

1 Corinthians 1:3-9 (First Sunday in Advent—Series B)**“Waiting for the Big Reveal”****Lutheran Church of Our Redeemer, Enfield, CT****November 29, 2020**

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Our text is the Epistle lesson recorded in 1 Corinthians, chapter 1:

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 which has been given to you in Christ Jesus, ⁵because in everything you were enriched in Him in all speech and in all knowledge ⁶just as the witness to Christ was confirmed among you, ⁷so that you do not lack any gift of grace as you eagerly await the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ ⁸who will also confirm you until the end, blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹God is faithful, through whom you were called into the communion of His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

If you have ever watched a home renovation show, then you are well aware of the big reveal at the end of the program. That’s when you, along with the homeowners, get to see the new and improved house with all the renovations completed. I’ll be heading off to bed and, once in a while, Mica will tell me, “I’ll be there in a minute, I want to see what the house looks like.” Everyone wants to see the end results, the big reveal.

The day is coming, could be any moment really, when the biggest of the big reveals will take place. The Crucified and Risen Son of God, Jesus Christ, will come again in all His glory and the angels with Him. The dead will be raised, believers in Jesus, by grace through faith, will rise to eternal life; non-believers who rejected God’s grace will rise to eternal punishment. The Lord Christ will then create a new heaven and a new earth where His Church will live with Him, the Father, and the Holy Spirit, the one true God, forever and ever. This world is not our end all, be all. Our end is with Christ in a new creation made for the whole people of God in Christ Jesus, the Church. So why do we as Christians often live as if this present world is the best we’re going to get?

As human creations of God who have been corrupted by sin, we do become preoccupied with this present age. We are inclined to become engrossed in the joys, gifts, and cares of this present world. To be sure, God richly blesses people with what they need to support this body and life. As we pray in the Lord's Prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread," we can be certain that God does give "daily bread to everyone without our prayers, even to all evil people." God provides in this world food, drink, clothing, shoes, homes, land, animals, money, goods, husbands and wives, children, workers, rulers, government, weather, and so on. But we tend to get all wrapped up in the gifts rather than the Giver.

This time of year we can especially see the passion people have for "getting things." For many, including ourselves, this is "the gift-getting season." Black Friday sales have been going on for weeks online. What is on sale that I can have for myself? What can I ask so-and-so to get me for Christmas? Now, wanting the good things of this world is not wrong. The wrong comes in when it becomes our obsession, our preoccupation, our god. This simply illustrates that we are very attached to the creation of which we are a part. We like many things in this world—the pleasures, the enjoyments, the benefits of the things that make us feel good and important and loved. But this world is not the end all, be all. Paul in 1 Corinthians 7 reminds us that "the present form of this world is passing away" (1 Cor. 7:31 ESV). John echoes this in his first letter, "And the world is passing away along with its desires" (1 Jn. 2:17 ESV). God Himself tells us in the person of His Incarnate Son, Jesus, "Heaven and earth will pass away" (Luke 21:33 ESV).

The stuff of this world that we hold as so important and so valuable and so pleasing is only temporary. We cannot, as Christians, live as if this present life were the best thing going. Clearly, it isn't! Even as richly blessed as we are by God in this life, it is not His intention to

leave us in a fallen world of suffering and evil. It is not the Lord's desire that we remain subject to our sins, to the consequences of our sins, and the effects of other's sins. God does not want us to remain under the authority and power of death and the devil.

The grace of God has been given to us. The Father sent His One-of-a-Kind Son to take on human flesh and live among us in this world. Jesus came and lived among humanity in a world of sickness, sorrow, disease, and death. He brought God's reign and rule, His grace, to the people as He healed the sick, raised the dead, and gave comfort to the weak. Jesus invites, saying, "Come to me all who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). Jesus earned the rest that all who trust in Him by faith receive when He laid down His life as the once-for-all sacrifice for our sins. His suffering and death on the cross and the shedding of His holy blood purchased and won for all people the forgiveness of sins. And where there is God's gift of forgiveness in Christ, there is also eternal life and salvation. Christ is risen from the dead and so we will live again in body and soul at the resurrection on the Last Day and enter with Him into the new heavens and earth.

By God's grace through the gift of faith in Jesus alone, you and I have received the fruits of Jesus' cross in this life, namely, the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. Through the Gospel Word and the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, Jesus delivers to us faith, forgiveness, and life, enriching us in our speech and knowledge of Him who is our God and Lord and Savior. Martin Luther comments, "St. Paul also declares in 1 Cor. 1:5–7: 'That in every way you were enriched in Him with all speech and all knowledge—even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed among you—so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift.' This is the greatest, noblest, and most necessary gift God can give us—a gift we should not exchange for everything heaven and earth contain. For what would it profit you to be

able to go even through fire and water and to perform all kinds of miracles, if you did not have it? In fact, many people who perform such wonders are damned. But the greatest miracle of all is the fact that God gives us the kind of power through which all our sins are remitted and eradicated, and death, the devil, and hell are vanquished and devoured, so that we have an undaunted conscience and a cheerful heart, and fear nothing.”¹

As new creations in our Risen Lord Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we dare not exchange anything in this present world the glory of the world to come. The apostle Peter writes, “But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells” (2 Pet. 3:13 ESV). Our brief lives are always lived in the shadow of eternity. Christ has become our righteousness so that on the Last Day we will be raised from the dead to stand blameless before God, covered in the white robes of Jesus’ blood and righteousness. Then we will enter the new creation with Him.

This is our hope and our future in Christ. God’s Word gives us a glimpse of this victory which we eagerly look forward to, knowing that we are not of this world, but belong to the new creation that Christ Jesus will make for us: “And I [John] heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.’ And he who was seated on the throne said, ‘Behold, I am making all things new’” (Rev. 21:3-5a ESV).

¹ Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works, Vol. 30: The Catholic Epistles*, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann, vol. 30 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999), 153–154.

Through faith in Jesus Christ, we are part of His holy Church, a communion of believers, eagerly awaiting His revelation of glory and our final victory over sin and death. During this season of Advent and beyond, focus on His coming again, on your resurrection, on the new heavens and earth. Life eternal in glorified body and soul is your future. Don't be overly caught up in the details of this life, holding so dear to the things of this world and its fleeting pleasures. By the power of the Holy Spirit through the Gospel, be faithful to the end. The crown of life belongs to you. Anticipate with hopefulness and joy the big reveal when you will see Jesus Christ come in glory. Then, your resurrection life in a new creation will begin and last forever, and so you will always be with the Lord. And that beats anything this life can offer. Amen.