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Sermon #2 Preparation for Gifts

1 Corinthians 1:3-9

Here we are at the beginning a special season in the church, the season in advent. It's a season of preparation, a season of joy, and a season of hope. It's a season that many of us look forward to all year long. We gain so much spiritually this season as long as we are open to the moving of the Spirit within us.

I take this passage of 1 Corinthians and I look for what this looks like in a greater context. What does this passage mean for us as Faith Church? What does this passage mean for those of us who claim to be Christian? What does this passage give us hope for in the coming future?

The lectionary this year brings us to this passage of 1 Corinthians 1:3-9. It's companion passages are ones that inspire a hope for a coming future. It plays a part in the beginning of the season of anticipation, of hope, of a joyful coming of Christ that can radically redefine the world that we live in. It's in this season that Christians honor as the beginning of our new faith, in the person that is Jesus Christ.

The passage that we are looking at is a passage of Thanksgiving, a passage that is to give thanks for the Corinthians for who they are as believers. Paul is showing his appreciation to the community for their various gifts. The last verse Paul gives thanks for the partnership between the believers and Christ. It's language of a strong connection between the believers and the Divine. The rest of the letter is built upon this thanksgiving, and I believe that Paul wanted to lay a foundation from which to communicate with the Corinthians.

In this thanksgiving there is also clues to some future events in the passage. Paul writes clearly about the coming of the Lord. In this way Paul tells the Corinthians that indeed Christ will come and in the that glorious day the Corinthians will be prepared for the Lord and will be able to celebrate that coming. Their gifts and abilities are preparing them for that day.

Yet I believe it is important to understand this passage in the greater context of 1 Corinthians. There was some division in the community, if look in the next passage of scripture. Paul wants the community to be unified, which I believe is a part of the reason Paul wants the community to be prepared for the coming of the Lord. It would be difficult to carry the Gospel if the group was more focused on being a part of specific groups rather unified under Christ alone.

There is also a need for faith to stand first among believers. Paul also writes the important need of keeping God and Christ and foremost, ahead of human knowledge. There's a danger present in believing that a person can be wiser than God or more powerful than the resurrection in their mind and Paul is tuned into that. The resurrection is the key component to faith, as opposed to human wisdom. The coming of Christ is built upon the resurrection, not on the coming of human wisdom.

While some of these two ideas later in the letter seem opposed to the passage in focus, I believe that they are not opposed to each other, but rather a grounding of understanding. What I mean by that, is that Paul is trying to put things into perspective. Human wisdom is a great gift, but it is nothing compared to the gift of Christ. Division will not bring the community together, but rather unity will prepare us for the coming of the Christ.

In this season of preparation for coming of the Christ, the unity of the community is paramount, and the recognition of the gift of the coming resurrection is what I believe is key as a Christian in the world. I believe in the power of unity and the power of the resurrection as

inspiration and guidance to make the world a more just place. Division does not allow a common voice to speak truth to power nor does it allow a confident approach to solving the world's problems. Relying on human wisdom alone can lead to our downfall, as opposed to faith and experience with people in ministries.

I believe as a church community today, Paul stills speaks to us. Today we did an act of unity by sharing together the decorating of the church and understanding the symbolism present in our decorations. This is a small act of unity, but an act of unity that we can stand upon and grow from in our future endeavors as a church. We can be a unified body.

Unity as a church can be difficult to obtain at times, because while it may not seem like it we are a decently diverse group of people, who have different passions for the world and have different gifts for reaching the needs of the world. I believe we should celebrate these differences, but we are all a part of one body. Paul writes that there are many gifts to the spiritual body and that these gifts can work together in harmony. Much like that statement, I believe we as a community can reflect that.

I believe that we can come to an understanding that the world can be a better place than it is now. I believe I am called to the ministry to share the amazing power of Christ to the world, so that others may live a life full and complete in the spirit of Christ. The world needs to be a place where all of God's children are respected and loved.

believe we can be unified by supporting each other. In anticipation of the coming of Christ we can support each other in our desires to reach out into the community. We can pray together, we can take a risk to serve together, and we can learn about each other's calling. Those are just a few small examples of what can be done. I know there are more ways to support each other, but I want to be a spark of thinking. I want us to believe that through each other's unique

callings we can bring about change in the world. We can bring about a world where people are loved through our unique ministries. There is no need to think that one ministry or calling is more important than the other, but that they are all equal before God in bringing the coming of the Christ. We are in this together, in whatever form that may look like in the end.

We must be willing to allow the Spirit to work wonders in the midst of our work. While we can gain wisdom about the world, especially wisdom that pertains to who we need to serve in ministry, we cannot let our knowledge overbear the power of the Spirit of that people have within themselves. I am a Christian, so I believe the power of the cross can have a transforming power that is far greater than any human knowledge that I can obtain. The cross for me is what drives us towards making a more just world. Christ died in the face of injustice, yet rose up to show that injustice and sin could not overpower the greatness of God. We must be open to the power of faith and allow the power of faith to even be a unifying power among us, for the power of faith can bind us in ways and support us in ways that we cannot imagine.

In this coming season of preparation, I encourage us all to think of ways we can support each other and allow the Spirit to unify us. We are in a season of preparation now for the coming of Christ. We must work together so that Christ can come in a more just world. We must work together so the world will be free of the hardship of the world. We must be unified so that Christ can come into a world where all of God's children are cared for and loved. In this season of preparation be prepared for the amazing power of unity can bring to our ministry as a church and to Spirit that binds us all together, as one body. Amen.