

“Just wait until Dad gets home!” That phrase or something like it is probably all too familiar to your vocabulary growing up. This time, Hans finally got to say it to his little brother Larry. There was no hiding the evidence, the plaster lamp was shattered to a million pieces on the floor.

Dad kept on telling his sons not to goof around in the house. This time Larry really messed up. He was playing catch in the living room and the baseball hit the lamp and came crashing on the hardwood floor.

The thing is Larry didn't seem to notice. Larry didn't seem to care. Hans really needed to lay the blame on thick to get Larry to be sorry. Larry as the younger brother seemed to get away with everything: stealing toys, tagging along with his big brother, asking obnoxious questions. It's about time he got what was coming to him. “3. Just wait until Dad gets home to punish you!” Hans said almost gleefully.

And likewise, God's people are in crisis as we approach our Old Testament lesson for today. Isaiah proclaims, **“Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains might quake at your presence— as when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes water to boil— to make your name known to your adversaries, and that the nations might tremble at your presence!”** It's almost as if Isaiah is saying to the troublemakers, “Just wait until Dad gets home to punish you!”

The rules have been disregarded. The lamp has been broken. And there is no remorse. The nations don't know the Lord. The nations don't care. They always get away with all sorts of things: worship of idols, the slaughtering of the innocent, the eating of pork!

God's people often felt like a raft on the open ocean—completely at the mercy of the nations surrounding them, being bullied and tormented, unable to defend themselves. This was the pattern of the history of Israel. The nations would threaten Israel, and they would rely on their God to rescue them. The Lord saved them from the Egyptians. The Lord saved them from the attacks of the neighboring countries such as the Philistines, and most recently from the superpower of the Assyrians.

And so we too want deliverance from our enemies. It's easy to point the finger at the forces outside of us which make life difficult. It's easy to see the sinners in our midst. It's tempting to say to those around us, “Just wait until Dad gets home to punish you!”

This is the season of Advent and we await the coming of Jesus. We want Jesus to rend the heavens so he can punish the evildoers, can teach the heathens all around us a thing or two, and so he can right the wrongs in our lives.

Hans kept on pestering Larry, telling him how much trouble he was in, reminding Larry how angry Dad was going to be that his favorite lamp was

shattered to pieces. Finally, Larry was fed up with it. Larry fired back at Hans, “The lamp wouldn’t be on the floor if you caught the ball I threw to you!”

Hans remembered; he was in charge of watching Larry while their dad was at the hardware store. It was Hans’ idea to play catch in the first place, and after all, he ducked out of the way to let the baseball slam into the lamp. Both he and Larry were going to be in trouble when dad came back, but mostly Hans since he was the older brother.

He told Larry to quickly grab the super glue from the workbench. Hans and Larry worked frantically to try to piece back the ceramic lamp, but try as they may, they only made things worse. They waited with dread for Dad to return home from his errand. Hans said to Larry with resignation: “Just wait until Dad comes home to punish us!”

Sin numbs our conscience, but it makes our skin thinner. In our state of sin, we cannot see the ways in which we harm others. We’re completely blind to it. Yet whenever someone slights us in even the smallest way, we’re ready to strike, we’re full of anger, and we won’t forget how we’ve been hurt.

Yet God’s Word acts as a mirror. It shows us the log in our own eyes before we complain about the speck in our brother’s eye. It shows us our role in the breaking of the lamp. It awakens our consciences to see just how bad we’ve been.

It is with that in mind that Isaiah’s complaint quickly shifts to: 2. Just wait until Dad gets home to punish us! The complaints quickly shift from a blaming of others to a blaming of self. **“Behold, you were angry, and we sinned; in our sins we have been a long time, and shall we be saved? We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. There is no one who calls upon your name, who rouses himself to take hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us, and have made us melt in the hand of our iniquities.”**

God’s Word tells us how bad things are. Even our good deeds are tainted with sin. Hans thought he was doing something good in trying to fix the lamp that was broken, but without much planning or expertise, he only managed to make things worse: gluing pieces in the wrong places, cutting up his fingers, and cracking the shards into smaller pieces.

The Bible says our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. Try cleaning a windshield with an oil-soaked rag. Try getting rid of a spot with a napkin that’s been soaked in red wine. Try earning your salvation with actions that might appear to be good on the outside, but inside are tainted with selfishness, pride, and simply a fear of punishment.

The Bible teaches that each one of us is born in sin, rotten to the core. We have inherited something called original sin from our parents who inherited it from

their parents all the way back to Adam and Eve. Original sin is a sickness unto death which manifests itself through us not fearing God, not trusting God, and having an inclination to do wrong.

In our state of original sin, we don't believe that our Heavenly Father is going to actually punish us for the sins we commit. Like Larry, we walk around not caring about the broken lamp thinking Dad isn't going to mind. In our state of original sin, we don't trust the Lord to provide for our needs, so we act like we're on our own. Dad's not coming back from the hardware store so let's raid the fridge. In our state of original sin, we'd rather be disobeying God than doing what His commandments call us to do. Who cares about sanding the dresser while dad shops for wood stain, let's practice our fielding skills in the living room.

But God's Word wakes us up to our predicament. It shows us just how bad things are. We are left staring at the mess whispering to ourselves: "Just wait until Dad comes home to punish us!"

Our passage ends with this plea: **"But now, O LORD, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand. Be not so terribly angry, O LORD, and remember not iniquity forever. Behold, please look, we are all your people."**

It is as though Isaiah were saying, "I know it looks bad, but we are your children. We are at your mercy. Forgive us. Help us. Save us. We are yours. We are in your palms to smush at your will."

This Advent, the Lord does have mercy on us. He does act in a Fatherly fashion. He acts to save us, His people. This Advent, 1. Just wait until Dad gets home to repair what we broke.

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him."

We are weeks away from Christmas, and as we await Christ's coming at Christmas, we know the reason He came. He came not to punish us, but to repair what we broke. We shattered the lamp, but He came to mend it back together.

This wasn't free. It cost God's Son His life. Jesus suffered for your sins. He took on your brokenness. He died on the cross to forgive you. He even died for your own failed attempts to fix the problem— trying to heap the blame on the little brother, trying to put the pieces back together, and trying to pretend there's no mess all the while walking on ceramic shards.

Jesus took on your brokenness and He became broken for you. He was beaten. He was hit. He was shattered as He endured the cross, despising its shame. Yet His resurrection shows you a picture of what it means to be mended. We can go through this life with all our temptations, sins, and failures knowing first and

foremost, we are forgiven, and secondly, that we will be put back together again fully and wholly on that day when Jesus calls us to be with Him in the resurrection of the body.

Just wait until Dad gets home to repair what we've broke. Hans and Larry were still waiting for their father to get back from his errand. Yes, they may have been anxious, but they were confident knowing that their dad would still love them. He would still be their dad, and that he would find a solution to the broken lamp problem even if he would be initially upset.

“From of old no one has heard or perceived by the ear, no eye has seen a God besides you, who acts for those who wait for him.” So Advent is a season of waiting—waiting for the Lord to come, waiting to be put back together again, but waiting with hope, not fear. **THIS ADVENT WE WAIT FOR "DAD" TO MEND OUR BROKENNESS.**

We wait with hope because Jesus has taken on the punishment we deserve. We wait with hope because we know that in baptism, God has made us His people. We wait as children of our Heavenly Father who we know loves us. We wait knowing that we have a Father who loves us, who sent His Son to free us from our sins. Amen.