

Transcription of 16TM818

Galatians 4:4-6

"Redeemed"

December 25, 2016

Rather than talking about the manger or the wise men, we decided this year to go a little different direction and talk about purpose.

Paul, writing here in *Galatians 4:4*, wrote this, "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."

Last night we spoke about a couple of things - that this was the right time, that Christmas celebrates the right time, the time that God has chosen to send His Son. And, for those of you that have been raised in church or maybe have attended Sunday school as a child, you might sense that Christmas is about Christ. That's not, I don't think, the normal picture or the normal outlook. I heard a story a couple years ago I really liked - of a teacher in a Sunday school class. She was teaching 4-year-olds, and she was up to the point in the Bible where she was teaching about Noah's Ark. And so she thought she could get the kids maybe a little bit involved, get some class participation, and she said to the kids, "Look, I want to describe an animal to you, and when you know what it is, I want you to raise your hand, and tell me right away." And so she started, and she said, "I am furry, and I have a fluffy tail, and I love to climb trees." And there was complete silence. She said, "Okay. I like to eat nuts, mostly acorns." Nothing. "I'm brown and sometimes black and can even be red." Still nothing. And by now, this poor teacher is frustrated with these 4-year-olds, and she finally turned to her star pupil, Michelle. And she said, "Michelle, come on, you know what this is," and Michelle said, "Yeah, I'm pretty sure the answer is supposed to be Jesus, but it sounds like a squirrel to me." (Laughing) And I like that story because, so often, we get to Christmas, and we have all kinds of explanations, but we're pretty squirrely about telling us what's truly going on and that it is about Jesus. And the Bible, by the way, is much more declarative than we are. The Old Testament promises that He would come. "In the fullness of time," Paul wrote to the Galatians. When God said it was time, Jesus came. And the prophets told us about all of the signposts along the way. You can't read a prophet but you don't find him pointing at Jesus and His

coming; specific directions, where He would be born, how He would be born, when He would be born, why He would be born, that He would die. The prophets were good at just pointing the way. They are literally lights so that you might follow them to the right conclusion. "In the fullness of time."

By the time you get to the gospels, Jesus is set on display; and for 3½ years, you watched Him do all of the things that the prophets said the Messiah would do. There is this constant reaching back to the Old Testament to say (Isaiah 35:5), "Look, when the Messiah comes, He'll open the eyes of the blind, and the lame will walk, and the deaf will hear, and the dead will be raised to life again." And we find Him put on display. In the book of Acts, we find Him preached. He's gone. He's been dead and then risen and now ascended, but yet the preaching of who He is and why He came began to change lives by the hundreds, by the thousands, by the millions. By the time you get to the epistles, there is the application of His ways to our lives. And by the time you get to the final book of the Bible, it speaks of His return to rule and reign. It is all about Jesus. The Bible is. And certainly Christmas is, too, because "in the fullness of time, God sent His only Son." It is one of the reasons we are committed to teaching the entire Bible to you. It is one seamless presentation of our Savior and Lord. Without the Old Testament, it is kind of like going to a two-act play and getting there for the second act. While everyone else knows what's going on onstage, you have to constantly say, "Who's that guy?" And, "Why is he yelling at that woman?" And, "How come he doesn't look too happy?" And, "What did he do wrong?" And you have no basis for which - you're totally unfamiliar with - what is taking place. So, there are folks who open their Bibles, and they're like someone stuck in a jungle without a road. No matter which way they turn, they're lost. They don't get it. They don't see any rhyme or reason, no familiar path to follow. They're just kind of disconnected phrases that don't seem to relate to one another at all. But the Bible is anything but disconnected. It is absolutely staged, if you will. It is coherent, and it is designed to bring you to Christ and to give Him the rightful place in your life.

When Paul wrote this book to the Colossians, he said (1:18), "He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence." Little Michelle was right. "I know the answer's Jesus." It certainly is when it comes to Christmas and when it comes to the Scriptures. Paul said to the Ephesians (1:11), "God works all things according to the counsel of His will." In the fullness of time. And really, it only makes sense to those who are willing to look at the fullness of time. What did God do for four

thousand years to make sure you didn't miss Him, that you didn't have Him just go by and kind of in one ear and out the other? It isn't some haphazard writings of men from long ago. There's a story here. There's a poem here. And that's exactly what we are told there (in verse 4 here) of Galatians 4 - at just the right time in history, to fulfill every prophecy the first time He came. Jesus did come in the fullness of time.

