

“We’re All In This Together”

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

One of our Thanksgiving traditions as a family is to **all** sit down together on Friday night and watch a movie. Since we were all together this year, and won’t be for Christmas, we decided to watch that holiday classic, *Christmas Vacation*. We used to own this movie on VHS...then on DVD. And now we just fire it up wherever we want because we own it on *Amazon Prime!* We, like many of you I would guess, have seen this movie so many times. But it never gets old. I mean, there are so many classic lines that all of my kids have heard me quote over the years and now they quote them too. Lines like, “That’s a honey of tree Clark, is it real?” Or, “I don’t know what to say, but it’s Christmas and we’re all in misery.”

But one of my favorite series of lines in the movie comes near the end. Clark and his family are having a rough Christmas Eve, of course. He didn’t get his Christmas bonus. His uncle Lewis burned down the giant Christmas tree with his cigar. A squirrel leaped out of the new tree Clark cut down from his yard. While chasing the squirrel in the house, cousin Eddy’s dog destroyed most of the dining room. It was at that point Clark sees the suitcases of his in-laws by the door and he let’s it fly with the classic, *“Where do you think you’re going? Nobody’s leaving. Nobody’s walking out on this fun old fashioned family Christmas. No. No. We’re all in this together.”*

Do you remember this scene if you’ve watched the movie? It’s a turning point, I think. Because no matter how bad things had gone that night, the fictional father-figure, Clark, vowed that everyone in the family was going to press on, because they were all in it together. And ultimately they did and things worked out in the end.

Now, I know I’m making a tremendous theological leap here, but every time I get to this point in the movie, I can’t help but think of Paul’s wonderful lines he starts his letter with to the Corinthians. Of course what

Paul writes has nothing to do with silly movie characters or ridiculous holiday themes. But still, every time I hear his words, I think of this really big family pressing on, no matter what's happening, knowing that things would ultimately work out in the end. I mean, Advent is a time when the church patiently prepares for the coming of the Great King, Jesus the Christ—the coming of the King at his birth, and his second coming on the last day. It's also a time to reflect on our readiness and preparedness for his coming. But even in our penitential preparations, Advent is a time for holy joy as we're all in this together. We have a story. It's not just a seasonal story like the movie, but a real one that's a part of who we all are as those saved by grace through faith in Jesus. And as individual as that story might seem, it doesn't belong to us, or begin with us. It's our story because of the one who is at the center of it all. He's the one who shows us that we're all in this together. And to see that all we have to do is take a closer look at our epistle reading for tonight.

"I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge— even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you— so that you are not lacking in any gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord."

Were you listening? Ok prove it. What name did you hear me read 8 times in 9 verses? The name of Jesus! You see, Paul obviously does this on purpose. Because he wants the Corinthians to understand what it means to have Jesus at the center of their lives—at the center of their stories, **if you will**. If they can do that, then they can see the entirety of their lives in the proper context.

Because Paul wants the Corinthians and his readers, which are you and me, to learn and understand something really important here. Together as members of Christ's church, we have been caught up in a great movement of the love and power of the one true God whose work for the whole world had now been revealed through the events concerning his son.

Because the way Paul is speaking here, he is thankful this family of Corinthians, **and our family**, has meaning, purpose, and hope precisely because we have come from somewhere- are someplace now- and are

moving into the future God has planned. I mean, notice how Paul weaves this story of our lives together into the story of Jesus at every level. God gave them—**he gives us**— his grace in Christ through Word and Sacrament. And remember what grace means? Not deserving what one gets. And so Paul says to God, “Thank you for your grace to this family” And what is the result of that grace? God’s riches improve us! This is where we are now. We have been blessed by God—we have been brought into his world of grace—and now we are being equipped to live the life of the Christian in the places in which God has put us. In these places, we continue to learn his ways through his word. We continue to see his will for our lives through his word. We continue to teach each other and grow in our faith. We live each day knowing that when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his son for us, which means our lives have meaning and purpose. We have hope even when all seems hopeless.

God called the Corinthians in the past, equips them in the present, and will complete the whole process in the future. That’s their story, and it is ours as a congregation, too. We’re all in this together, my friends, *“not lacking any gift as we wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ who will sustain us to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

And all of this should give us nothing but confidence. In a world in which human history recorded each and everyday disappoints. In a world in which sin, death, and an out-of-control pandemic seems to dominate our lives, we, as the body of Christ, have a God-ordained story. Our lives are not some game of chance or just a random series of events that in the end mean nothing. They’re not just our stories with no history, and no future. No, the Christian life means something. It has purpose and it has shape. As Paul reminded the Corinthians and you and me tonight, Jesus is the shaper at every point. Only he can fill the ins and outs of everyday life with purpose, real meaning, and enduring hope.

And this is good news my friends in Christ. You are participating in a historical movement because your identity is bound up with the purposes of God in Christ! Christ who was born; Christ who died and rose again; Christ who comes to us in his Word and Sacrament; Christ who will one day come again in glory.

The next time you feel alone in this world. On those days when you think that you have no future, no story, no overarching connection to the

greatest narrative in the history of the world, look to the cross. Look to the cross and remember what Jesus did for you by sacrificing his life as payment for your sins. And while you're looking that way, look down and remember those two Greek letters on the front of the altar. Jesus is the first and the last—the Alpha and the Omega. Through faith, you are connected to him. You have a history from the beginning and it's a history that's going somewhere! It will persist through this pandemic and any pandemic that might follow. It will persist through every election, through every changing headline, and every changing trend until the glorious day of our King's return.

Until that day occurs, whenever it may be, I have more good news. *“God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.”* He did this to you and me. He made it happen. He called us into the fellowship of his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. And thank God for it because under his reign, both now and forever, it means that we're all in this together. **Amen.**