

Transcription of 16TM817

Galatians 4:4

"Son Is Sent"

December 24, 2016

So I get this unenviable job of teaching five services over the next two days - on one subject - Christmas. I was looking back. We've had 32 of these here, talking about Christmas. I don't know how long you can tell this story or how many times you can tell this story and spin it enough to where it's different. But it's a good story nonetheless, isn't it, and one that we need to think about.

So, tonight and again tomorrow (and we'll kind of push down a little ahead at our services in the morning), we're going to look at Galatians 4 - if you have a Bible with you, just dig there real quickly - and just at a couple of verses that I think have a lot to say about Christmas. There's no story of mangers this year, no wise men, no animal troughs, no room at the inn. We've told all those stories, but we wanted to look a little deeper this year.

And I'd like to look at verse 4 of Galatians 4, and this is what Paul wrote to the Galatians. "But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, 'Abba, Father!' Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." Unlike any other man in history, Jesus obeyed the law perfectly; lived a life no one could have lived. None of us have been able to do it. But Paul, I think, hits on that in this Galatian letter, and he makes three points; and we'll look at two of them tonight and one of them tomorrow. But Paul says God, at the right time, sent the right Person for the right reason. In the fullness of time, God sent the only One who could deliver you - His Son. Born of a woman, born under the law, came with one purpose - to redeem those of us under the law so that we might receive the adoption as sons.

How many of you can remember what happened December 17, 1903? I'm just throwing it out there. If you actually answer this, I'm going to sit down, and you're going to finish the message. (Laughing) If I tell you, I think you'll remember. It was two young men from Dayton, Ohio. How about now? Do you know now? They found their way to the sand dunes of Kitty Hawk in North Carolina. They took their heavier-than-air machine (at least that's what they called it) to give it a go.

They wanted to see if they could fly. They owned a bicycle shop in Ohio. They had built this contraption, chasing a dream that someday man could fly. And on that day, their dream came true. They were able to get this thing off the ground for twelve seconds. It flew 120 feet. Success was had. Man could fly. It's the most amazing news, certainly, of the decade. In their excitement, they sent a wire home to their sister, Katherine. It said, "We flew 120 feet today, and we'll be home for Christmas." She took it to the newspaper, so excited about the news of the flying, and the editor looked at it and read it out loud and said to her, "Oh, good. They'll be home for Christmas." And she couldn't believe what she heard. The most historic news of their time - man had flown - completely overlooked by the editor of the paper; failed to pick up on it. The news of the century - and he missed it.

And I think that, a lot of times, happens (unfortunately) in our world when it comes to Christmas. I had the misfortune of driving by the Brea Mall at 1:30 this afternoon. (Laughing) We went to eat at Lazy Dog. By the way, I would highly recommend it. (Laughing) But you couldn't get near the Mall. And I thought how in the world do you wait until now to go shopping?! And if you love them that much, shouldn't you have shopped earlier? (Laughing)

Seems to happen every Christmas. The greatest news of all of history - the birth of God's plan to save - overshadowed by office parties, and a fat man in a red suit, and nativity scenes that look just so. And you lose Jesus in the mix of it. God had Him planned from the beginning. He is the greatest news the world will ever know. And yet you look around, and, man, it's like the editor saying, "Well, I'm glad they'll be home for Christmas." You miss the biggest news of all.

I talked to a family several years ago who had gone out with their kids every year looking at Christmas decorations, and their young daughter loved the nativity scene at the local church. It was the largest one in town. And every year, they would stop there last, and the shepherds and the angels and Mary and Joseph and Jesus and the little manger - and one year the daughter, who was growing up, said to her mom, "How come Jesus is the same size every year?" (Laughing) It's a good question. And I hope that tonight and tomorrow Jesus might grow a little bit larger in your thinking, in your hearts, because you don't want to miss the greatest news ever - the One that will last you and keep you and get you into eternity. It's the monumental truth of the sending of His Son.

