

**1 Corinthians 4:1-13**

December 5, 2010 – ADVENT 3

**Wait Till the Lord Comes**✧ **For praise from God (vv.1-5)**✧ **No pride in men (vv.6-7)**✧ **As fools for Christ (vv.8-13)**

In the name of Christ, our Advent Savior, dear fellow Christians:

Remember when your Mom said, “Wait till your father comes home!” If she was smiling, maybe you were going fishing. Frowning? You might wish Dad would be late. That day for me was one of the rare times my mother was not smiling. And I don’t remember her saying, “Wait till your father comes home.” When he did, I wished she had. But I’m not sure it would have helped. I was disrespectful all day. Her late afternoon silence my only warning. That night my brother and I were planning to camp out in the back yard. I got to, all right. Very early before the sun went down. And Roc was not allowed to be out there with me. Forty years later I still remember one of my father’s most effective disciplines.

It’s one of the reasons I love my father. *“No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.”* (Hebrews 12:11 NIV) That *“harvest of righteousness and peace”* is more than my treasured relationship with my mother. Home discipline taught me to appreciate the discipline of my heavenly Father. We are soldiers of the cross headed back to the combat zone today. God’s counsel, love, guidance and discipline come with a loving smile. Hearing it now is all good when God says, **Wait Till the Lord Comes.**

✧ **For praise from God (vv.1-5)**

Discipline was needed by the congregation at Corinth because of divisions. One said, *“I follow Paul,” and another, “I follow Apollos.”* (3:4) They were choosing up sides between pastors, and everyone was hurting because of it. As Paul shows them the proper view of pastors, he teaches God’s people the reason **For praise from God** and why we want to **Wait Till the Lord Comes.**

*“So then, men ought to regard us as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the secret things of God. Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.”* Wouldn’t that make life easier in a good way if we could just keep that one word in mind? It’s not a pastor’s eloquence that impresses God. Apollos was a great speaker; Paul was not. It’s not a pastor’s travels. Paul was everywhere; Apollos didn’t always want to go. God is looking for something in pastors and His people. All of us have been given *“a trust.”* God wants only this: Be *faithful*. Isn’t that the lesson of our Midweek Advent *Parable of the Ten Minas*? Your “mina” is the same as mine. It’s the Gospel of God’s forgiveness in Christ. Are we faithfully investing the Good News in hearts and souls?

It sounds a bit calloused in the NIV when Paul is translated saying, *“I care very little if I am judged by you or any human court.”* His willingness to stand trial for Christ is amazing in the Book of Acts. And Paul did care what people thought about his administration of the special offering for famine victims in Jerusalem. In 2 Corinthians, he says, *“We want to avoid any criticism of the way we administer this liberal gift.”* (8:20 NIV) To the Corinthians here in his first letter he seems to be saying something more like, *“Being examined by you or cross examined in court is the least of my worries. I don’t even examine myself like that. You see, my conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who examines me.”* **Wait Till the Lord Comes.** That’s the right time set by God to shine the light on dark things and reveal hidden motives in every heart.

Does that shake you up a bit? I look in my heart and don’t like what I see. Where there should be love, I find self-love. Where peace should rule, turmoil. Where trust should blossom, weeds of worry

keep popping up. Warmth of praise? No, it's icy coldness. One seminary professor said, "Whenever I look in my heart for faith, the little bugger runs and hides." **Wait Till the Lord Comes?** This cannot wait. I plead with David in last Wednesday's Psalm 130: ***"If you, O LORD, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness; therefore you are feared."*** (130:3f NIV) And again in Psalm 139: ***"Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."*** (139:23f NIV) The time for repentance is now because Jesus said, ***"The time has come....The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"*** (Mark 1:15) That **"good news"** is truly **Praise from God.**

Each week we come here dragging a heavy weight of worries, cares, disappointments over our own sins and grief for what others have caused. We might expect to find God frowning. But instead we see the smiling face of our Father just longing for us to come home. "Don't be afraid," He says. "You're mine! I adopted you into my family by Baptism. And when my Son Jesus **Comes** to take you home to heaven, you will hear Him say, ***'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.'***" (Matthew 25:34) Looking forward to such undeserved **Praise from God**, we can return to our duties here with peace and joy in the Lord, and...

### ☆ **No pride in men (vv.6-7)**

Paul had used some figurative language about him and Apollos to help the Corinthians see this more clearly. ***"I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow."*** (3:6f NIV) In another picture he says, ***"By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ."*** (3:10f NIV) See! **No room for pride in men.**

Not in yourself either. "What makes you so special?" Paul asks the very gifted, professional Corinthians. Don't go beyond what is written in the Bible there either. ***"What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?"*** Are you a great organizer? God gave you that gift. Can you run the numbers till they're tired, begging for mercy? God gave you that gift too. Can you gather volunteers so they pull the plow together straight and true? God set the lines. He gives the energy and blesses your work. A church to clean, sugar for treats, even coffee with caffeine, these are all blessings from God which we have received. But there's more to guarantee **No pride in men.** Paul is yours. Apollos is yours. All the pastors, teachers, staff ministers, administrators, Sunday School teachers belong to you. You own the world, life and death. You own the present. The future is yours. ***"All are yours, and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God."*** (3:21-23) Boast in God...!

### ☆ **As fools for Christ (vv.8-13)**

***"Fools for Christ"*** – does that seem a little harsh? Paul is using irony, even sarcasm here to cut through the foolish pride of his dear Corinthians. Later he says, ***"I am not writing this to shame you, but to warn you, as my dear children. Even though you have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. Therefore I urge you to imitate me."*** (4:14-16 NIV) You won't look rich to the world that way. Kings? Not at all! They'll see you as slaves of myth and legend. You will look weak and dishonorable. You may be brutally treated, tried, hung on a tree. So was Jesus for you and me. And the criminal next to him getting what he deserved from man's justice, found mercy in God's forgiveness when Jesus said, ***"Today you will be with me in paradise."*** (Luke 23:43) With love like that, let them curse; we will bless. Let them persecute and slander; we will bear up patiently with kindness. If they blame us for disasters like the early Christians, we revel in their labels: ***"scum of the earth," "garbage of the world."*** Every chance we get, we will tell them: Christ died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again. **Fools for Christ** will be ready for Him to enjoy all the gifts He brings that Second Christmas: perfect love, joy and peace. **For praise from God, No pride in men, As fools for Christ** – I can hardly **Wait Till the Lord Comes!** Come, Lord Jesus! Amen.