

1 CORINTHIANS 4:1-5
WAIT UNTIL THE LORD COMES.

In the name + of Jesus.

So, was it a good week or a bad week? I wonder what jumps foremost to your mind when I ask that. Is it the financial picture? Is it health-related? Is it year-end deadlines? Is it the countdown to Christmas vacation? Well, let's narrow our focus just a bit. Think of how you lived this week. Think of the good you accomplished. Think of the sins you committed. Was it a good week or a bad week? Or think about the way God treated you this week. Do you recall blessings, or do you recall hardships? Was it a good week or a bad week?

No matter what answer you thought of, heed St. Paul's encouragement instead: **"Judge nothing before the time." (1 Corinthians 4:5)** Your assessment of what is good or bad is usually based on how you feel or what you experience. Does how you feel tell you what God thinks of you? Does your experience tell you if God's favor is upon you or withheld from you? It does not. It cannot. God does not make himself known through your feelings. God does not reveal his love in our experiences, whether good or bad.

That was a lesson that John the Baptist had to learn. John was the voice crying out in the wilderness. He was proclaiming a message of repentance, driving people to the Savior who would come and deliver them from their sins. Some, however, preferred their sins to their Savior. John the Baptist had confronted King Herod for his unlawful marriage to Herodias. She had abandoned her husband Herod Philip for his brother Herod Antipas. John called their deeds shameful sins and urged them to repent. For his preaching, John was thrown into prison. It was not a good week.

At the same time, Jesus was preaching and healing. While John was locked up in prison, Jesus seemed to be enjoying popularity. If they were preaching the same message, why would John be suffering while Jesus was being honored? In dismay, John sent his disciples to Jesus who asked him, **"Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?" (Matthew 11:2)** John's experience was telling him that something was not right. John's feelings were that God had let him down. John felt that God had failed him while King Herod and Herodias got away with everything.

Again, heed St. Paul's encouragement: **"Judge nothing before the time." (1 Corinthians 4:5)** Do not assume to know what God's thoughts are based on what you see or feel or experience. You are not to judge, for you cannot be trusted. Your sinful flesh tells you that lying is good, that greed is gain, that lust is harmless, and that your opinions count more than anything God has to say. Your corrupt heart says that evil is good. How can you judge anything God does when you cannot judge yourself correctly? Repent.

St. Paul declares, **"Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God." (1 Corinthians 4:5)** But what praise should you receive? If God will highlight the hidden things in our hearts, won't he only reveal what frauds we are? We want others to judge us based on what they see in us

and based on how they feel about us. And while that may win us friends, God cannot be fooled. God knows better. You should too. There is no praise for sinners. Repent.

St. Paul declares that we should not let ourselves be consumed by feelings – either our own or the way we think others feel about us. He wrote, **“But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. For I know of nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord.”** (1 Corinthians 4:3,4) Our judgment is not based on what others think of us. It doesn't matter if your friends think you deserve a place in heaven or if your enemies wish you would go to hell. Their opinions don't matter. It does not even matter what you think of yourself – whether you think you are the cream of the crop or the scum of the earth. Your feelings do not save you or condemn you. He who judges you is the Lord.

Jesus is the Lord's Anointed who has come to settle any doubts you may have about where you stand. When John the Baptist asked him, **“Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?”** (Matthew 11:2), Jesus replied, **“Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear....”** (Matthew 11:4,5) and so on. In other words, Jesus pointed to the Prophets. The Lord had foretold what the Messiah would come and do, and Jesus was doing it. God's word was being fulfilled. Jesus is the Messiah, your Savior.

Jesus pointed to God's word because it is the only word we can rely on. It cannot be twisted by circumstances. God's word is not changed by experiences. It is not altered by feelings. It does not adapt to the spirit of our times. Men, on the contrary, are fickle. All flesh is grass. All man's glory withers and decays. His feelings are blown around like a reed in the wind. But God's word stands forever.

This Word became flesh and came to deliver us from everything that fades and fails, from everything that deceives and disappoints. He was judged for you. He suffered and died for your love for yourself and for your trust in your feelings. He was crucified because you have trusted what you experience rather than what God tells you. Do not trust your feelings. They don't reveal God's love. God reveals his love in the blood he sheds for you. Your judgment is written in Jesus' blood, etched into the Book of Life through your baptism. You are cleansed of sin. You are pure in God's sight. You are God's beloved children. This is a verdict you can rely on; for the word of the Lord stands forever. And Jesus, who suffered and died for you, also stands forever. He lives and reigns for you and works all things for your good.

If it doesn't look like that's true, do not be offended. Wait until Jesus returns. That is when you will receive your glory. God's love for you now is not broadcast in worldly gain or glory. Jesus did not bust John the Baptist out of prison. John was put to death there. If you had a bad week last week, it may be worse this week. If your sins haunt you, the guilt may come back to haunt you again and again. But so what? Do not judge anything by what you see or feel. Listen to the Lord's word. This is the true judgment on all things. This word stands in good days and bad.

Wait until the Lord comes to see your glory. For now, we live on promises. We live on God's word. We know that God's love is demonstrated in a Savior who was willing to live for us and die for us. We know that God's favor is found in promises that are preached to us. We know that God's mercy is poured out in sacraments that mark us as redeemed and nourish us. That is where God reveals his favor upon you, and that is

where God bestows his favor upon you. Remember: He who judges is the Lord. He has issued his judgment upon you: You are forgiven through the blood of Jesus Christ. That judgment stands, meaning that God loves you even if the whole world hates you. God is with you even if the whole world forsakes you.

For now, we live on promises. But wait until the Lord comes when he will make his love for you clear and plain. It is not until Jesus comes again that you will actually appear as Jesus says you are – holy, blameless, and glorious children of God. But even if you do not see it or feel it, you can believe it because God says it is so. And the word of the Lord stands forever.

In the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.