And then we looked at the next part of that last night, which says He sent the right Person; He sent His own Son. And we looked at what that meant, that God sent His Son. He existed before He was born - the only Person ever to have been around before He was born. He was born of a woman. He was born in the flesh. It was a mystery - God in the flesh. He lived without sin. He came to save us. Remember that "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing," there's that line that says, "Veiled in flesh, the Godhead see; hail, incarnate Deity." Christmas really is that. It is Jesus sent by the Father at the right time, sending the right Person.

And now we want to just look at verses 5 and 6 - the right reason for Him coming. For many people, I think Christmas seems very out-of-place. It's almost like Christmas is disconnected from life itself. It's like you stumble across a holiday that comes and goes so quickly - maybe even more so when it's on the weekend like this - and it interrupts your life. You're working to pay the rent or raise your kids or save for college; and yet once a year, everything just has to stop. And you have to celebrate the birth of the baby Jesus, and then I can go back to my "real" life. And twelve more months will pass before I have to drag the box with the tree and the ornaments out of the attic or dust off the manger or plug in the lights or wrap the presents and make the rounds with the family; and soon after that, I can just put it all back until next year. It seems like it doesn't really have a part of my life at all. It just is an interruption to life.

Why bother? And yet verse 5 says that the Lord brought Christmas to us - sending His Son to redeem those who were under the law. There is a history to this reason I think we should understand. Notice that Paul uses the past tense - "to redeem those who were under the law," (were under the law) "that we might receive" (the present reality) "the adoption as sons." Paul does the same thing in this book over and over, in that he rehearses - for the folks that he's writing to - what they once were and what they could become; religious folks who had God's promises that they failed upon, sin that separated them from God, and yet God sent grace through His Son. And so it is really a book about Christmas, and these

verses, for sure, focus upon that - the right time, sending the right Person; now - for what reason? So we could be sinners that have been saved and become God's children.

When did Christmas start? What is the true origin of Christmas? Was it really a manger in Bethlehem a little over two thousand years ago that Mary and Joseph came and brought the baby Jesus forth? Or maybe it was when the shepherds were in the fields, and the angel appeared. And I always read that story and think, gosh, it's a good thing not all the angels showed up at once. They got a taste of one angel. I think they'd all just have died. You know? But one angel showed up and declared who He was; and then the announcement by the choir.

Maybe you should go back a bit further. Maybe 700 B.C. when Isaiah (9:6-7) promised that a Child would be born and a Son would be given who would be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Prince of Peace, where the government would be upon His shoulders and of His kingdom there would be no end.

Or maybe you could go back even a little further. Maybe 1450 B.C. when Moses, standing before the people a few weeks before he was to die, said (Deuteronomy 18:15), "The LORD will raise you up a Prophet like me in your midst and from your brethren. Listen to Him." And then (four or five verses later) said that "God would raise up a prophet like me from among the brethren, and He'll put my words in His mouth, and He'll speak them to you. And if you will hear His words, it'll be required of you." And he spoke about this One that was to come. That's Christmas already, isn't it, in promise.

Or maybe we could go back even a bit further. Maybe all the way back to Genesis, where we read of God's creation. It's a pretty good story, early on. The first couple chapters are wonderful. God made everything. God made Adam. God made Eve. Everything was good. All you kept reading is, "And God looked, and He saw all that He'd made, and He said, 'It's good.'" Six different times, God patted Himself on the back. "That's pretty good." He high-fived Himself. Until He got to Adam. "Not good that man should be alone." And God created Eve, and He brought her to Adam, and they were married, and then God said something. He didn't just say, "Good." He said, "Very good." And He only left them one commandment. It wasn't too difficult. The Bible was pretty thin back then. "Stay away from the tree. Don't eat of this tree. You'll die." One commandment so that love would have a choice. And for however long they lasted, they had intimate relationships with

God. It was very good, indeed. But, in chapter 3 of *Genesis*, their choice was exercised, and everything changed, and there was a cave-in, and man sinned against God. And you read of the LORD coming to look to have fellowship with His creation in the cool of the day, and Adam and Eve finally realizing, because of their sin, that they were naked before the LORD, and they hid themselves. And God would put them out of the Garden, and they would be put away from fellowship with Him. They would be alienated from God. They would lose their relationship. They would be out of the kingdom. Death would follow.

What would God do for a damned creation? How could you spare a doomed people who had chosen to go otherwise? Children who had fallen to the dark side. What would God do? Had He prepared for this? Was this part of His plan? Could He fix this, that man had brought upon himself?

