**Advent 1 Sermon**

**Text:** 1 Corinthians 1:3-9

**Theme:** Wait and Watch!

 If there's one thing people hate to do, it's wait.  We don't like to wait for anything.  It doesn't even matter if the thing we're waiting for is "good" or "bad."  How many of you have ever had some sort of unpleasantness slated for the future (i.e. a medical procedure or a meeting) and you say, "I wish I could just do it right now and get it over with!  This waiting is killing me!"?

 We don't like waiting. Waiting, when put on hold on the phone, waiting in line at the store or waiting in the doctor's office. But the church is always waiting. **Waiting and watching** for Christ’s return. And Advent Season is here to remind us of this clearly.

 Advent is a season of preparation. A season of waiting. Waiting for Christmas, of course. But we also remember that Christians are still waiting and watching, for our Lord's second coming. Advent means, “coming”. And you might think that it means “Christmas is coming”. And it does. But it also reminds us that Christ is coming, or returning, as he has promised. While the world is awash in red and green, the church wears blue – which reminds us of the sky, and the promise that Christ would return the same way he left – he will come “coming in the clouds”.

 So, we wait and watch, as they waited and watched back then, when St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians. In Paul's greeting here you'd think he was writing to a bunch of super-Christians. He thanks God for them. He says they've been given everything. That God’s word was being preached in their church and community. They lack no spiritual gift. They must have been a Super church!

**3Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ! 4I always thank my God for you because of the grace of God given to you in Christ Jesus. 5You were enriched in him in every way, in all your speaking and all your knowledge, 6because the testimony about Christ was established in you. 7As a result you do not lack any gift as you eagerly wait for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

 Sounds great doesn’t it? Super church indeed! But wait! When Paul continues to write to them, he notes that there is something rotten in Corinth, something terribly wrong. Paul wrote at least 2 letters to the church he founded in Corinth. The Church of Corinth was, what we might call, a mess. They had issues. Real problems. There was sexual immorality, yes active in the church membership. Marriage problems. There were divisions in the church, factions. One group against another against another. Members taking each other to court. Unruly individuals were disrupting the worship services, people were getting drunk from too much communion wine during the services and some even denied basic teachings of the faith, like that Jesus actually rose from the dead. Not so supper were they?

 What about us? Take a good look at St. John Lutheran Church. Take a good look! I mean, a real good look. I am not talking about this building. With all the decorations for Christmas and it’s beautiful architecture and historical significance. This church is a gathering of people – various ages and backgrounds, but one thing in common. We aren't super-Christians either. We break the rules, we forget what's really important. We don’s step up as we should. We live life for ourselves. And don’t kid yourself. Even the most faithful fall into sin every day! As Paul pointed out to the church in Corinth. They were a mess. **It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that even pagans do not tolerate: A man is sleeping with his father’s wife. 2And you are proud!**

 A messy church indeed. It is easy to point fingers at others but remember this. When you one point finger. Three are pointing back at you. Here is a picture for you. A father takes his teenage daughter to school. He stops to pick up her friend first. Just as they approached the school, the car began to behave very badly, missing and backfiring noisily so that we sounded like a very troubled version of Chitty-Chitty-Bang-Bang! As come up to the school, the father looked back in the mirror to see my daughter and her friend, without any signal, dive down into the seat. They did not want anyone to see them in that old, sickly car. The car was no status symbol. A great embarrassment. They did not want to get out. The daughter begged her father just to keep driving. —I would have ducked myself, but someone had to drive.

 If likened to an automobile, the church at Corinth is a wreck. The engine barely runs (on just a few cylinders), the transmission slips, and the wheels are about to fall off. The irony is that the Corinthians drive about in this car with heads held high. They are proud of their car (church), and they let everyone know it.

 What about us. Are we a wreck? It would be easy also to point the finger at the pandemic and the situation we find ourselves in but let’s be honest. We are a wreck, messy, misfiring. Because of sin. We probably don't give the impression that we're eagerly awaiting Christ's revealing, and the conclusion of history. And we're certainly no super-Christians.

 That may be who we appear to be, but that isn't who are. Just like the church in Corinth, wasn’t lacking what they needed. Neither are we. **A messy Church needs a merciful God! 8He will also keep you strong until the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9God is faithful, who called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.**

 We have seen how God cleaned up the mess. And his method was messy. It started in that dung filled stable, there in that manger full of hay. And it ended on that hill outside of Jerusalem. Blood dripping, a messy, awful, terrible death. With a body wrapped in a sheet and lying in a cold dark tomb. But the mess was taken care of. Our mess our sin our failures. We were cleansed. And the wait. Only 3 days. Then came the news. He is alive. We have seen him. God did it. We are blameless because of him!

 Now we still wait. But not in fear. Not in terror, not a mess, but clean, knowing he has given us his word and sacraments to keep us till the end. Because he is faithful! So, we will continue to chug along. We wait. We watch. Yes, a messy church, but with a merciful God!

Amen