

**- Saint John's Pulpit (Nov 29, First Sunday of Advent)  
- "The Greatest Fellowship" 1 Corinthians 1:3-9**

<sup>3</sup>Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

<sup>4</sup>I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, <sup>5</sup>for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind— <sup>6</sup>just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you— <sup>7</sup>so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>8</sup>He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>9</sup>God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

***Grace and Peace: Where Are They From?***

Finally, we begin the season of Advent! Advent 2020... how do you feel about it, or what is your Advent plan? Not only by Covid-19 but also through all other nationwide / worldwide social issues, we had to see the world without grace and peace. Besides, how many victims did we see from a lot of natural disasters?

In the midst of all these challenges, we now begin this year Advent journey to meet the baby Jesus Christ. What we all experience now looks like what the Magi experienced about 2,000 years ago. They were traveling to follow the bright star in darkness. Yes, we are going through a long and dark tunnel.

On the other hand, what we all experience looks reminds us of the world before God's Creation. When God created the world, He did it out of chaos, darkness, and emptiness.

*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. <sup>2</sup>Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. Genesis 1:1-2 NIV*

Here is what the Old and New Testament share commonly. Before the advent of God (Genesis) and Jesus Christ, it was dark and empty. How much or how seriously have we experienced formlessness, darkness, and emptiness in our country? Don't you think that this season of Advent is what we really need?

Please look at the verse 3 from the text today.

*<sup>3</sup>Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 1:3 NRSV*

Apostle Paul's first message for Christians at Corinth clarifies an origin of grace and peace. Where are they from? Grace and Peace are from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, with the advent of God and Jesus, we can experience grace and peace truly. Please remember this. Your Advent this year is a blessed journey to taste peace and experience grace from Jesus Christ. He is the only one who can do this.

*<sup>27</sup>Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid. John 14:27 NRSV*

### ***Advent: Time to claim your 'Lifetime Warranty' by Jesus***

A label 'Lifetime Warranty'... I love it so much, don't you? We want to see this label from whatever we purchase. Do you know that Advent confirms a 'Lifetime-Warranty' for our salvation?

The reason why Jesus came to this world is to help us remain as faithful people of Christ until Jesus' return. Jesus encourages us to keep our faith journey without giving it up. Yes, Jesus is the greatest offer to make our Salvation. He is our Lifetime-Warranty for Salvation! Paul stresses out this point in the verse 8:

*8He 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*

Please look at the world. Our reality says that any Lifetime-Warranty offered by the World is not reliable. Let me share my first Thanksgiving shopping experience about sixteen years ago in America.

Hannah and I (at that time we had no kids) visited a neighborhood outlet in Indiana. Our first pick for the Thanksgiving shopping was a luggage bag made by a very famous company (starts "S"). Its tag clearly said, "Lifetime Warranty!" I loved this promise.

Several years later, the luggage bag needed a minor repair. I brought it to the same brand shop and asked a repair proudly. In a couple of minutes, I had to hear that no free repair service for goods purchased at Outlets! You never know how much I was disappointed at that time! Plus, this was a lesson learned in my life- No Lifetime Warranty in this world!

However, Jesus promised this warranty as long as we are with him! In the Epistle to Philippians, Apostle Paul encouraged Christians at Philippi to keep this Lifetime Warranty faithfully.

*6I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ. Philippians 1:6 NRSV*

### ***Advent: Time to deepen the Greatest Fellowship***

During this pandemic, we have lost fellowship with others. Visiting or inviting people requires lots of courage. Graduation, weddings, funerals, and all other gatherings had to be stopped, minimized, or postponed. Children couldn't enjoy their fellowship with their friends.

One day, my little son joined his online class, at that time there were a few students who joined in-person classes at the school. Presumably, they all met through online class either from their home or their classroom. One

student who was in the classroom said, "it is cold here!" Was it from a low temperature in his classroom? Or was it from the loss of fellowship among students?

Yes, it is cold here! We all meet a very cold and dry winter. However, this Advent makes us see a great joy of fellowship with Jesus Christ. This divine fellowship had been planned by God for His people. Finally, His plan comes to be fulfilled now.

*9God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. 1 Corinthians 1:9 NRSV*

Can we see the best word to portray the Advent? It might be the word 'fellowship'. Christmas is the best plan to bring Divine fellowship between God and people. Jesus was born to wear a human body to share life with people, known as Incarnation.

For the Virgin Mary who was afraid of all things around her, God allowed her to be in fellowship with the Holy Spirit. The unnamed shepherds in a field could enjoy fellowship with people cause of the Good News given from the angels. The bright star the wise men saw made them keep their journey on and encouraged one another not to give up their travel.

The point is this. This Advent is the best opportunity to deepen our fellowship with Jesus Christ. Don't be disappointed because you cannot enjoy lots of holiday parties. Rather Rejoice! The greatest opportunity is given to you now. To enjoy the wonderful fellowship with Jesus- is the gift from God this Advent.

Do you want to see a star in the sky clearly? If so, it should be dark. The darker, the better/the clearer! The Advent in the pandemic, it would be the best opportunity to focus on Jesus our Savior clearly!

*10When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. Matthew 2:10 NRSV*

Are you ready to enjoy the greatest fellowship with Jesus now? Amen.