If you go back, and you read the account of the discussion that the LORD has with the serpent, who had lured Eve and then Adam to question God and then to defy God, God spoke very clearly to the devil. He said, "I'm going to put enmity between you and this woman. I'm going to put enmity between your seed and her Seed. He's going to bruise your head even while you bruise His heel. Satan, you're going to have a conflict from this day forward with the offspring of this woman. In this war, you're going to be the ultimate loser. I will put enmity between your seed and hers. He shall bruise your head. That's a fatal blow. You'll bruise His heel. That's a temporary setback." And there in *Genesis 3:15*, Christmas is already discussed. A Descendant of a woman would come to crush the head of the enemy of man's soul, and Man will be born to crush the dominion of Satan. His head, his power, his authority will be broken by this coming One born of a woman, while Himself receiving a wound - the bruising of His heel.

If you keep reading through the Bible, watching for the Christmas story to unfold, you will soon get to a flood that would come to destroy the world, and only eight souls would be saved with Noah. He and his family made it through, and the Seed that was promised to destroy and to crush the head of the serpent would be found amongst one of these eight. Noah had three sons, and one of them was named Shem (not like the Three Stooges, but Shem). And from him came a man named Abraham, who would come to be told that through his seed, all of the nations of the earth would be blessed. "I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." You've gone all the way to *Genesis 12*.

That promise is reiterated to Abraham's second son, Isaac, in *Genesis 26*. It is then given to Isaac's second son, Jacob, in *Genesis 28*. And at the end of the book of *Genesis*, as Jacob lies on his death bed, that promise is passed along to Jacob's fourth son (with his wife, Leah) named Judah. And God continued to promote and to present the promise that man could be brought back from the death that sin had brought, the separation that had been entered into - that relationship that was so very good for two chapters.

By the time you get to *2 Samuel 7*, God promises King David that his descendants will rule upon the throne forever. In the New Testament book of *Matthew* (the gospel writer to the Jews), he begins with the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the son of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob and Judah, and you get that same lineage drawn all the way down through the history of the descendants of God's people. *Matthew* then writes in chapter 1:16, "And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ. So all the generations from Abraham to David until the captivity, until Christ and the birth of Christ is" as follows. And the promise made by God to the enemy in the presence of His fallen creation is found in the birth of Jesus, in the One that God promised to come and restore the relationship that man could have with God. And Christmas has its roots, if you will, in *Genesis 3* because God had a plan. He would redeem you and me from the sin that was introduced into the world by our parents long ago - of Adam and of Eve.

Paul follows that same line of reasoning in this book. In fact, in chapter 3:13 and then 14-16, it says, "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree'), that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." Ultimately, this coming Seed promised to Adam and Eve, in their presence - as they had just fallen into sin, told to their enemy and the one that wanted to destroy them, "There's a Seed coming. We know His name is Jesus. He came to fulfill the promise God made back in the Garden." He would pay a price. His heel would be bruised. He would die. But He would rise while the head of the enemy would be crushed, his authority and dominance in your life broken. In fact, that's confirmed even here in verse 26 of the previous chapter (if you're there in chapter 4). It says, "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus." So, the fellowship that God created with Adam and Eve, the "good," the "very good," destroyed in chapter 3, is regained or restored in Christ. You want a relationship with God, one that sin has been

removed, and you're welcomed into His presence, you have to go through the One that He sent that would be bruised, that would come to crush the head of the enemy. You have to come through Christ. So in the fullness of time, God sends forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, so that you and I might be redeemed, who were under the law; that God might redeem us and bring us back, regain fellowship. We read last night, but just look again up at chapter 4:1. It's a pretty simple illustration. Paul says, "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." And then he makes a spiritual comparison, and he says, "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." And Paul's point is, look, you might have a child to whom you're leaving all of your worldly goods, but until he understands it and he comes of the age where he gets to receive it, he really is no better off than a slave who doesn't understand it either and has no rights in terms of joy or rest or hope. Yet when you get it, then you realize your position. And Paul said it's kind of like that in the world. You're lost in your sin. You're separated from God. You're post-Genesis 3 kind of people. But until you realize that there's no way out, you're like a child, you're like a slave. But when you meet the Deliverer, when you meet the One who's been promised, when the Redeemer is noticed by you, then you can come out of that bondage, and you can come to life, and you can come to know Him. And your life changes in every aspect because God has a better plan for your life than for you to be enslaved in sin. And Christmas screams that out to us. God came to redeem us. He sent the serpent Crusher to restore sinners to a place of sonship, to give those who had fallen an inheritance, to bring them intimately and closely back with God through the blood of His Son who shed that blood to die in our place. That's Christmas.

