



DAILY FAITH PRACTICES

First Sunday of Advent (B) – 1 Corinthians 1:3-9

Focus: *Being Blameless*

word of life

“[Our Lord Jesus Christ] will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.” 1 Corinthians 1:8 (NRSV)

Read 1 Corinthians 1:3-9

The church season of Advent begins on a Sunday and includes the four Sundays preceding December 25. Advent includes a two-fold preparation: We prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus born centuries ago and to receive the second coming of our Lord. Advent lectionary texts are full of ominous warnings about the return of Christ.

1. *What are some images and words associated with Advent?*
2. *Take a moment to reflect on Advent traditions which you have observed.*

Advent often is overshadowed by the hustle and bustle of Christmas shopping, cooking, cleaning and preparing. We can get hooked into attempting to produce a perfect Christmas Day, but that is not why Christ came to dwell among us. Advent calls for prisoners to be released, sins to be forgiven, and lives to be made whole. The hopes of all the years rest on the coming of the Messiah. What a stark contrast with the holiday buzz of the pre-Christmas rush.

Advent invites us to stop, breathe, and listen to the Word of God.

In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul cuts through the distractions. He writes as a believer who anticipates Christ to return at any point – within his lifetime. There is no need to invest in celebrating the first birth of Jesus when his second return is imminent.

3. *Are you preparing for the return of Christ? Why or why not?*
4. *What might you do differently if you knew Christ would return on December 25 of this year?*

Paul begins the letter in his typical pattern with words of thanksgiving. He gives thanks not only for the work of the Corinthians, but for the ways God is working through them. He looks at the Corinthians and sees God shaping, leading, guiding, and inspiring the people of Corinth – despite their internal struggles and disagreements.

God’s grace has been given to the Corinthians through Jesus Christ. It is God who has already made them rich. Spiritual gifts have already been given, even if the faith community struggles to claim those gifts and to use them to benefit others.

5. *How has God made you rich?*

Paul prays the Corinthians might be blameless on the day of the Lord at the end of time. He is concerned about them standing before God at the final judgment, but Paul knows God is already at work strengthening the faithful through the fellowship with Christ.

6. *What does it mean to be blameless?*
7. *Is being blameless a goal of your life? Explain.*
8. *What thoughts and feelings do you have when you think about judgment day?*

word among us

On the first day of camp, Miss Mary leads the following song to get to know the names of the children.

All: *Who stole the cookies from the cookie jar?*

Joey stole the cookies from the cookie jar?

Joey: *Who me? Not me!*

All: *Then who?* [Joey points to someone else and yells that person's name]

Joey: *Beth!* [The song is repeated until each person has a turn.]

In this singing game, each person gets blamed for stealing cookies. Of course, each child is innocent and points the finger at someone else until all are declared blameless. Hopefully the group can rejoice when the cookies are found and enjoy eating them.

None of us likes to be blamed, especially when we are innocent. Paul hopes each follower of Jesus can stand on judgment day blameless and without reproach. At first, this hope and prayer by Paul might seem mind-boggling and not attainable.

1. *What is your first reaction to Paul's hope for followers of Christ to be blameless?*
2. *How can we as sin-filled humans ever hope to attain a state of blamelessness?*

We can stand before God blameless only because of Jesus Christ working within us. He takes the sin of the world upon himself, allowing us to be reconciled with God. In this season of gift-giving, we are reminded that God has made us rich through the gift of Jesus Christ.

3. *How do we respond to the gift of Christ?*
4. *What is your part in becoming blameless before God?*

faith practice in daily life

Live among God's faithful people.

All this talk about being blameless can stir additional questions. Most of us squirm when we hear about God keeping us blameless. Good thing we have others in the church to discuss this matter. In baptism, we are connected not just to Jesus Christ, but to the body of Christ. God is not strengthening us in isolation, but God's Spirit is at work calling, gathering, and enlightening the church.

As people of faith, we are on a journey. Have courage. God continues to be at work in us so we might be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

5. *Who might you consult about their understanding on leading a "blameless" life?*
6. *What questions might you ask that person?*
7. *What will you continue to ponder during the Advent season?*

Prayer

God, prepare our hearts to receive the gift of Christ. Strengthen us so we may be blameless on the day our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen

last word

Begin each day
asking Christ to keep you
blameless for the day.

Daily Faith Practices

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