

What Are You Waiting For

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[0 : 00] Our God and Father, we thank you for this opportunity to come together to worship you as you have called us to do. We ask that your presence may be with us and that your Holy Spirit may illumine all our minds.

And that the testimony which is born to the person of Jesus Christ in this service may be confirmed in all the circumstances of our life through the week that follows.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. We're looking this morning at 1 Corinthians chapter 1 verses 1 to 9 which was the epistle reading this morning.

It's found in the Blue Pew Bible on page 156. And it would be helpful if you turn there to see that this is the first verse of the first chapter of the first letter.

And it's a very significant document indeed. I would like to tell you that I have had a lovely time getting this sermon ready.

[1 : 27] A much less happy prospect of preaching it. It's a rather dismal prospect of you getting anything out of it at all. But I am hoping that at least we'll stimulate you to go back at it again on another occasion.

And maybe to find some of the things which it is my privilege and delight to share with you. And hope that you can be blessed as I have been in preparing it.

So you start with the church at Corinth and Paul is imprisoning in Ephesus and writing them a letter. And he writes this letter to them on the basis of knowing them well and having considerable authority.

Because if you read in the 17th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, Paul went and preached at Athens without much response. He then moved on to Corinth where he found Aquila and Priscilla, the tent makers.

And because he was a tent maker, he joined them. And because they were Jewish Christians who had been, what do you call it, when you send people out from Rome, and they had gone to Corinth and taken up their work there.

[2 : 49] Corinth was the administrative capital of the Roman province of Achaia. It was a port city. What we would now refer to in somewhat disparaging terms as a playboy, in those days they referred to as a Corinthian.

As Vancouver is famous for strip joints and beer, so that kind of immorality was part of the city of Corinth as well.

I don't know what it makes you feel like when you open the province of Achaia, but preaching the gospel in the city, that if it is truly represented by that paper, it must be an extraordinarily difficult task.

Well, to such a difficult task, Paul addressed himself and began in a very simple way by attending the Sabbath synagogue services, and there he argued week after week, and subsequently day after day.

And at the heart of the Christian proclamation, there must be an argument, because it's either right or wrong. And Paul's business was to establish the truth of the gospel, and so week by week he argued.

[4 : 17] If you do what you like with that, you may not think it's very Christian, but there it is in Acts 18. The result of his arguing with them was that the Jews in the synagogue became divided.

Some became believers in the Lord, and some refused to believe the argument that Paul was presenting. And so the congregation in the synagogue split.

Paul very graciously took the ruler of the synagogue, who had become a Christian, and moved into the house next door and started all over again, arguing day after day.

Sort of like one service station proprietor I know, who was told that he had to raise his prices by the company, and the company said to him, if you don't, you'll put up another station across the road from you that will.

So it was that kind of thing. Paul moved in next door, and for 18 months he went back and he argued the truth of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, until the Jews, in their exasperation, took him before Galileo, who was the proconsul, and said, this man is teaching people to worship in a way which is against the law.

[5 : 40] Galileo heard them and dismissed it and said, that's none of my business, work it out among yourselves. You're just arguing about words and laws that pertain to the Jewish religion, and they're no business of mine.

And so he dismissed the case outright, but they didn't want it to be dismissed, so they took Sosthenes. Now, Sosthenes was also a ruler of the synagogue, and there was a kind of mob violence in which he was badly beaten up in front of Galileo, but Galileo paid no attention as he wasn't going to be taken in by their demonstration.

And it's very interesting that that man who was beaten up is very likely the man that you meet in the first chapter of the first verse of the epistles of the Corinthians, where Paul writes, Paul, by the will of God, Paul called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and the brother, Sosthenes.

So you see the wonderful grace of God in taking this man through all this, and he becomes the brother, and joins Paul in Ephesus, and in giving authority to this letter which Paul is writing.

So, that's what you have. That's the church. And subsequently, after Paul had finished there, had moved on to Ephesus, he received reports, perhaps from Timothy, and he writes back to this church, this letter which opens in these nine verses that we're looking at today.