The word "redeem," there in verse 5, literally means to buy back; that God, in the context of a slave, bought us with cold, hard cash in order to set us free from our slavery. God obviously did much more. He bought us from the slavery of sin. And not just to set us free - to make us His own. It's one thing to be delivered and just go do what you want with your life now. No. He wanted to give us the adoption of children. Right? Buy the slave, set him free, but adopt him and bring him into the family. That's what Christmas ultimately is. By analogy, God went to the slave market of sin, He saw our condition, He purchased us, He brought us to Himself, He filled out the adoption papers, He produced an inheritance for us, and we become His. And the Son became a Man to enable men to become God's children.

John said in chapter 1:12, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right" (the word is "*exousia*," the privilege) "to become children of God." It's big news! And certainly isn't something that you hear playing in Nordstrom.

So, look, you don't ever need to worry about doing enough to be saved, or piling up enough good works, or trying to earn God's blessing, or proving somehow your worthiness. You're His child when you come to Jesus. You're not a slave. You're His child. And that's why Christmas came. That's the right reason.

And the question you always have to ask yourself is - what kind of Father would give up His Son to be killed for the sake of others? And the answer is - only the kind that loved the world that He had made, that watched it fall into sin and be separated from Him for eternity and death following. And He didn't want that to happen. He knew that death would bruise His Son, but His Son would rise, and He would crush the enemy and strike a fatal blow to our enemy so that we could have life.

Now that's the side of Christmas that you rarely hear about or that people, I think, rarely contemplate. And yet it is the most important reason we have. We like the lights and the presents and the family dinners. We like the baby Jesus with His soft little hands and little feet and that hair that smells like a little baby; without ever stopping to think that that little baby was destined to have His hands driven through with Roman spikes, and on His head a crown of thorns, and walk down a road of sorrows, and find Himself at a place of execution, so that we could live forevermore. In the fullness of time, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those that were under the law, so that we could be made His children. It's pretty good news, isn't it?

But there's even one more thing left. Verse 6 says, "And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, 'Abba,' " (which is really the Hebrew word for daddy) " 'Father!' Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son," (or a daughter) "and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." Here's the cool thing. When you ask Jesus into your life, the Lord, by the Holy Spirit, comes to live within you and produces this amazing, almost instant, knowledge and awareness of your relationship with God - that you are right with God. There's a peace. Abba, Father. I can now call Him Father. It isn't something I can learn. It is just something innate that God sends His Spirit to teach me. And then I'm taught that I'm going to inherit a great and glorious future through

His Son. Jesus who, by nature, is a Son became a slave so that we, by nature, who are sinners could become children of God. And Peter would write that God has raised you up to an inheritance that is incorruptible and undefiled, that waits for you in eternity (1 Peter 1:4). I don't know if you have presents under the tree at your house. But in heaven, you'll have stuff waiting for you forever. There's a verse in Ephesians (2:7) that says the Lord will rejoice in just letting you know what the glory of your inheritance is in Him, that in the ages to come, He'll reveal to you the things that He can do. I suspect every couple hundred years, the Lord goes, "Oh, I've got this for you, too." (Pastor Jack puts his hands forward as if he's giving someone a gift). "Oh, not that. I always wanted that."

We mentioned a line from "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing," which is a Charles Wesley song; and like many old hymns (I think Bob Bennett sang one that we didn't know one of the verses - at least I didn't know it), I think the reason we don't sing them is that they're old English, and they're hard cadence. And we're Americans; we can't sing these songs. But here's one of the verses from "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing," and it's one you don't sing. But these are the words, "Adam's likeness, LORD, efface, stamp thine Image in its place, and second Adam from above, reinstate us in thy love. Let us thee, tho' lost, regain, Thee, the life, and the inner man; O! to all Thyself impart, formed in each believing heart."

Christmas. Right time, right Person, right reason. And that's really the rest of the story behind the manger because the manger keeps you far from the complete intent of God. The One that will grow up and die for you, who will live a perfect life so you can stand one day before Him, without judgment, because He's been judged; so that you'll be welcomed into His kingdom. Oh, you don't measure up, certainly. But He does. And so we have that confidence that, as we look to Him and trust Him and obey Him and serve Him, we're His children; we're His son or His daughter. And everything we have comes from Him. Michelle was right. "I think the answer is Jesus." You bet it is. Still to this day. That's "Merry Christmas," isn't it?

Submitted by Maureen Dickson
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