

Sunday, December 7, 2025

Advent 2A

Romans 15:4-13 (v.7)

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

My dear friends,

It is Advent.

During Advent, we prepare to welcome our King.

We prepare to welcome Him in remembrance of His coming by His birth.

We prepare to welcome Him as He comes to us now in the Word and Sacraments.

We prepare to welcome Him when He comes again in glory.

We welcome Him, because He comes to welcome us.

Advent is about the Coming One,
the one who welcomes us into righteousness.

John the Forerunner announces Him with urgency.

"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!"

John calls all *to prepare the way of the Lord*—
from the wanton sinners to the 'pious' sinners.

John points us away from ourselves.

He points us to the Lamb of God.

The lamb who takes away the sin of the world.

Advent is not self-improvement season.

Advent is the season of turning to Jesus.

We turn towards the One who receives sinners.

We turn to the One who renews us.

Prepare ye the way of the Lord!

Welcome He who receives you!

The King of Kings is near!

1. Christ Has Welcomed You

My friends,

St. Paul says in today's Epistle reading:

*"welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you,
for the glory of God."*

Christ has welcomed you.

Christ has stretched His arms wide in welcome on the cross.

From the cross, He reaches to receive the poor and the oppressed.

The outsiders and outcasts.

The weak and the strong.

Enemies and oppressors.

All people.

By the cross, you are welcome.

For on the cross, all the scorn and reproach you piled on God
went onto Christ.

Christ has covered all the damages and rifts you have caused.

All your insistence on getting your way.

All your demands to get your own.

The consequence of insisting on your own prerogative, privilege
and preference.

The outcome of your living up to what you want to boast about.

Your arrogance and folly.

Your whining and backbiting.

Your rolling eyes and wagging head.

Your gossip and judgment.

Your pushing down God and others to please yourself.

All of that—it landed on Christ.

"As it is written,

'The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me.'"

(Romans 15:3).

What you deserve is what Christ got.

Because He loves you.

And He wants to welcome you into His Kingdom.

As Scripture says in Colossians:
*"Once you were alienated from God
 and were enemies...because of your evil behavior.
 But now He has reconciled you by Christ's physical body
 through death
 to present you holy in His sight,
 without blemish and free from accusation—
 if you continue in your faith, established and firm,
 not moved from the hope held out in the gospel..."*
 (Colossians 1:21–23b)

Jesus bore your scorn.
 He endures with you.
 He loves you.
 And having paid for all your sins,
 He welcomes you with open arms.

The welcome of the cross is not tolerance.
 It is the self-giving, transforming love of Jesus.
 Advent repentance means opening our eyes to this welcome.

John points us away from ourselves to the Lamb of God.
 God doesn't demand that we make things right first.
 He has already made them right by the cross.
 God points us to His Son—the One who receives sinners and
 makes them righteous.

By His cross, Jesus accepts you.
 Jesus receives you.
 Jesus welcomes you.
 And Jesus makes you new.

2. Christ Calls You to Welcome Others.

My friends,

Christ calls you to welcome others.

*"welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you,
for the glory of God."*

He calls us to accept one another on account of the cross.

They are accepted as forgiven
without blemish and free from accusation.

You do not just tolerate one another.

You love.

You don't just put up with your brothers and sisters in Christ.

You don't just endure our enemies.

You **love** them.

You value them and esteem them by the cross.

They matter to you.

You need them, and they need you.

So, you lay aside what pleases you and seek to please them.

Not to make them happy.

But to build them up in Christ.

To bear with their weaknesses, inabilities, disabilities,
quirks and foibles—

and make it right with them in Christ.

God says,

*"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit,
but in humility consider others better than yourselves.
Each of you should look not only to your own interests,
but also to the interests of others." (Philippians 2:3–4)*

This is the loving way you accept one another.

But this kind of love requires death.

This love requires Christ's death for sin.

And it requires the death of the old self.

Christ welcomed you by spreading His arms wide in death to give you life.

He calls you to do the same.

St. Paul says:

"We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and [ought] not to please ourselves.

Each of us should please his neighbour for his good, to build him up.

For even Christ did not please Himself, but, as it is written:

'The insults of those who insult You have fallen on Me.'"

(Romans 15:1–3)

And our Lord says,

"If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself

and take up his cross daily and follow Me." (Luke 9:23.)

You lay aside self-interests for the interests of Christ.

And Christ is interested in the welfare *of the least of these, My brethren.*

Christ's desire is for all people to come to repentance and faith.

Christ's desire is for all to be loved and forgiven.

Christ's interest is for you all to

"continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel."

His longing is

"that together you may with one voice glorify [God His Father]"

(Romans 15:6).

3. You Keep Welcoming Because Christ Gives Us Hope

My friends,

People are difficult.

(Even Church people.

People like to point that out.

They expect Christians to be perfect.

But that's not happening this side of Christ's return.

Christians **are not** perfect.

But the world certainly isn't any better!)

People are difficult.

So how can we keep accepting each other as Christ accepts us?

How do we keep loving and forgiving?

Hope.

St. Paul began today's Reading with

*"For whatever was written in former days was written...that...
through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have **hope**."*

(Romans 15:4)

And He ends it with:

*"May the God of **hope** fill you with all joy
and peace in believing,*

*so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in **hope**."*

(Romans 15:13)

The Holy Spirit gives us hope through the encouragement of the Scriptures.

And hope isn't wishful thinking.

The Holy Spirit's hope isn't

"Man, I hope I get Lego for Christmas."

Hope is the Spirit-given knowledge that God keeps His promises.

Hope is the expectation grounded in God's character
and the reality of Jesus' resurrection.

*"This hope we have as an **anchor** of the soul,*

*a hope both **sure** and **steadfast**..."* (Hebrews 6:19a.)

*"and hope does not disappoint,
because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts
through the Holy Spirit who was given to us." (Romans 5:5).*

We don't welcome and receive each other in vain.
Our sad divisions will cease.
Jesus Himself will come and be our Prince of Peace.

So you lovingly endure because you have hope.
Look at the future:
*"The wolf shall dwell with the lamb
...and a little child shall lead them.
...They shall not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain;
for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord
as the waters cover the sea." (Isaiah 11:6–9)*

Your future is perfect harmony.
Your future is perfect reconciliation.
Peace and harmony—not by excluding, but through transformation.
Enemies will be friends.
The wolf, lion, bear and cobra are there, included—but renewed.
For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord.

This is not a naive wish.
This is the promise of the crucified and risen Christ.
Love wins because Christ reigns.
The cross is where hostility dies.
The resurrection is where hope rises.

Advent expectation isn't passive; it is an active welcoming.
Because you know what your future is,
you can welcome one another.
You can even welcome your present "wolf" or "enemy."
Because the one who comes at the end of time
is the One who welcomed you at the cross,
you can welcome others now in His name.

*

My friends,

Christ has welcomed you.

He welcomes you with a love that endured your sin,
died your death, and rose to give you hope.

Therefore, you welcome one another.

Not to tolerate, but to love.

Not to excuse sin, but to bear with the weak.

Welcome one another to glorify God with one voice.

For the Root of Jesse stands as a banner for the peoples.

In Him the nations hope.

In Him, enemies become family.

In Him, wolves become lambs.

In Him, you have hope—and so you can love.

On the cross, Christ spread His arms wide to embrace you.

Jesus accepts you.

Jesus receives you.

Jesus welcomes you.

*The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ
Jesus our Lord, amen.*