Well Paul says here in verse 4, "When the fullness of the time had come." For four thousand years in the Old Testament, God spoke about His plans to save man. Four thousand years, God said, "Here's what I'm going to do. Here's who I'm going to send. This is what I'm going to accomplish." And Paul begins by saying, as he focuses in on this great news, "When the fullness of the time had come." The prophets had spoken about His coming. They had been scattered all over the globe. They had come in different centuries and at different times, and had come at it from different angles; and they brought different parts of the story. But as you put them together, He even, in Daniel, told us the very day that the Lord would ride into Jerusalem and present Himself to them as the Messiah that had been promised - the Passover Lamb - born in Bethlehem, born to a virgin, a descendant of David, fully God, fully man. This is the One that was coming. The right time - in "the fullness of time" - when God had laid it out for years and said, "Don't miss this!" So that every finger and every hand and every Scripture pointed to that time of His coming so that you wouldn't miss Jesus. If Jesus isn't the Messiah, there is no Messiah. Because everything in God's Book pointed to Him and had for generations. But in "the fullness of time," when God saw that it was time, at the perfect time. And Christmas celebrates that. Christmas celebrates that God had a perfect time in mind to send His Son. His timing was perfect, and it had been pointed to for some four thousand years.

Second of all, it says in verse 4, "when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son." The right Person came at Christmas. The right Person came. No one ever influenced the world as much as Jesus Christ. Think about it. Aristotle taught for forty years. Socrates forty more. Plato - fifty years. Three of the greatest philosophers of Greece that the world has ever seen - known for their wisdom and knowledge - spoke for 130 years, and they can't begin to stand next to Jesus, who spoke for 3½. And His influence overshadows them all. We don't use encyclopedias much anymore. We've got that computer thing now. But the latest, and the only, Encyclopedia Britannica that was printed, had over 120,000 words just about Jesus. It's a lot of literary real estate. More than is written in that Encyclopedia about Aristotle or Alexander the Great or Buddha or Caesar or Cicero or Confucius or the prophet Mohammed combined. And rightfully so. He stands head and shoulders above them all. He singularly touched the world far more than any combination of them all. I read one time someone saying Christmas was when God came down the stairs of heaven with a baby in His arms. But the whole story that the Bible would say is that He came down the stairs of heaven

with a Savior in His arms because that's why Christmas is. God, at the right time, sent the right Person.

That very popular song that you hear this time of year - "I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas" - was written by Irving Berlin in the early forties. But it was made really famous by Bing Crosby. His recording, as of this year, had sold well over 108 million copies. That's amazing. If God had written it, though, the lyrics would have been changed to "I'm Dreaming of a Red Christmas" because if you're going to get white, you're going to have to find red. Isaiah (1:18) would write, "Come and let us reason together. Though your sins are like scarlet, I can make them white as snow." The right One was sent.

In this letter, as Paul writes to the Galatians, he discusses with them the history of the Jews and their relationship to God as a nation; and how the law had pointed out their sinfulness, how they really couldn't rely upon it to get to God based upon their behavior. And he called them to graduate. He said to them, "Let's leave behind the bondage of the law and turn to the Savior who has come to bring freedom." Even in this chapter, beginning in verse 1, Paul says this, "Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave, though he is master of all, but is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world. But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son." Paul's point is pretty simple. You can be the heir of millions of dollars from an estate of your father left to you, but if you don't understand estate, and you're not at that age to receive it, you might as well be a slave without an inheritance because you gain the same amount. You don't know it, you don't understand it. Paul said it's like that for the religious man. He's under the law, he doesn't know about the freedom of God, he doesn't know about the deliverance that God could bring. He's like a slave. He thinks he's free, but he's under the bondage that only sin really can bring to man. Until he meets the Savior. Until the Lord comes to deliver. And when He does, now you have something. Now you become an heir. Now you become a child of God - and one that has a future and a hope and a glory. God sent the right Person at the right season. And for the right reason.