[7 : 21] And they're good verses. There were enormous problems in the church in Corinth. There was problems of immaturity, problems of pride, problems of boasting, problems of disunity, problems of gross immorality, problems of spiritual excitement and fervor that was in excess.

All these things were happening, but in these first nine verses, Paul says, this is the basis of that community, despite all its problems, and he outlines it for you, and I want to pass that outline on to you.

Will you look at the word God, as it appears, by the will of God, the church of God, grace and peace from God.

I thank God. And it ends with, God is faithful. Number of references to God all the way through. And if you're studying this in a Bible study, look at them closely and see what it says about God.

And then look in these nine verses and see what it says about Jesus Christ, about who he is. He is the one of whom Paul is an apostle.

[8 : 41] He is the sanctifier. He's the one whose name the Christians call on. He is the Lord of the Christians in Corinth and every other part of the world where they believe on his name.

Grace comes from him. Peace comes from him. Grace is given in him. We are enriched by him. There is a testimony to him. There is the revealing of him.

He sustains us. His day, which is the day of the Lord, is the day of judgment. And we are called into fellowship with him to acknowledge him as Lord. And that's all in nine verses without being the subject of those verses.

So there is a great deal that these nine verses say about God and a great deal that they say about Jesus Christ. Now, I'm wise enough to know that people in our society like religion, as they say, but they don't like God and they don't like Jesus Christ.

They don't like it to be very particular. So I have extracted from these nine verses any reference to God and Jesus Christ. And this is what came up.

[9 : 51] Paul, the entrepreneur, and his partner Sosthenes to the community at Corinth, the people who have got it together, morally disciplined, sharing universal humanity.

You've got the resources and you can make peace. Thanks to nobody, you've got it all together. You know it and you can communicate it because you've got it.

You don't have to wait. It's all here right now. Like it is now, it's always going to be. You can depend on that because you are the center of it.

You can try it yourself. Take every reference to God and Jesus Christ out of those nine verses and you've got to end up with something that sounds like that.

The terrible part about that is it does sound very familiar, doesn't it? As though I've heard it somewhere else. And what it is is an attempt to communicate Christianity without reference to God or to Jesus Christ.

[10 : 57] Now, what the Christian community believes in is very much that. but the resource, the source is man living over against God who is the source of it all.

That's what a Christian is. If you're not a Christian, then these words will no doubt thrill you to the bone. This is who we are. We are the people and the truth will die with us.

That will no doubt be a tremendous encouragement for you to know that. But as a Christian, it's quite different. The resource for everything is in the God who has revealed himself in Jesus Christ.

Three characteristics of the church, the community of God's people because that's what we are. A people called by God, a people dependent on God, a people living in relationship to God through that relationship which he offers to us in Jesus Christ.

So, there's much here but three things I want to tell you about his description of the church. Who the church is, the people who live in relationship to God.

[12 : 18] And if you look at the verses, you will see first that the church is a called community. you are here as a community because God has called you and you are seeking to respond individually and corporately to that call.

That's why we're here. God has called us. Do you want to hear it again? Paul, called by the will of God. As an individual he was called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ and our brother Sosthenes to the church.

Do you know what the translation of that word is? The church is the people who have been called out by God. They are the called people.

They are the people who are answering God's call. Then it goes on to say not only are they a called people but they are a calling people.

And that is in verse 2 again all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ both their Lord and ours. God has called us.

[13 : 27] We call on him through Christ. That's the relationship. The called community that calls on him through Jesus Christ. Further it says that we are called to be saints.

And please understand that that saints means that you belong to God. Please understand what I said at the beginning. For people, people, people, people, immaturity.

All these people are people who have been called to be saints. And God has worked to work in them and take them into what he has called them to be which is his saints.

God's people to fulfill God's purpose. So, a called community, a calling community, a community called to be saints.

There's another word in there which has called in it and you will never find it except for my infinite wisdom in being able to tell you where it is because you won't believe me but it's there in verse 8.

[14 : 35] And, uh, who will sustain you to the end guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now, that word guiltless has calling in it too only it's a negative calling.

You will not be called into judgment. It's a, it's the called community called to be saints calling on the Lord not to be called into judgment because of Jesus Christ.

