

All Good Things

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1 Corinthians 1:3-7 — Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given to you in Christ Jesus, for in every way you have been enriched in Christ, in speech and knowledge of every kind—just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you—so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So, there's this phrase, which I'm guessing you all know, that goes like this: "All good things come to those who..." What? *Wait*. It's a phrase that we tell others and ourselves to remind us of the value of patience, to remind us that patience is not only a virtue, but also a key to happiness. Much of the fulfillment and gratification we long for can only be experienced through patience. If we're baking a pie during this holiday season, for example, we have to patiently wait until the pie is done baking before we take it out of the oven—otherwise, it won't be as good of a pie. And then, of course, once it's *out* of the oven (here's the hardest part), we need to patiently wait until the pie is done cooling before we eat it—otherwise, we'll burn our mouths, and we won't be able to enjoy the pie.

"All good things come to those who wait." I have to say that this phrase sounds a little exaggerated to me. I mean, *all* good things? Really? Surely, there are some good things in life that don't come to us because we *waited*; some good things in life come to us because we *acted*, took initiative, responded swiftly and decisively. The Gospels have stories that testify to this. Jesus walks up to two fishermen, two brothers named Peter and Andrew, and says to them, "Follow me," and the future apostles can either say "Yes," then and there, or they can just wait, content with the way things are or hoping that something better comes along. Good things do come to us when we wait, it's true, but sometimes, we are called to stop waiting and to move, for the sake of better things.

This morning, I'd like to look at our second passage through the lens of this well-known phrase. According to the apostle Paul, who is writing to the church in Corinth, it's not that all good things come to those who wait, in the sense that the good things come *after* we wait; rather, it's that all good things come to us *as* we wait, in the sense that it is through and in the waiting that good things come. According to this passage in 1 Corinthians, our souls have everything they need in Christ. Paul repeatedly emphasizes this point: *in every way* you have been enriched, in speech and knowledge *of every kind*, he says. You are not lacking in *any* spiritual gift—as you *wait* for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. According to Paul, we are waiting not so that one day, after we've waited, we will receive the gifts that we need; rather, we are waiting because the gifts of Christ are ours *as* we wait.

Our six Confirmands, here at the front, have waited a long time for this day—not a passive waiting, but an active waiting, working towards an anticipated goal. For the past several months, they’ve showed up early on Sunday mornings, learned about Presbyterianism and theology and the Bible, talked with other congregants about what membership in our church means to them, helped out with readings and other parts of the Sunday service, and—perhaps most terrifying—wrote a personal statement of faith, a personal creed, from scratch, which they shared with the Session of our church several weeks ago. They’ve done all of this over the past several months, and now, it’s Confirmation Sunday, the day that we’ve been waiting for all along. But it just so happens that on this day, we are also celebrating the beginning of Advent—which, as many of you know, is a season of *waiting*—specifically, waiting for the birth of Christ, the coming of God in human flesh, which we celebrate on Christmas. So, all that goes to say, our Confirmands are in a bit of a weird place right now: we’re telling them that the waiting is over—they are now officially members of our church—but the first thing that we’re telling them to do, now that they’re finally members, is to...wait again.

It’s a little weird, but I think that it’s also very fitting. Because—Alex, Casey, Chloe, Ethan, Lizzy, and Montana—I’ve got news for you: as members of this church, as members of the Body of Christ, you will always be, in a sense, waiting. By that, I mean that you will always be looking ahead and moving ahead. You will never fully arrive, never perfectly master this whole faith thing, or this whole life thing. There will never be a time when you have it all figured out, never be a time when you can just stop searching and stop growing. Because being a Christian means *always* striving to know God better and to live more fully into the life that God has planned for you. Everyone behind you, Confirmands, no matter what their age, is still growing, still striving, still figuring it out.

And that’s okay. In fact, that’s great. Because, as Paul says in this morning’s passage, Christ has already fully equipped us for the journey. We are not lacking in *any* spiritual gift. Through the Spirit of Christ, who dwells in us and all around us, we have everything we need to grow and to strive well, alongside each other. Montana, Lizzy, Ethan, Chloe, Casey, and Alex: above all else, know that you are not alone. First and foremost, God walks with you, and second, we—your church—walk with you. We will wait together, work together, grow together, love together. Amen.