

It's Always Advent
Rom 15: 7-13
November 26, 2023

Intro: Even though it's not quite Advent yet, in a sense it is always Advent, because there is always a waiting. We are always waiting with confident hope based on the fulfillment of promises in the past. The Church celebrates this upcoming season because the first coming of Christ has happened in fulfillment of all the promises of the Old Testament. And we celebrate Advent still as we await the Second Coming of Christ to judge the world and bring to fulfillment the reign of Christ on earth forever. So in a sense, then, it is always Advent. And in this passage, Paul gives us what to do while we wait.

Listen to the Word of God for us and hear of the fulfillment of past promises and future assurances.

So, now, this exalted paragraph that brings the whole letter together by giving us God's vision for multiethnic unity in a world full of peace and evidence of His faithfulness to His ancient promises.

While we wait: welcome, proclaim, and hope

1Welcome Each Other's Diversities (v. 7)

Paul is giving the rationale for welcoming one another. Context – The Roman church was having a problem with judging each other about whether or not certain customs of food, drink, and holy days were sinful. Some were strong in their faith that nothing was unclean, and some were weak in their faith.

These are matters of individual conscience between the person and the Lord. Welcome one another. Welcome diversity of opinion on disputable matters. Strong, welcome the weak. Weak, welcome the strong. B/c Christ has welcomed all – the inventor of diversity – He has welcomed all people, of all backgrounds, of all nations, whoever will come to Jesus trusting in Him alone.

How this paragraph fits into the whole book... see Thielman – great help!

Can't read 14-15, but this is a summary of 14:1-15:6

This passage summarizes and concludes by using the theme of welcoming one another. v. 7 – “welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you...”

Welcome each other across the social barriers and opinion barriers on matters that would otherwise divide us from one another.

How?

v. 8 - By imitating Christ's unselfishness and appealing to Christ's welcome of us.

No difference that another Christian has with me is an excuse for not welcoming them.

What is this welcoming? What does this look like?

“To receive kindly or hospitably, admit to one's society and friendship, treat with kindness.” (The New Analytical Greek Lexicon, 1990, Pershbacher, 354)

Yes, we will have and do have differences!

But welcome one another b/c Christ has welcomed you.

Rom 5:8

Don't underestimate your propensity towards flocking towards those who are like you and make you feel more comfortable. Paul goes back again to Christ's welcoming/receiving of us, the undeserving, the vile, the foreign.

Go back to why Paul is writing like this – the underlying issue of the weak and the strong, which was likely based on the continuing applicability of the Jewish law, something that arose regularly in the NT era b/c Gentiles were becoming Christians before becoming Jews first and didn't abide by the Jewish food laws, for example. (Moo, 874).

... Paul is then implicitly reminding the 'weak' (primarily Jewish Christians) that the 'strong' (primarily Gentile Christians) are full members of the people of God. Yes, they are 'wild olive shoots' that have been 'grafted in' (11:17). He also reminds the 'strong' that their status as Christians is dependent upon a Jewish foundation – they are supported by the 'root' (11:18).

Paul says then to **welcome** one another – who is this one another? It is Jews and Gentiles together in the voluntary society of the church. And what is the church? Remember it is the “called out ones” – the ekklesia – ecclesiastical community – the called out ones, the rescued ones, the redeemed ones, the bought back ones, the purchased ones.

When you know what you have been rescued from, then skin color and culture and musical tastes matter less and less, but what matters more and more is your common identity of Rescued.

ILLUS of people who form survivor clubs. 9/11 survivors. Shipwreck survivors. Earthquake survivors. Hurricane survivors. There is a commonality that they share that no one else understands but those who have been through it. ... And that is who the Church is, that is who you are, if indeed you have a story like this.

2Proclaim the Magnificence of God (vs. 8-11)

The promises given to the patriarchs confirmed in Christ

What were those promises?

Gen 12:3 – “in you, Abraham, all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

The promises were given to the patriarchs – Abraham, Isaac, Jacob – so that the Jews and the Gentiles would one day together glorify God for the sake of His mercy (v. 9a)

The significance of Christ for all history!