So, it's called in that negative sense as well. And finally, in the last verse of this passage, verse 9, God is faithful by whom you were called into the fellowship of his son Jesus Christ our Lord.

Your relationship to one another as you look around is not based on human compatibility. It's based clearly on God's call to you which you are seeking to respond to along with others whom God has called.

That's why Paul said Paul, an apostle by the will of God and the brother Sosthos, two very unlike people called to be brothers.

[15 : 55] The called people are referred to again when he says that we're called to be saints along with everybody else in every place who is characterized by calling on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

They are called and the calling people are one because of that calling. So that's what we are first, a called community.

The second thing we are is a gifted community and Paul thanks God for this in verse four when he says because of the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus that in every way you were enriched in him with all speech and all knowledge.

They had these gifts and then if you go on into verse seven so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Enriched you lack no spiritual gift. You are a gifted community. God in his grace has gifted you.

[17 : 05] Now I have a problem about this because so often we meet together and there's nobody to teach Sunday school, there's nobody to sing in the choir, there's nobody to serve on the church committee, there's nobody to head up this committee, there's nobody to do this, there's nobody to do that, everybody's too busy and on and on it goes.

I shrink from that because I am sure that it is as true of us as it was of Corinth that we come behind in no gift.

There is no gift that as a congregation we lack. They're all there. May God by his grace bring every gift to the place of its fulfillment in the service of Jesus Christ.

Every gift is the other side of it of course is how do we organize this congregation? We organize this congregation in order that every person in it may exercise the gift they have, whatever that gift may be, whether it's visiting, whether it's praying, whether it's witnessing, whether it's counseling, whatever it may be, God grant that built into the structure of your life and your Christian community may be the opportunity for you to exercise that gift.

Because we come behind in no gift, as the Corinthians didn't, and I don't think it suggests that they are particular. I think that's what the church of Jesus Christ is all about, that we are in every way enriched in him.

[18 : 43] Notice they were enriched with all speech and knowledge. knowledge, there's a hook on that. Do you remember what it is? Speech and knowledge, they were great communicators and great philosophers, and they understood.

So it was to them. Later in this letter that Paul wrote, though I have the gift of all speech, men and the vengeance, have not love, it's not worth it.

Though I understand all knowledge, without love it's not worth it. So that he's saying here they're gifted, but there is the possibility that he's setting them up to show them that that giftedness without love is going to collapse.

The church is a called people, the church is a gifted people, and finally the church is a waiting people, a waiting community.

community. And I think this to me is, I mean, you've probably heard everything I've said a hundred times already before in your life, but hear this because I think this is something I'm beginning to understand in a new way, and I hope you are too.

[20 : 00] When it says about you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, the difference between us and the Christian community that believes in God and the other community is that there's nothing to wait for.

It's all here right now, and you've got to make the most of it. The Christian community is a waiting community, and what we're waiting for, we're told, is the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We are waiting like a waiter waits, a busy waiter, that he's got a lot of people to attend to as he waits on people. So as Christians, we are to be busy in our waiting for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ.

What Paul is saying about the Corinthian church, and he covers this in the totality of the letter, he says there's two things that you've got to keep firmly in your mind.

Those two things are to live in remembrance of what he has done, and in anticipation of what he will do.

[21 : 13] That's where you are. This do in remembrance of me. Remembrance of what he has done, anticipation of what he will do on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ, the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We're in between the two. The present is very imperfect, unless we are remembering what God has done in the past, unless we are anticipating what he's going to do in the future.

So we are awaiting community. And while we're waiting, this is what's happening. Look at it carefully in verse 6. The testimony to Christ was confirmed among you.

Now that word appears later on again when it says in verse 8, who will sustain you? Now that same word confirm and sustain, those are the same word.

Confirm and sustain. So that what in the present moment is happening is Jesus Christ is confirming the witness we make to him by demonstrating that this is true.

[22 : 30] And he is sustaining us without reproach while we await his coming. So he's confirming the witness to himself and he's sustaining us as we seek to live in the obedience of faith.

We are being confirmed or sustained in that faith. So that's the present moment. The remembrance of what he has done, the confirming of the witness to Jesus Christ and the sustaining of those who belong to Jesus Christ in the present and the anticipation of what he will do.

