

Listening for the Promise

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL

Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany – January 29, 2023

“And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, ‘Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.’”

– 1 Corinthians 1:30–31–

St. Paul reminds the Corinthian people of what they were prior to when God called them faith (see 1 Cor. 1:26–29), and he doesn’t sugar-coat his words. St. Paul wanted the Corinthians to remember that they, along with all people, have nothing to boast about when it comes to who we are as people or what we’ve accomplished. That’s hard! We like recognition when we’ve done well. Paul tells the Corinthians, and us, that we only need to boast in our God, not in ourselves. Look at what God has done for us! He has made us righteous and redeemed us through the precious blood of his son Jesus Christ. That deserves our boasting!

Although we have no reason to boast on our own, God has given us ample reasons to boast in him. As children, my siblings and I would play the game “King of the Hill.” It was a rough game, actually. In order to be the “king,” you had to shove your opponents down the hill before they could reach you. If one of your opponents made it to the top of the hill, that person would take your place as the new king, and the game would continue. In many ways, this is how boasting about our own accomplishments and actions plays out. As we boast about ourselves, we knock others down. Whether we intend to or not, we can make others feel like their “less than” because we boast and brag about how good we are or how much we have. That is until someone else “one-ups” us. Then they become the proverbial “King of the Hill.” But what about if we boast in the Lord instead? What happens then? When we boast only in the One who deserves to be boasted about, then the Holy Spirit actually picks up those we’ve knocked down. The Holy Spirit gives the gift of faith. And as we receive that gift, we find ourselves boasting in God and only in him.

May we take St. Paul’s words to heart. If we are going to boast at all, may we boast only in the Lord, in his deep love for us.

Prayer: Gracious God, forgive us when we become focused on ourselves and less concerned about our neighbor. Thank you for giving us so many reasons to boast in you. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

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