

"Just You Wait" 1 John 3:1-7

April 19, 2015

3rd Sunday of Easter

Waiting is difficult to do. It is difficult to do when we are waiting for something bad. When children of my generation and older did something bad, the threat from our mothers, "Just you wait until your father gets home from work", was enough to instill fear in our hearts and make the next couple of hours a slow and difficult wait for something we didn't want to happen.

Waiting is also difficult to do when we are waiting for something good. Time slows down and almost stops as we wait for Christmas, a birthday, or some other celebration to come. We were filled with joy and anticipation at those times. We just couldn't wait for those things which we wanted to happen.

Easter is a time for waiting! The resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ caused waiting for the first disciples and for us. Some of it is bad waiting. Some of it is good waiting. All of it is difficult waiting.

When the reports came from the women that Jesus was not dead, but alive, the disciples reacted in fear. They were waiting for something bad to happen. They locked themselves in a room (as we read last week) because they feared that the Jewish leaders who had persecuted and executed Jesus would do the same to them. When Jesus came and appeared in their midst, our Gospel reading for today says that they feared that they were seeing a ghost. When Jesus showed that it was truly Him, I bet they were waiting to see what would happen now. They had deserted Jesus in His time of need. Now that He was alive, what would He do to them? Seek revenge? Hold them accountable for their unfaithfulness? Reject them?

Have you ever thought about that yourself? When you or I seriously consider all of our sins of thought, word, and deed that nailed Jesus to the cross, that's a scary thought. All of the evil we have done and all of the good we have failed to do caused Jesus to die. Would you want to face Him

when He came back from the dead after all you've done to disobey or be unfaithful to Him? Would you wait nervously and in fear for Him to confront you?

Jesus' resurrection from the dead brings all of that waiting to a happy end, both for the disciples back then and for His people now. The disciples were overjoyed to see Jesus alive from the dead because He was not angry nor did He reject them. He did not come to seek revenge or to inflict punishment. Jesus' resurrection changed all of that. Jesus came to love them and accept them. He came bearing forgiveness and the promise of everlasting life.

He has done this for you and me. Jesus' resurrection changes everything for us, too. We don't have to nervously wait and see how God feels about us on the Last Day. We don't have to wonder if Jesus' death on the cross was a failure on His part or if it actually does something to help us. Jesus' resurrection out of the tomb is the exclamation point to Jesus' work on the cross. It shows that Jesus' sacrifice for sin was sufficient and that God has accepted it. Therefore, God has accepted you and me. Forgiveness for all of your sins and mine is sure and certain. We are no longer enemies of God but children of God.

Children of God? It sure doesn't feel that way though at times, does it? When we think of being children of God, we likely think of sharing in His glory, being in His presence, and dwelling in the place He has particularly prepared for each of us. Because of Jesus' resurrection all of that IS coming, but it is not yet here. This is the good stuff that each believer in Jesus must wait for.

It is hard waiting for all of that to come to be. We are afflicted with so many problems in this world – economic problems, political problems, social problems, natural disaster problems, and so on. It's hard to believe that God has chosen us to be His children when we experience so much suffering. There's not a whole lot of glory to be seen in our lives.

In addition to simply experiencing evil, we also experience rejection. The world does not look at us in awe and reverence and say, "Look at those children of God! Aren't they great?" No. The world is rejecting Christianity and Christians more and more today. Society does not respect Christianity nor admire faithful Christians as it perhaps once did. Instead, the world ridicules the tenants of our faith and works hard to oppose them.

So we wander through the problems of this life. In addition, we experience rejection and persecution for our beliefs and our status as the children of God. And we end up where everyone else ends up. Our bodies age, break down, and die. We may ask ourselves, "Are we really the children of God or have we deluded ourselves into thinking that? And if we are, what good is it?"

Jesus' resurrection from a weak and dead body to a grand and glorious body changes that for us. The apostle John, in our epistle for today tells us that. He writes, "See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are." He marvels at the kind of love the Father has for us. Why? In love, the Father has declared us to be children of God. We don't always act like children of God. We often do feel like children of God. We certainly don't deserve to be children of God. But that's precisely who we are. It matters not how we act, how we feel, or what we deserve. Because God, for Christ's sake, has declared us to be His children, that's exactly who we are: beloved, forgiven, and redeemed children of God.

Then why don't we get the respect and even honor which children of God should get from those around us? The children of earthly monarchs are certainly afforded royal treatment. Notice how much publicity there is when one of the royals in Great Britain marries or has a child. However, the world not only doesn't respect the children of God, but the world doesn't even know we are children of God. We shouldn't be surprised though. John writes, "The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him." The world did not recognize or respect the Son of God, Jesus Christ, when He came into the world. In fact, they persecuted and executed Him. When we are faithful children of God, we will get the same treatment Jesus got. We should expect no recognition or respect, but persecution and rejection.

However, the world's behavior does not negate or invalidate God's declaration. You are God's children, no matter what the world thinks of you or does to you. You are God's children, no matter how you look or feel. How the world thinks of you and treats you will likely not change. But how you look and feel will change. John writes, "What we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is."

How exciting is that? When Jesus comes again, we shall see Him as He truly is now in His resurrected and glorified body. Not only that, but we shall be like him in our resurrected and glorified bodies. Paul promises the same thing when he writes, "But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself." (Philippians 3:20-21) We will have glorious bodies doing what we see Jesus doing in His appearances after the resurrection. After our resurrection, our bodies will be free from sin, free from corruption, and free from death; able to be holy, able to be mighty, and able to live forever. Talk about something that is hard to wait for – that might be the hardest thing ever for which to wait.

So how do we live as we wait in our imperfect mortal bodies? John says, "And everyone who thus hopes (waits) in him purifies himself as he is pure." Our purity is to be found only in His purity.

Therefore, we lay our sins of thought, word, and deed in confession upon the spotless Lamb of God to be washed clean in His precious blood.

In light of who we are and what we will be, we do not desire to go on sinning. In fact, John says, “You know that he appeared to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. No one who abides in him keeps on sinning.” We are not to continue to sin, but we are to interrupt that cycle of sin. The only way to do that is through daily repentance, worked in us by the Spirit of God through His Holy Word. We cannot do it ourselves. We cling to Christ in faith, craving His life-giving Word and grace-giving Sacraments to deliver us from sin and its control.

We are to live new lives by that same Spirit in thought, Word, and deed. Having been cleansed by the righteousness of Christ in Holy Baptism and declared to be a child of God by that same righteousness of Christ, we are to live in His righteousness, not only here in Church, but in our homes with our families, in our schools with our classmates, at our jobs with our co-workers, and in our communities with our fellow citizens. “Little children,” John says, “let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous.”

“Just you wait” is not a threat for Christians, but a glorious promise. Who you are now by God’s mercifully declaration in Christ will be revealed for the whole world to see when Christ comes again. Since you have been made new by Jesus’ death on the cross and resurrection from the tomb and will be shown to be new in glorified bodies when He returns, live new now as you wait for this to be fulfilled. Easter is a time to remember what God has done in Christ Jesus in raising Him from the dead. Easter is also a time to look forward to what God will do for all of us - His children in Christ Jesus - in raising us from the dead, glorifying us, and giving to us eternal life. I don’t know about you, but I just can’t wait. Amen.

