

Sermon Manuscript: Galatians 4:4-7

God Sent His Son

2nd Sunday after Christmas – January 2, 2022

But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir. [NIV]

Sometimes the United States is referred to as "the world's policeman." This has been the case since the end of the Second World War. Our national policy for a long time was to promote democracy around the world. This led us to sometimes get involved in the struggles of various nations from Korea and Vietnam to Iraq and Afghanistan. Our involvement was often questioned. Our success was often less than was hoped at the beginning of such conflicts. A lesson that has seemed difficult to learn is that before we commit ourselves to warfare, we need to make sure that our mission is specific and its scope is limited. But this isn't a history class on US foreign policy. Instead we are here today to focus on another mission that is far more important. This mission is the one that was completed by our Lord Jesus. It is a mission that was very specific and was focused on just one goal. It is the mission on which GOD SENT HIS SON. Its scope was for Jesus to be one with us under law. Its goal was to make us one with God through Christ.

1. To Be One with Us under Law

When a military commander goes into battle he doesn't want to have to hold a position that he cannot defend. A commander wants to have enough men, equipment and ammunition to fight the enemy. He wants to have the high ground or other place where his forces can be reasonably protected. From history, the commanders of the garrison at the Alamo were severely outnumbered, outgunned and short of supplies. Their "fortification" was a crumbling mission. Their defeat was inevitable and none of the commanders would have chosen it given a choice.

Paul's letter to the Galatians shows us a similar situation. He was writing to people who are being told that they needed to fight and win the battle against sin on their own. They were being told that God required them to keep his commandments and laws in order to earn salvation. The false teachers who were promoting these things were leaving Christians in an indefensible position. Paul writes to them and to us to show us that our position under the requirements of God's law is indefensible. We can

never keep God's law in the way that he actually requires. It would be like a single soldier trying to hold off a huge force of the enemy. The requirements of God's law will simply overrun us and overwhelm us. The Lord requires us to do it all. It requires us to do it all the time. Attempts to try and win our place with God and salvation by doing all of God's laws and demands on our own are destined to defeat. To think we can do this is to be like a soldier who has been captured and he is in a prison camp thinking that he is actually won the battle. He would be living in a delusion. The truth is that the requirements of God's law would overwhelm us. Like a soldier overrun by a vastly superior force, we are dead.

But God had a much better plan for this battle. It involved the rescue mission of sending his Son, Jesus. Paul says, *"When the time had fully come, God sent his Son."* [verse 4] God literally assigned the mission to save us by winning the battle for us to Jesus. Things looked hopeless for us but God is the greatest general of them all. In that short phrase, "when the time had fully come," we see God's strategy at work. God guided history and the things that he has created. He strategically directed everything to come together at just the right time to insure victory.

His tactics were a straight up, fair fight. When God's Son was sent on his mission, he became one of us. Paul says that he was "born of a woman." In other words, the Son of God himself took on a human nature. As we have just celebrated at Christmas, Jesus joined our human race. Paul tells us the importance of this. When Jesus was born as a human being, he was born under law. That means that he was obligated to obey and keep all of God's laws just as the rest of us human beings are required to do. But there is a difference. With us, we are swept away by each wave of sin's attack. Christ was able to withstand every temptation and assault. He was able to keep all of God's requirements without flaw. He has defeated the enemy that we never could hope to fight let alone defeat.

God's plan served to rescue us from defeat by sending a substitute. Jesus is like the mighty ally who came to rescue the helplessly weak country from conquest by a terrible tyrant. Paul says that Jesus' victory "redeemed us from under law." This means that Jesus provided the price that was necessary to be given in exchange for us. Like prisoners of war, he surrendered himself to the imprisonment and punishment that our sins had earned so that we could be set free and return home. To accomplish this Jesus had to be equal to us in every way. This is why Jesus took on a human nature by being born of a woman. But in order to be the sufficient substitute for all of sin's prisoners, Jesus also needed to be God. Celebration of Jesus incarnation at Christmas is the celebration of this great exchange.

The result of all of this is that our freedom has been won by Jesus. It is been won by Jesus alone because without him we would've been utterly defeated. This world was

occupied territory. But then God brought about his "Christmas invasion." It was like when the allies invaded France on D-Day in the Second World War. Jesus landed on the shores of this sinful world when he was born on that night in Bethlehem. The decisive battle of the war was fought on the hill of Calvary. That was where the strength of the evil axis of sin, death and the devil was broken and crushed. Their defeat was sealed three days later when Jesus emerged alive from the tomb.

