

The Amen of Advent
December 12, 2021
1 Timothy 1:15-17
Clint Pressley

***15****The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.****16****But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life.****17****To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.*

*(Pastor prays)*

We have *got* to get Christmas right. While Santa Claus might be coming to town, Jesus is coming into the world. And Paul is writing to Timothy to clear the air and set the standard that above tradition and celebration and nostalgia stands the savior, Jesus.

The letter of 1st Timothy is especially important at Christmas because Christmas gets clouded. If you have lots of family and friends and a busy schedule, Christmas gets clouded with parties and get-togethers and gifts and really fun distractions. Or if you are lonely or hurt or lost someone, Christmas can get even more clouded with pain and nostalgia and possibly depression that’s an even harder distraction, and we’ve got to press against both and clear out space in our souls to see Jesus.

And in this first chapter of 1 Timothy, Paul tells Timothy that there are people in church who are swerving from faith and wandering into vain discussions, and it’s soul-killing. And God has given us the Bible as a tuning fork. It is a perfect pitched note to center our hearts and souls on Jesus at Advent. So all of you who are tired or hurt or lonely or numb, it’s Sunday, the day when God realigns His children onto the centerpiece, Jesus. I love this passage. I like that it’s short, packed with meaning and ends with an “Amen” like every good sermon should. And my goal today is to take these three verses and use them to minister to your weary soul so that you can say the “Amen” to God’s good grace given to us in Christ. Because Advent reminds us that…

**The Coming of Jesus is Our Amen**

**The coming of Jesus is to be trusted and received**

Let’s read the whole verse, but you’ll see it in the first phrase. ***15****The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.****16****But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life.****17****To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.*

The Gospel message is all of verse 15, but before he even writes it, Paul says the Gospel is trustworthy. The Gospel is able and strong and sturdy. You can pile all your junk on the Gospel. Christmas and the coming of Christ says “come over here and put all of it – sin, worry, anxiety, anger, twisted desires, your past, all your sin – put it on there.” Pre-covid you might get on an elevator and if there were lots of people on it, it might kind of jolt down and you worry, is this thing gonna make it? The Gospel of Jesus isn’t like that. It’s a freight elevator that you can pile everything you have on this saying: Christ came into the world to save sinners.

Why do you carry guilt and shame, bitterness and hatred and coldness? The life, death and resurrection of Jesus can be trusted. Load all your junk on Jesus. The coming of Jesus is to be trusted and it is to be received. Let’s go back and read that first phrase again. ***15****The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.*

The saying, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” is trustworthy and deserves full acceptance. What did Paul mean by “the Gospel deserves full acceptance”? Well, let’s look at the word “deserves.” Have you ever seen a solid Christian girl dating a guy that’s a sorry, no good, lazy scoundrel who doesn’t even love his mother, and you think, “Man, she deserves better than that.” What do we mean? We mean that the guy doesn’t match what the girl deserves. Paul is telling us that the Gospel deserves, or the Gospel is worthy of, full acceptance. It deserves a full-throated “Yes and Amen!” It deserves an “I believe that” or “Thank God for his grace”!

Let me tell you what the Gospel *doesn’t* deserve. It doesn’t deserve apathy or complaints. It doesn’t deserve skipping church to do something else. It doesn’t deserve fence riding or backbiting. Let me tell you what the Gospel *does* deserve. It deserves an all-out embrace like when you see a long-lost friend. It deserves the excitement that Spurgeon, my beagle, shows every time someone comes over. My neighbors hear it every time, Spurgeon howling! That’s full acceptance.

The Gospel story is so great and its glory so strong that if you can yawn through it, then you really don’t understand it. You don’t understand that Christ came into the world to save sinners. It seems too good to be true. And for that reason, the coming of Jesus is to be trusted and received. Do you? Do you love Christ and worship Him? Do you read the Bible and hate sin? Do you love the cross? The Gospel message should be trusted and received.

**The coming of Jesus is to be explored and believed**

Let’s take a bit of a dissecting look at this saying. In Greek it’s a nine-word statement of the Gospel. It’s an amazing summary. John MacArthur says each word is chosen carefully to tell us who Jesus is and what he does. Let’s explore it.