A couple of things that the Lord tells us here about our Savior. First of all, verse 4, "God sent forth His Son." The Person that we celebrate at Christmas was sent from God. It seems kind of rudimentary, but it's important. It doesn't say "at the right time, God made a Son or created one." It just says that "He sent His Son

forward." It implies preexistence. He was with the Father before He showed up in that manger. The Father sent somebody that was already in His presence. The word "sent forth" comes from the Greek word for apostle, one who is sent forth to carry out a work or to bring a message or to be an ambassador. In fact, Jesus is the only Person who lived before He was born. Makes Him unique, doesn't it? Try that on for size. It'll freak you out. Don't think about it too long. But it's amazing. And that truth is stated constantly in the Scriptures. Jesus, in John 17:5, on the way to the cross (it's late Thursday night), as He's praying before the disciples, said, "Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world began." Twenty verses later He said, "Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world" (John 17:24). This Savior that was sent existed before He was born, which makes Him unique. He was sent from God. Jesus clearly told that to His enemies. He said, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me" (John 8:42). In chapter 6:38 of John, He said to His enemies, "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me." You see, Christmas celebrates God's action of sending His Son. This Person came from God. The right Person was sent by Him. He existed with Him. He was sent by Him.

I'm sure you've heard the words "culture shock," and we use it, I think, when we find ourselves in surroundings or living conditions far removed from what we're used to. It can be good or bad. Usually it's bad. We have missionaries who spend years out in the mission field with little to show for it as far as gain outwardly. And when they come home for vacation or rest, they're often just moved by how easily we spend things on nothing. They have culture shock. And I thought what culture shock must Jesus have gone through. He came from heaven, here - here - and not modern America. Two thousand years ago - Bethlehem. He came here. There's an old hymn, and part of the old hymn says, "Out from the ivory palaces into a world of woe." Jesus came, sent by the Father, because Christmas tells us God had a plan. At the right time, He sent the right Person.

Our greatest need was not an educator, or we would have gotten one. Our greatest need was not technology, or we would have had a scientist. If our greatest need was money, God could have sent us an economist or an entertainer if our greatest need was pleasure. But our greatest need is forgiveness. Our greatest need is relationship with God that can't be grasped or found by ourselves - because of sin.

We need someone on the outside to come and get us, to save us. This Person that we celebrate on Christmas was sent from God.

Second of all, this Person that God sent was the Son of God. That's what it says here in verse 4, "God sent forth His Son." Now there's a real mystery there that can certainly, I think, do a number on you when you start to think about it. Paul, when he wrote to Timothy (in his first letter), said, "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh" (God was revealed to us in the flesh), "justified in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory" (1 Timothy 3:16). But he starts with, "Here's a mystery. God let Himself be known in the flesh." In the fullness of time, God sent forth His Son. From heaven to us. The Son of God came to us. How does God become a Man? I don't know. I don't know. I love how people always like to ask questions that are unanswerable. We have, oftentimes, people that get saved, and they'll go, "Hey, when do you think the Lord's coming back?" I say, "Well, the Bible says no man knows the day or the hour. I have no idea." "Yeah, but when do you think it'll be?" "Don't know. I can tell you when I'd like it to be - before the bills come in for the Christmas deal is what I'd like it to be." (Laughing)

God sent one Person, His only begotten Son. And the fact that He is God's Son would imply to you, besides many other verses, that He is Deity. The Son of God implies Jesus shares the same nature with the Father, as the Father who sent Him. And if the Father is God, then the Son is God. And when you see the term "Son of God" singularly used, it is always the expression of God's invading man's space in a physical body. Even Jesus' enemies understood, at least, that concept and that that's what Jesus was saying. In John 10:31, they took up stones to stone Him, and Jesus said to them, "I've shown you a lot of good works from My Father. For which one of them are you going to stone Me?" And they said, "Well, not for Your good works. For none of those good works. We're going to stone You because You are a Man, and You are claiming to be God." That's what Christmas is all about. God sent, at the right time, the right Person - who coexisted with Him, who is God come in the flesh, who is the Son of God.