Now we are in the waning days of the war. We are only waiting for the final triumphant conclusion. There are still battles that are being fought. We still have a sinful human nature that fights against love for God. Part of that nature is drawn to the treason of trying to save ourselves by keeping laws and rules. It is the idolatry of rejecting Jesus' victory and seeking false peace with the enemy out of our own human pride. To think this way is to be a traitor to our Savior and the victory that he has won. It will only end in defeat and despair.

The forces of our enemies of sin, death and Satan have been outflanked by God's plan. We are no longer under an obligation to God's law to try and earn our salvation. Jesus has already done that. Here we see the specific scope of Christ's mission for us. It was to fulfill all of God's law for us. Jesus has won this victory. God sent Jesus to do this so that he could bring his boys and girls home like soldiers after the war has been won. God sent Jesus to make us one with him.

2. To Make Us One with Him through Christ

We were traitors and prisoners because of our sins. We were lost behind enemy lines and captured by hostile forces. But Jesus came and reunited us with our Father. Christ has freed us and restored us to him. We are like POWs whose camp has been liberated. We have been reunited with our family. That's what Paul tells us in the last part of our lesson. We are no longer slaves but sons and heirs. We can be confident of God's love. Through Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit we are able to call our heavenly Father "Abba." This is a word that the Apostle Paul knew from the time he was bounced on his father's knee. It's the word of a beloved child for the "daddy," the "papa" that he loves. A little child who is loved unconditionally by his papa has a sure and certain confidence. He knows that he is loved, appreciated and cared for. It is the kind of confidence that a veteran can have when he knows that he has his country's appreciation.

Jesus has won the victory for us. And he gives us the fruits of that victory. Those who return from war victoriously can expect to have a joyous homecoming. The terrible enemy has been defeated. There's no more fear of war anymore. Because of the victory that Jesus has won for us think of the homecoming that we have in store in heaven! Jesus said that the angels rejoice over one sinner who repents. Such a one is

received with shouts of thanks and praise. How much more do the angels in heaven rejoice when Jesus has saved the whole human race? This must be why the host of angels appeared to the shepherds and sang: "Glory to God in the highest!" And when we enter those gates of beauty, what joys and blessings await us there! There we will know perfect rest. There we will enjoy perfect peace. There we will want for nothing because every tear will be wiped from every eye and every need will be generously and fully met. All of these things are ours to look forward to because Jesus has won the victory for us. What amazing grace! We had nothing to do with winning the victory but we will enjoy all of its blessings.

We usually don't think of Christmas and warfare together. At Christmas time, we like to think of peace on earth. But the truth is that there can be no peace as long as sin has not been dealt with. Jesus said that he did not come to bring peace but a sword. There are two sides in the great battle for the souls of the human race. There are two sides in a great battle for your soul and mine. As we fight the final skirmishes don't forget that Jesus has won the victory for us. He brought his sword – the sword of his perfect righteousness – and defeated our enemies. And so he is also called the Prince of Peace. He has achieved the peace that comes because he has achieved his goal. He has saved humankind. But that defeat took warfare. Jesus entered this world as one of us so that he could restore us to oneness with God. It was a tremendous fight but Jesus has won the victory for us.

So how was your morale? Think of the soldiers and citizens of the nation that has finally achieved victory after a tremendous war. Think of the people who celebrated the victory at the end of the Second World War. Their attitude was one that said, "We can do anything!" That's the attitude that you and I can have as we fight on in the waning days of this war. We are God's children. As Paul says, because we are his sons, we are also heirs. Think of what it means to be heirs of our heavenly Father. We have the inheritance of eternal life. We have the inheritance of everything else that God would give us. We have been freed from the burden of having to keep God's law and fight the war on our own. We have no worries of guilt in the past. We have no fears of life in the present. We have only the joy of heaven to look forward to in the future. There is nothing left that we could possibly need. So how will we live our life? What can't we do? What won't we be willing to do in service to our Lord?

They always talk about bringing the boys home by Christmas. From our point of you, we can apply that to ourselves with a bit of a twist. It is by Christmas – Jesus coming into the world sent by his Father – that we, his boys and girls, are brought home. Amen.