The Corinthian church got into great problems because they concentrated on the excitement of the moment. This is written by C.K.

Barrett. They concentrated on the excitement of the moment or the despair of the moment if you want to overlook the cost at which the present was purchased and the fact that the present is still incomplete.

And that to me is where so much of our problem comes from. And that is that we forget how God has purchased the present and the fact that the present he has purchased for us is incomplete until Christ's coming again.

[24 : 03] A lady told me recently that she's leaving St. John's because we believe in the second coming. Well, I don't believe in a lot of teaching.

I hear about the second coming. But unmistakably we are looking for the revealing of the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

history is in his hands. The future is in his hands. It's not in our. We are called to wait for him being sustained by him and watching the testimony to him being confirmed in our lives.

that's why we are Christians with a past to remember a present to be sustained and to wait in and a future to anticipate.

That's how we're to live. Those are to be the characteristics of the people who have chosen the liberate dependence upon God, the God who has revealed himself Jesus Christ.

[25 : 14] That's what we are. Amen. See? Let us pray.

Let us begin by praying for unity of all Christian people.

Our Lord Jesus Christ who did say unto thine apostles Peace I live with you my peace I give unto you regard not our sins but the faith of thy church and grant unto it that peace and unity which is agreeable to thy will who liveth and reigneth with the Father and the Holy Spirit one God world without end.

Amen. Let us pray for the extension of the church. Almighty God who by the Son thy Son Jesus Christ didst give commandment to the apostles that they should go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.

Grant to us whom thou hast called into thy church a ready will to obey the word and fill us with a hearty desire to make thy way known upon earth thy saving health among all nations through Jesus Christ our Lord.

[26 : 45] Amen. Let us remember some of our missionaries in our parish. O God who wilt that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of thy truth prosper we pray thee all those who labor in the gospel at home and in distant lands and particularly we remember David Turvey as he travels and remember Jane his wife and Miriam his daughter.

As well we rejoice with Mildred Sullivan known better to us as Sully as she celebrates her 25th year of ministry through the vehicle of intervarsity. Protect them in all perils and support them in loneliness and in the hour of trial.

Give them thy grace to bear faithful witness unto thee. Endue them with burning zeal and love that they may turn many to righteousness through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen. As we approach our annual congregational meeting let us pray for the parish. O God and Holy Ghost sanctifier of the faithful sanctify thy church by thine abiding presence bless those who minister in holy things enlighten the minds of thy people more and more with the light of thy everlasting gospel bring erring souls to the knowledge of God our Savior and those who are walking in the way of life keep steadfast unto the end.

Give patience to thy sick and afflicted and renew them in body and soul. Guard from forgetfulness of thee those who are strong and prosperous.

[28 : 34] Increase in us thy manifold gifts of grace and make us all to be faithful in good works. O blessed Spirit whom the Father and the Son together we worship and glorify one God world without end.

Amen. Let us remember our Sunday school. Almighty God who has committed to thy holy church the care and nurture of thy children enlighten with thy wisdom those who teach and those who learn.

Particularly we would remember Monday Church Club as it starts again this year and all those that are involved in the Sunday school particularly Nora Johnson as she leads it. That rejoicing in the knowledge of thy truth they may worship thee and serve thee all the days of their life.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. And let us pray for those who are preparing for confirmation. O God who through the teaching of thy Son Jesus Christ didst prepare the disciples for the coming of thy comforter make ready we beseech thee the hearts and minds of thy servants who at this time are seeking the gifts of thy Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands that drawing near with penitent and faithful hearts they may be filled with his power through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen. And let us pray for peace in the world. Almighty God and merciful Father who wouldst have the kingdoms of the world become the kingdom of thy Son Jesus Christ bestow thy blessing who beseech thee upon all who labor for peace and righteousness among the peoples that the day may be hastened when war shall be no more and thy will only shall govern the nations upon the earth through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.

[30 : 32] Amen. And let us pray for our national heritage. Almighty and merciful God who in thy wisdom does divide to the nations their inheritance we yield thee hearty thanks for thy loving kindness.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.