What alone makes us eager
 - God's grace

Dear fellow redeemed in Christ Jesus,

I think it's safe to say that we are all eager for Christmas. Maybe we are not eager for the long lines at the store or figuring out what to buy for loved ones. Hopefully we are all eager to hear that the Son of God was born into the world to save us from our sins. Truly Christmas is good news that brings joy to the sinner. That joy is reflected in all those precious Christmas hymns. In His first coming or His first Advent Jesus came in a very lowly manner, in the form of a Servant. His first Advent was largely ignored by the world. Some shepherds came to worship the newborn King, but they had to have messengers from heaven to tell them. Later, some Wise Men came from the East, but they needed a star to guide them.

That was His first Advent - the first coming of Jesus. It was lowly and humble. His second Advent will not be the same at all! We're told in the New Testament that a trumpet will sound to mark His return. A trumpet so loud that everyone throughout the world will hear it's blast. Jesus' second Advent will not be in humility but in glory. The King of kings will return in glory, on His throne, and surrounded by the angels. At the second Advent of Jesus the dead will rise and Jesus will judge the living and the dead. And that will be the end of the world.

The second Advent of Jesus is the pinnacle of the Christian faith. It will mark the end of all of God's enemies. The last enemy of death will be destroyed forever. Satan and sin will no longer be able to tempt us. All believers in Christ will be taken into heaven to be with the Triune God forever.

While we all enjoy celebrating the first, lowly coming of Jesus, how do you feel about His second Advent? Are you, as Paul writes in verse 7 of our text, "***eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ***"? Did hearing in our Gospel lesson that Jesus could return at any moment make you excited or a little uneasy? Let us consider today being EAGER FOR ADVENT. We will examine what keeps us from being eager for Christ's second coming and

what alone can make us eager for that glorious day! May God the Holy Spirit be with us and keep us faithful to the end. Amen.

WHAT KEEPS US FROM BEING EAGER

-The love of the world

Do you remember last fall some of the things Alison Hansen told us about her trip to India? How she described the extreme poverty as well as the foul odors and garbage everywhere. When our American pastors visit and teach over there, the native pastors tell them to “Be sure to tell the people about heaven. They need and want to hear about heaven.” One of the reasons heaven and the joys of heaven are emphasized so much is because their lives here are somewhat hellish. Life here is for them so wretched that they anxiously look forward to their mansions in the sky which Jesus has gone to prepare for them.

We know nothing about such filth and poverty in our lives. Our homes are warm and clean. Garbage and sewer are hauled away from our houses and put out of sight. Our families have their cupboards stocked with food and our closets full of clothes. When we something as insignificant as a runny nose the doctor or his nurse is only a phone call away. All these things are tremendous blessings from the hand of a gracious God. However these blessings can also be a tool of the devil. When life is easy and prosperous we begin to think that it can't get much better than this.

So one of the reasons that we may not be eager for the return of Christ is that we love the world and the things of the world. Our hearts are set on goals and accomplishments of this world. Our future in this world seems more important than spending eternity with God. To see if this is the case for you, consider this: Do you want Jesus to return this morning or would you rather He wait until you get to do this or that? Your answer will be very telling. If we are not eager for the second advent of Jesus it may be because Jesus is not #1 in our hearts, but instead the things of this world.

Hear what God says in His Word about the things of this world. In 1 John 2 we read, ***“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world -- the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life -- is not of the Father but is of the world.”*** (1Jn 2:15-16) The love of the world and the things of this world are opposed to the love of God the Father. For this reason James writes, ***“Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.”*** (Js 4:4) And it is Jesus Himself who warns us, ***“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”*** (Mt 6:24) It is impossible to serve both God and the things of this world. Our hearts only have room for one God. It is either the God who created all things or the things which He created.

Is this one of the reasons why we are not eager for Advent? Is this one of the reasons why we love Christmas, but hope that Jesus doesn't return today? Let us confess this idolatry to God and repent of it, looking to Him for mercy!

- Sin, guilt, and fear

But there may be another reason why we don't eagerly await the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ. What is it we just said we believe in the Apostles' Creed about Jesus' return?

Didn't we say, "*From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead?*" One of the names we have for the Second Advent of Jesus is "Judgment Day." It's that word "judgment" isn't it? It makes us uneasy because we know Jesus can see into our souls - He knows the true condition of our hearts, maybe better than we know it ourselves. Our conscience convicts us of our guilt and sin. And so because we know our sin we fear Jesus will condemn us and place us on the side of the goats going to hell, rather than His sheep that are headed for heaven. Maybe it was some sin you did as a youth or some good thing you failed to do for your neighbor when you had the opportunity. Or maybe it is the revelation that you love the world and the things of this world more than you love Jesus and wait for His return. But these are two reasons which keep us from being eager for the second Advent of Christ - love of the world and the guilt of our sin.

WHAT ALONE MAKES US EAGER

If it is your sin that makes you a little uneasy about Jesus' return - even the sin of loving this world more than you love Jesus - then our text has something to say to you. As we consider being eager for advent, remember that Paul is writing to the Christian congregation in Corinth. In this congregation the members were boasting of the sexual sin of one of its members, people were coming to Lord's Supper drunk or to eat dinner, and their worship services were chaotic.

It was to these very Corinthians that Paul writes in our text, "***I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus.***" Despite all that was going on in Corinth, Paul is thankful for the grace of God given to them by Christ Jesus. Grace is that undeserved love of God. Grace is loving acts that are done which are unearned, unmerited. One of my professors described grace as "love anyway."

Paul was thankful for that grace which was given them in Christ Jesus. It was grace that cause the Son of God to be born as a Servant and be their Substitute under the law. It was grace that led the Son of God to lay down His life for them. This could be nothing other than grace - for the Corinthians certainly did not deserve to have the Son of God be born, suffer, and die for them.

This grace that was given to them by Christ Jesus had enriched them in everything. In that grace, Paul says in verse 7 that they "***come short in no gift.***" In the grace of Christ Jesus they have everything they need. They have the free gift of forgiveness. They have the free gift of the righteousness of Christ through faith in Jesus. They have the free gift of heaven. It is because grace is grace that they could eagerly wait for the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Rejoice, dear sinners, for this same undeserved, unmerited love has been showered on you too. Yes we willingly and freely confess that we HAVE sinned in countless ways against our God. We did nothing to deserve any good thing from the Creator of heaven and earth. Yet the grace of God has been given to us also by Christ Jesus. By this grace we have been enriched in everything by Him and we too have everything we need. By grace we have all of our sins forgiven for Jesus' sake. By grace through faith in Christ we have His righteousness.

It is by grace and by grace alone that we too can eagerly wait for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ. If we look to ourselves we will find only sin and one reason after another to fear the return of Jesus. But because of grace we know that we stand justified before almighty God. And it is because of grace - that unearned, unmerited love of God for sinners - that we know verse 8 is talking about us, "***Our Lord Jesus Christ who will also confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.***" Unless we willingly backslide and despise His Word and Sacrament - we have this promise of God, that through His Word and

Sacrament He will keep us in the one true faith until that last great day. Furthermore he says we will be blameless in that day - there will be no accusation against us! Because of grace we know that there is therefore now NO condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. God who has promised this is faithful and will keep His promise of grace to us.

Behold how beautiful that word grace is! It is because of the grace of God alone that we can now be eager for advent. Because of God's undeserved love for us sinners Jesus will say on that last day, "***Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.***" (Mt 25:34) And thus we shall be with the Lord forever! All praise to our Triune God for His amazing grace. Amen.