

Advent 2  
December 6, 2009  
1 Corinthians 4:1-5

The Apostle Paul gives us some meat to chew on in these few verses. It is an example of using Jesus' sure return as Judge on the Last Day of history to help and direct us in our daily living as Christians in the here and now.

Let's focus on today. Christ's 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming Needs to Be Kept in Mind as We Live.

Last Sunday, Saint Luke talked about Jesus' 2<sup>nd</sup> coming and never really got into the matter of judgment that Jesus is going to carry out on that day.

St. Paul, in these verses, certainly does focus on the judgment of that day.

Luke was speaking specifically to Christians. But St. Paul is also speaking specifically to Christians.

So, how can both Luke and Paul speak to believers in Jesus about the same 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Jesus and yet one never mentions the judgment of that day and the other one mentions nothing but the judgment?

Well, Luke was preaching the Gospel for the encouragement and strengthening of the new man, of faith in Jesus. Paul was preaching the Law for the discouragement and weakening of the old self, the sin that was trying to assert itself in these Corinthian Christians. All of us do need both the Law and the Gospel to help us in our daily living.

We as followers of Jesus still have in us and with us our original, sinful self. We need to war against that sinfulness in us every single day. This sin can show itself in countless ways. God's commandments (and their judgment) are the weapon to use against sin. But our new selves, created in us by God, in His image, through faith in Jesus, our Savior from sin, every day need to be fed and exercised by the Gospel to strengthen it.

The particular sin St. Paul gives us ammunition against in these verses is false, illegitimate judging.

At Corinth, some of the congregation members were judging their past and present pastors and were judging one another. This was leading to quarreling and factions. The Apostle has been dealing with this matter since the beginning of chapter 3. Paul says there, "You are still worldly. For since there are jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly?" And in chapter six, Paul says some members were even dragging one another into court over disputes.

There is a right kind of judging and a sinful kind of judging. Christians are to judge. They are to judge using God's clear revelation of His Word, and they are to judge what human beings do see and know. For example, in chapter five, Paul says they should have

judged the member who had committed adultery with his step-mother, and when he did not repent, should have removed him as a member to try to lead him to repent. And in those disputes between members, Paul says other members should have served as judges to settle the disputes, instead of them going in front of courts run by unbelievers.

So, what kind of judging is wrong? Paul identifies it here. We have no right to judge – and it'll almost always be harsh judgment – what we as human beings cannot see or know, for example, the motives of people's hearts. Or when we judge one person better than or inferior to another simply because of different abilities or results, that is evil judgment, for it's not based in God's Word.

How were they judging Paul and Apollos, both who served as pastors at Corinth? Well, some liked Paul better. Some liked Apollos better. Apparently, some even liked Peter better from what they heard about Peter. Some, who probably thought quite highly of their own spirituality, said, "We like Christ best."

What was going on here? First, Paul condemned this kind of factionalism. He was not one bit impressed by the group that chose him as their favorite. They were judging personalities. They were judging styles. They were perhaps judging results – like how many were joining the church and how fast under which pastor.

Paul corrects this. Yes, there is a proper judgment of pastors and such. But what must it be based on? Let a person regard us as servants of Christ. That's number one. Are they faithfully serving Christ? Is Jesus their point and purpose? Second, are they managing the secret things, the mysteries of God? Paul frequently talks about these mysteries of God. Paul always means the things God has revealed, has made known by the prophets and apostles, especially that Jesus, the promised Savior from sin, death, and satan had come, was offering by Word and Sacrament forgiveness of all sin, new life and eternal, glorious, body and soul salvation to all people. Is that Word of God being preached, taught and lived faithfully? If so, then there is a faithful servant of God. There will be different people with different styles, different talents to different degrees. Paul had his, Apollos his, and Peter his. Each one was more or less gifted in this way and in that way. Let there be no judging of unseeable, unknowable motives and intentions of people's hearts. How cruel to judge a faithful servant of God like Paul, or Apollos, or Peter, etc. as being badly motivated.

The same goes for any Christians. We may suppose that this Christian brother or sister's motives even for doing good things may not be right; we may judge what's in the heart. Maybe our guess is right. But maybe it is totally wrong. All of this kind of judging is sinful because only God can know such things. If in actual fact, we do not know something first hand, we cannot judge it. All such judgment must be left to Jesus Christ, The Judge, until He comes again, if need be. Seek forgiveness for such loveless judging. This time of year when there are more gathering of family, friends and coworkers, be on guard against this sin of evil judgment.

*Rev. Dale R. Schulz*  
[www.stjohnsde.org](http://www.stjohnsde.org)

*St. John's Ev. Lutheran Church*  
*Newark, DE*

Let every Christian be a faithful servant of our Savior. Let each one use whatever talents, time, and resources he or she has to do that serving. And let's serve Christ as we serve one another this way. That will be love. It will be done according to God's Word and we won't be playing God as we do so!

And let every believer in Jesus be a faithful manager of the Word of God. Do that in two ways. Firmly hold onto it yourself. Unwaveringly trust every word of it. Stake your life, including your eternal life, upon it. And two, do everything you can to get that Word of Christ to the people of the world. Every one of those people needs it. Speak it. Support others who speak it in the world to the world. Pray for the success of the Gospel. Then you will judge rightly and not sinfully. Then the will of Christ will be your motivation of heart, and you will have Christ's Gospel judgment of Not guilty! Amen.