Back to Rom 1:1-4 (read)

Jesus came for the Jew first (1:16), but also for the whole world – the Gentiles

And Rom 9-11 – the mystery of election and the Jewish remnant and the Gentiles grafted into the nourishing root of the olive tree

All of this being tied together here – breathtaking -

So proclaim the magnificence of God -
Something we are good at and can always grow in – how? How do I increase my love for worshiping God? Two practicals: 1) Read the Bible, 2) Look around

Look at how Paul helps us to magnify God: He **Reads the Bible** >
“And again...” 4 times, 4 passages, each taken from different sections of the OT...
The Writings, the Law, and the Prophets
For the purpose of highlighting Christ’s welcome of both Jews and Gentiles for the glory of God
This has been God’s vision and plan all along – that the Gentiles would join with the Jews by faith in the rescuing Messiah.

So, Read the Bible and see the storyline and the people of Israel called to faith and the Gentiles called to the same faith – faith in Jesus, the promised Messiah, the only Hero.

Sunday is not enough to nourish and sustain you – it’s the highest, but not the only.
Like if T’giving Day meal was your only meal for the week – yes, you’d look forward to it all week, but you’d be malnourished if you only ate one big meal a week.

Paul mines the Scriptures to remind us of one of the main purposes of the Bible: To give you reason to rejoice as we walk through this weary world. Read the Bible – every week we publish a Bible reading plan in the bulletin.

Look around and see the world as Jesus sees it – v. 9, 10, 11 being fulfilled! Maybe the world is jealous? B/c look and see:

According to the Pew Research Center, Christianity is the largest and most diverse belief system in the world with roughly equal numbers of Christians in Europe, N.A., S.A., and Africa, and with a rapidly growing church in China that is expected to outgrow the church in America in the next 10 years or so (*The Secular Creed*, 16).

Look around and see other evidences – Urban Hope Community Church – Alton’s story of forgiveness from his memoir, *Long is the Way*.

These practicals are for the purpose of replacing the judgy-ness within the church with church unified proclaiming of the magnificence of God. This isn’t happy-clappy-ness, this is receiving and applying to our hearts the main message of the Bible again and again. Because we are more prone than we realize to forget it. And what is that main message? That there is hope. Trans to 3

Welcome, proclaim, and

3Hope with Full, Overflowing Richness (vs. 12-13)

ILLUS of the Thanksgiving Table – all this cooking, all this bounty, we know it’s too much! No one can eat all of this! We have a drive for there to be more than enough. So does God.

And for what reason? So that we, the church, may abound in hope! (v. 13)

What is Biblical Hope? 3 times in the passage.

It is an assurance that good will win.

That there is a Ruler, a King who is good and right, merciful and just. The defeater of evil and the rewarder of good. See v. 12 – “rule the Gentiles” – a hope that there is a Hero, someone outside of ourselves who will rule with righteousness, joy, and peace. This is what Christmas is about.

Aspects of this hope:

It is of the Spirit / **Supernatural** / spiritual / un-natural / un-human / other-worldly because God is the author of hope. Where else could it come from?

The passage is bracketed by the Supernatural, otherworldly nature of this hope.

It **is a fool's hope** > The word translated “Gentiles” is sometimes translated pagans, or nations. It's the Greek word “ethne” – it means outsiders. Outsiders to the covenant promises. Outsiders to the promises given to Abraham's descendants: The Jews. They are our spiritual fathers

See Rom 11

This is the main message of the Bible – again, that we need every week – that the world is a mess and we have made it that way, and no matter how much I don't want to be a part of making the world a mess, I still contribute to its messiness every day b/c of my own selfishness and sinful rebellion against God. But God. That's vs. 12-13. (echoing Rom 5:8 – But God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us!)

This is the message of Romans. But God. But God who is rich in mercy (v. 9) may, by the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit lead us to abound in hope through the Messiah Jesus prophesied by Isaiah. This is a fool's hope. A glorious, ridiculous, laughter inducing ridiculously foolish hope.