We, on Sunday mornings, recently went through Mark's account of Jesus' talk with the scribes on Tuesday before the cross. And He asked them who they thought the Messiah was, and they said, "He's the Son of David." And Jesus took them to Psalm 110 and said, "David called Him Lord," and he wouldn't have done that in that

kind of a society. He wouldn't call his son his Lord; and implied again He's not only David's Son in the flesh, but He's the Lord of David in the Spirit. He's the right Person. He came to save. There's always confusion with folks about - on the one hand, Jesus says, "I and My Father are one" (John 10:30); on the other hand, He says, "My Father is greater than I" (John 14:28). And people go, "What does that mean?" Well, the Son deals with His position in His incarnation. He came, and He took a flesh, and He didn't rely upon His Person as God to do miracles and to know things and to have power. He was our example. So He walks with the Father in His flesh like we do - relying on the Holy Spirit, depending upon God's promises, having faith, being obedient even unto death - and Jesus becomes that example to us. But that doesn't make Him any less God. The kids shared Isaiah 9:6 tonight, as we were listening to them. "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given," and it covers both sides. Most of the Christmas celebrations in the world cover the first part, "Unto us a Child is born." Oh, we all like that. Yet even in His conception, there was this miraculous hand of God clearly at work. When Mary found out that she was to be pregnant, she was told by the angel that she'd found favor with God and that she was going to conceive in her womb a Son, and He was going to be named Jesus, and He would be great and called the Son of the Highest and that the Lord God would give Him the throne of His father David, He would reign forever; of His kingdom there would be no end. And Mary went, "Time out!" (Pastor Jack makes the time-out sign with his hands). "That all sounds great, but I'm a virgin, and I'm not married yet." And it was the angel who said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, the power of the Highest will overshadow you, and the One that is born in you will be called the Son of God." He's unique for sure.

Why did God send His Son? Because God wanted to save you and me. He sent the Lord, His Son, to spell out for us - in a language we could understand - the heart of God. Plato, not so smart, wrote, "God and man can never meet. The gods will never be approachable by man." That's biblically incorrect. Go to the back of the class, Plato. Jesus said, "If you've seen Me, you've seen the Father" (John 14:9). You want to know what God's like, just check Jesus out. When you see Him healing a blind man, know that God has a compassionate heart. When He's teaching the crowds the truth (even though they hate Him and turn upon Him), know that God is concerned that you know the truth about who He is. When you see Him weeping over Jerusalem, know that God's heart breaks when you turn away from Him. When you see Him dying on a cross, know that He will pay any price necessary to be sure that you can go to heaven and be with Him and be forgiven. "You've seen Me, you've seen the Father" (John 14:9).

God is determined to do something about the sin that has so plagued the world. He's not aloof. He's not in heaven, standing afar off, unconcerned with your life. He comes to the earth. He knows what He's going to be going through. He's come with all of the resources of heaven with Him to save us. At the right time, God sent the right Person. He was the Son of God.

And not only that, He lived (as a Man) a perfect life. Notice we read here in verse 4 that he came "born of a woman, born under the law." In other words, He was put in the same position all of us were. Here, the emphasis is not on His Deity but on His humanity. He was born to a woman. He was born under the law of God. The Son of God had a human birth. He was 100% God, but He was also 100% human. Christmas is all about God's timing and God's Person and God's solution.

Prophetically and spiritually and culturally and politically and all, God had the right time. And then He sent His Son Jesus, who is God and who was Man, and He is larger than the universe that He created, and yet He confined Himself to the womb of a teenaged Jewish girl. And He was born in a manger. And if that doesn't blow your mind, I don't know what will. But the miracle on that day in Bethlehem, in a barn for animals and in a feeding trough, was that the Maker of all made Himself helpless; put Himself where we are and where we've lived, as a dependent newborn who came to redeem us from our sin. Sent by the Father, the Son of God is with us. Christmas has arrived.