Christ, He is the anointed King who came to redeem. Christ Jesus is the Messiah. Jesus is the fulfillment of all God’s promises and the keeper of all God’s laws. All the laws and promises of God find their “yes and amen” in Christ.

Jesus, fully human. He is the second Adam. The first Adam sinned and cursed all creation. The second Adam, Jesus, was tempted in every way like us and yet He lived without sin. He did what we couldn’t do, earning righteousness through His perfect life. He died on the cross, taking the wrath of God and in the great exchange, He gives us His righteousness.

He came into the world. Here is the incarnation. Here is Advent. Here is Christmas. This sounds a lot like John 1 when the Word became flesh. The pre-existent, ever-living, second person of the Trinity came to us. Before Abraham was “I AM.” This ever-living God came into the world, this blind, lost, condemned hellish world. A world of sinners and darkness and unbelief. That’s what Christ Jesus came into. But what for? To teach? To be an example? To lead? Look at verse 15.

*He came to save sinners.* He came to *rescue*. “Save” is strange language for some of you because you’re not sure what you need to be saved *from*. Saved from *what*? Saved from guilt, sin, slavery, wrath, punishment, alienation, everlasting death. Saved from Hell. But when the Lord saves us *from* something, he also saves us *to* something. He saves us to righteousness, wholeness, forgiveness and freedom. He saves us to reconciliation, God’s love and everlasting life!

The Gospel is for all sinners and we are *all* sinners. The Gospel is that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. And Paul adds, I am the foremost. I am the chief sinner. I am “Proto.” I am the first. To know the Gospel of Jesus is to know His life, substitutionary death and resurrection. It’s to explore it. And then like Paul, I need that.

Let the coming of Jesus be your “Amen.” The coming of Jesus must be trusted and received. The coming of Jesus must be explored and believed.

**The coming of Jesus must be displayed and explained**

Let’s read Verse 16 and pay attention to what Paul calls himself. He said it in verse 15 and now he says it again. ***16****But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life.*Don’t you love how Paul personalizes the Gospel with a robust self-awareness? He says, Look, I am a sinner. Back in verse 13 Paul says, I was a blasphemer and opponent of God. Then in verses 15 and 16 he says, I am the king of sinners, the chief, the prototype. I am the model sinner. When you go into the showroom floor, he is the car with all the bells and whistles. That’s me, he says. Paul makes three biographical statements. The first is in Ephesians 3:8 when he calls himself the “least of the saints.” Then in 1 Corinthians 15:9 he says, I am the “least of the Apostles.” But now in 1 Timothy 1:16 he says, I am the “chief of sinners.”

One of the hallmarks of a Christian is a genuine and humbling realization that you are an absolute sinning wretch. But verse 16 says “but the mercy and patience of the cross means forgiveness.” God saved and forgave somebody like you so that you might be an illustration, a wonderful example.

So people would say, well if God can save Paul then He can surely save me! Do you have a past? Do you have something to be ashamed of? If you are bad, Christmas is for you. It’s not a bag of coal but a life of love and grace and forgiveness at the cross of Jesus. And in verse 16, Paul uses words like “mercy” and “perfect patience” to describe what God gave Him in Jesus. And He did it for me as the worst so that other terrible sinners would see and believe. And as Paul is talking about how God saved him, even the worst of sinners, he is just overcome and in verse 17 we have our last point.

**The coming of Jesus is to be celebrated and experienced**

***17****To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.* This doxology is a praise of celebration. Paul calls God the King of the Ages. He is the eternal King who rules. He overrules evil for good. He kills sin with grace. He makes His enemy into His children and He is Lord over all. Paul says He is the immortal God. He is incorruptible. He doesn’t change or decay. His arms never grow tired of holding you up. He has an inexhaustible reservoir of power. He never gets weary. He is Lord of all.

He is the invisible God. But just because He is not seen does not mean that He is not there or that He doesn’t care. This reminds us that hope that is *seen* is not hope. For who hopes what he *sees*? But if we hope for what we do *not* see, we wait with *patience,* believing that God is at work.

He is the only God. He is solitary like the sun exploding with warmth and power and energy. And I want to spend my life reflecting honor and glory and worth on the good God. And to every bit of that I can say, AMEN! The coming of Jesus is our “Yes and Amen.” He is trustworthy and deserves our full acceptance. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am the foremost.

*(Pastor prays)*