In LOTR *Return of the King*

Eve of Battle –

Little Hobbit Pippin has conversation with Gandalf, the White Wizard.

Gandalf, tell me, is there any hope?

Gandalf replies: “There was never much hope, only a fool's hope.”

From the perspective of worldly reason, Christian hope is utterly foolish. Think about it. A God who humiliates himself, who degrades Himself and becomes one of us? And then empties Himself in servanthood all the way to dying naked as a condemned criminal?

Paul admits as much when he says, “For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” ([1 Cor. 1:18](#)). It is folly b/c the world traffics in success and doing whatever it takes to advance your own cause, not die to your own cause.

Rom 4:18 “In hope he (Abraham) believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told....”

B/c look at Paul's emphasis – he points over and over to the promises given to the Gentiles. Why is he doing this? Most of us are Gentiles, non-Jews. We forget how radical Christianity is. To be right with God comes by faith, not by anything else. Not by national identity, racial identity, ethnic identity.

*Christianity is for the outsiders. For the least of these. Those who shouldn't even consider being brought in, are brought in. The least likely are given not just a seat at the table, but given a seat next to the King. And so this is the foundation for welcoming one another, as Christ has welcomed us – for no other reason than that He loved us and called us out to repent and follow Him.

ILLUS of the draw to the famous... why are people drawn to famous people? B/c we want something they have earned, we want something from their gravitational pull, their orbit. What if a famous person that you really respect invited you to their home? Would you accept the invitation?

This is the 'sounds too good to be true' part of the gospel – v.12 – He rules the Gentiles, and in Him the Gentiles hope. Get closer. Gaze harder. Be mesmerized, transformed, taken in, taken up by His magnificence that He invites you into. A famous person will one day not be famous. A famous person's fame will fade! Not Jesus'! Jesus is the Light, the Sun of Radiant Brilliance and He invites us into His orbit, into His Home which is right here – His body on earth, His Church.

Why this short section is so important - This is Hope for the world that we should double down on – multiculturalism, diversity, inclusion based on the non-negotiable of faith in Christ alone and what He has done to make this happen. Don't let the world take this from us. Be the Church and let your allegiance be to the society of the redeemed and then go and affect the world instead of being affected by the world. What the world is trying to do is what the church already is! This is what Paul is doing in this passage...

Conc: We are always waiting. It is always Advent. Hope is a waiting word. Hope needs kindling, encouragement. Hope needs signs that what is hoped for is coming. And as the Church grows in welcoming all types of people and the strong and the weak seek to listen to one another, worship increases, and hope abounds b/c it becomes tangible, demonstrated and lived out. Live it out as a fruit of being welcomed by Christ into His kingdom of mercy and love.

Communion:

Tie in to "It's Always Advent" > waiting with anticipation for the Day to arrive... Communion is opportunity to receive Jesus' promise of being with us. I am with you, here, at the Table. My spiritual presence is real, tangible, life giving, nourishing, sustaining. It is one of the ways I feed my people as they wait on me to return bodily from the Heavens and again fulfill my promise.

Small Group Questions
From 11/26 Sermon “It’s Always Advent”

1. The season of Advent celebrates waiting. What is difficult about waiting? Why has the Church historically celebrated a season of waiting?
2. How is biblical hope “a fool’s hope”? What aspect of biblical hope particularly warms your heart as you consider waiting?
3. Consider Paul’s admonition to welcome one another and to live in harmony with one another. What issues were present that were particularly challenging to the church at Rome regarding this? How can we prosper this value in our church?
4. How does church unity glorify God? What does it mean to bring glory to God? How can we do this better?
5. Consider how Paul’s admonitions to the church at Rome composed of both Jews and Gentiles (see Rom 14:1 and following) leads us to an application: The Church should be leading the way in multi-culturalism and multi-ethnic diversity.
Discuss.
6. How might God (see v. 13) lead us to abound in hope? Pray this for the Church at large around the world and for our church.