And, in reality, if Jesus doesn't have that miraculous birth, then He can't save you. Every man is born in sin. "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23), which is why there's no mention of the Father. There's only a mention of the mother. The Father was in heaven miraculously forming this young Jesus - in the heart and in the womb of Mary. If He weren't God, then we're doomed. So Paul writes "born of a woman." No mention of a man. He was born of the Spirit. He was virgin-born. His Father was in heaven. His body was upon the earth. The Savior had come to save. Christmas is here.

And he was born under the law. Grew up as a Jewish boy, circumcised on the eighth day, dedicated at the Temple like all good eight-day-old kids would have been, raised in a home where the Torah and the Tanakh was taught (the Old Testament). Having prayed to the God of Israel, He went to the synagogue regularly. Like every Jewish boy, He was obligated to keep the law. What made Him different was He did it perfectly. He did it perfectly. So when He said, "I'll

die in your place," He could. He had no sin to die for. But you have plenty for Him to die for, and so do I.

And the reason is found in verse 5, "to redeem those who were under the law," so that we might go from children who are separated from God "to receive from Him adoption as His children." That's good news, isn't it? That's Christmas in its greatest form. God sent His Son. God did not send Santa Claus. By the way, I have nothing against Santa Claus. He never did me wrong, though he sent me enough threats, as I recall, when I was young. (Laughing) But I remember that, even when I was naughty, I think I got stuff. So I'm pretty sure he was bluffing. I might've told you before about the fact that there is a real historical Santa. The Dutch call him Sinterklaas. I'm proud of that, being Dutch. And they have, for years, celebrated this saint of God. His name was Nicholas. He was the bishop in Myra in ancient Anatolia, which, today, is part of Turkey. But he was a generous, kind of compassionate, man who gave to the poor. He developed a reputation of leaving gifts with folks who needed it more than anyone else in the name of Christ, and he was a man who served on the Nicaea Council. The Nicaea Council, in 325 A.D., was the one that was written out - they wrote the Nicene Creed. Maybe you've heard about it. It was written as a response to a fellow named Arius who was running around saying Jesus wasn't God. In fact, in the Council, when Arius stood up and said, "Jesus isn't God," old Saint Nick of Myra walked over and slapped him in the face. I like Santa. (Laughing) Seemed like my kind of guy. He said, "Don't be blasphemous." He's more than a fat guy with a beard and red clothes; he loved Jesus. Served Him faithfully and left that testimony behind.

Christmas cannot always be easy. There are some in our church who are celebrating Christmas for the first time without their husbands or their wives or a child. And yet was it not for the right Person that was sent, I wouldn't know what to say to them. But here's what I can say to them now - we'll see them again. This is just for the moment. This is just for the time. This is just for this year or next. The Lord is coming, and we'll be gathered together with those that you love. They went ahead, they ran ahead, they beat us. But they're waiting for us. Were it not for the Savior that would come, I'd have no comfort. But I have plenty now because God said, "There was a time for Me to send My Son into the world, born of a woman, to live a life without sin so He could die for your sins, so I could offer you life. All you have to do is trust that the work I did on your behalf was real, and it is true, and I will honor it." That's about all that's left for you to do - acknowledge Jesus as the One sent by God at the right time. God in the flesh. One who dwelt

before He was born. And came and lived this kind of life for you and for me so that we could be saved. And the Bible says He stands at the door of our life, and He knocks, and He wants to get in (Revelation 3:20). The Bible's pretty clear He won't kick His way in. But He's persistent. He's also not going away because eternity is a long time. You want to be sure you have that part right. You can be wrong about who you voted for, for President. Time will tell if you're right or wrong. But you don't want to be wrong about Jesus.

Tonight you can give Him your life, and He'll give you His in exchange. Because that's what Christmas is all about - God's timing, God's Person, God's reason. He wants to save you. Without Him, you can't make it. With Him, you can't lose. Merry Christmas, indeed!

Submitted by Maureen Dickson
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