

Trinity Lutheran Church, Gillette, WY
December 30, 2007

Christmas is for Children

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, amen. The text for the sermon this morning is the Epistle which was read earlier.

Just as I said it would, it happened. The day after Christmas, Gwen and I were out doing some running around town. As we were putting our dog in the kitchen, we turned on the radio for him. Christmas music had been replaced with rock and roll again. Even the Christian radio stations have put Christmas music back in the box and have started playing its contemporary Christian music. Wal-Mart and K-Mart have taken what Christmas items they have and have reduced them to 50% off to get rid of all signs of Christmas. Fortunately for us, Christmas doesn't just last the one day. We have 12 days of Christmas that we celebrate in the Church Year. So to all those that have put Christmas out of their minds already, I tell you Merry Christmas, children. I'm not speaking to just the little kids but to all of you because you are all children of God. Believe it or not, Christmas is for children. It's all about children. It was told to the shepherds, "*For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.*" In our text for today, St. Paul records that God sent forth His Son, born of a woman. That Son, that Baby, was more than any shepherds could ever imagine. That Son, that Baby, is more than any of us could imagine.

This little Child would bring forth deliverance from sin and death. Imagine if I told you that the next child you would have would save all of mankind from their sins.

What would you say? What would you do? I imagine that you would probably laugh. I'm sure that I would too. But when the angel told this to Mary, all she could respond with was, "*Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.*"

The few verses that we have before us today tell us much about Christ's coming and what it means for us.

In the opening verse of our text, Paul reminds both the Church at Galatia and the church of today that it was God who sent Christ and not us who called for Him. As far as we are concerned, we do not need Christ because He gets in the way of our Old Adam doing the backstroke. Daily we must drown the Old Adam of our sin, yet we know that that is easier said than done. The Old Adam is persistent in his ways, and therefore, God sent Christ to us. We know about the distress, discomfort, and the destructiveness of death, but our natural reason does not recognize sin as its general cause. God, in His love, sent the world the gift we needed the most. But when the world rejected His gift, He even used the people's cruel act of crucifying His Son to bring about our redemption.

Christ came "*to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.*" To buy back what is rightfully ours in the first place strikes us as unfair. But what does a father do when his children live contrary to the law and thus subject themselves to its punishments? What our heavenly Father does is buys back His children. The cost would be great – no less than the life of His Son. But "*God so loved the world that he gave his only Son.*" And so we cannot gaze upon the Babe at Bethlehem without realizing that His little hands would soon be "*wounded for our transgressions.*" This little Child would be "*crushed for our iniquities.*" We cannot

gaze upon the Babe at Bethlehem without kneeling before Him and worshipping Him as our Redeemer.

It is extremely important, therefore, to keep in view and always to consider this statement of Luther, so delightful and full of comfort, as well as others like it which define Christ properly and accurately; for then throughout our life, in every danger, in the confession of our faith in the presence of tyrants, and in the hour of death, we can declare with a sure and steady confidence: “Law, you have no jurisdiction over me; therefore you are accusing and condemning me in vain. For I believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, whom the Father sent into the world to redeem us miserable sinners who are oppressed by the tyranny of the Law. He poured out His life and spent it lavishly for me. When I feel your terrors and threats, O Law, I immerse my conscience in the wounds, the blood, the death, the resurrection, and the victory of Christ. Beyond Him I do not want to see or hear anything at all.”

All this our God does “*so that we might receive adoption as sons.*” We were not God’s sons by birth so He placed us into that honored position. This picturesque phrase refers back to the parable with which Paul began the chapter. In the Israelite household, the child had no more rights than a slave until the time set by his father. But now the time our heavenly Father set has come, and we are His sons. What love the Father lavishes upon us, that we should be called the children of God. That is what we are, children of God.

Isn’t it interesting that Paul says we might receive adoption as sons? For what could be merited by men confined under sin, subjected to curse of the Law, and condemned to eternal death? Therefore we have received all this freely and without

deserving it, yet not without merit. What merit was it, then? Not ours, but that of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was born under the Law, not for Himself but for us as Paul said earlier, that He was made a curse for us, and who redeemed us who were under the Law. Therefore we have received this sonship solely by the redemption of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who is our most abundant and eternal merit. Together with this gift of sonship, we have also received the Holy Spirit, whom God, through the Word, sends into our hearts.

Every day of the year, we know that the Spirit of God's Son has come into our hearts. If there is any day of the Church Year to reflect on how the Spirit of Christ has come into our hearts, now is it. Christ is completely certain that in His Spirit He is pleasing to God. Since we have the same Spirit of Christ, we, too, should be certain that we are in a state of grace, on account of Him who is the Son of God. Christ, by redeeming us from the Law, makes it possible for us to live under His grace. We are free from the no-win situation of trying to make ourselves acceptable to God. We already are acceptable to Him **in Christ**, our Redeemer. We are free from pretending to be God's children by ignoring or excusing the guilt of our sins. We are His perfect children in Christ our Redeemer.

All who "*live by faith in the Son of God*" enjoy this full right of sons. When God's Spirit enters our heart to bring us to faith in Christ, He enables us to call out to God, "*Abba! Father!*" "Abba," the Hebrew children called their fathers, as our children use the word "dad" or "daddy." "Abba, I want a drink of water," the Hebrew child would say, fully confident that his loving father would satisfy his need. "Abba, hold my hand," the child might say when frightened. Such confidence belongs to each and every

believer, who no longer is a slave, but has received the full rights of a son. We too call out, “Abba, thank You for Your Son.” “Abba, thank You for the forgiveness of sins which You bring in Your Supper.”

“And since you are a son,” Paul says, “God has made you also an heir.” These words echo the same truth Paul wrote to the Christians at Rome. *“The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs – heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ.”* With these words, the Holy Spirit opens our eyes of faith to see everything from an eternal perspective. He makes it possible for us to see in Jesus’ lowly stable His heavenly Jerusalem; possible for us to see in this new life in the manger also the new eternal life He brings; possible to see through His suffering and cross His glory and the crown.

And this brings us back to where we began – the kindness of the Lord. God sent His Son. He does not want anyone to perish. His Son prays, “Father, I want those You have given Me to be with Me where I am, and to see My glory.” The Holy Spirit through these inspired words of Paul helps us to see in Bethlehem’s stall all the Lord has done for us.

In these days after Christmas, let us not focus on the presents we received, the parties that we went to. Let us focus on the gift of all gifts, the gift of Jesus Christ, born into this world of sin and death to bring us into the world of life everlasting. It was through a Baby that life was given to us. And through that life, we have been made sons and heirs through God. So is Christmas really for children? It is for the children of God. In Jesus’ name, amen. Now the peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, amen.