

December 27, 2020

Galatians 4:4-7

“God Sent Forth His Son!”

Pilgrim Lutheran Church
2155 North Oakland Ave.
Decatur, Illinois 62526

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

When Paul writes “... when the fullness of time had come, **God sent forth his Son ...**” I am not so sure that we really appreciate the unbelievable weight of that statement. Time was invented for this moment. Everything from the beginning flows to it, and everything that is after flows from it. Everything before it was only to get to Jesus, and everything that is after it is still to get to Jesus. I doubt that you will ever read that in any secular history book. The so-called “famous” and “infamous” in the annals of history are at best footnotes.

God Sent Forth His Son! The statement is staggering. The Word of the Father, the eternally begotten of the un-begotten, the image of the Father, God of very God was “sent forth.” He was sent to be “born of a woman.” It is here that our thoughts cannot help but to travel back to the book of Genesis and the very first promise of a Savior. You will remember that after the fall into sin and in the midst of a conversation with the serpent, who we know to be Satan, that the Lord God makes a promise in Genesis 3:15, “... I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall crush your head, and you shall crush his heel.”

No doubt that Satan had to be absolutely paralyzed at the pregnancy of every woman from that time to the time of the virgin Mary. Satan’s spirit is the spirit of Herod who hates babies and feels the need to wipe them out. His wrath against offspring no doubt continues to this very day despite the Savior having been born. But, in the first gospel, there is talk about a particular offspring that will overcome death and will be the life of all the living. No wonder then that Adam names the woman “Eve,” for she is “the mother of all the living.” We forever live because of the offspring that has come. Though his heel was crushed on the cross, he crushed the head of Satan. Those who believe in the offspring have eternal life.

He was “... born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law ...” What generation has not been born under the requirements of God? From the time of the two trees, where one was “you shall eat” and the other “you shall not eat,” humanity has been faced with the commands of the Lord God who establishes an understanding of the relationship that he would have with us - a relationship of love. But, in our fallen state, all of the commands of love now only show us just how loveless we really are toward God and one another. The law condemns us and reveals the wrath of God now and the punishment we will receive at the very end of it all. But the beautiful words of Paul in this text are that the offspring of the woman was born under the law to redeem all of us who are under the law. Luther nails it when he writes:

How did Christ manage to redeem us? “He was made under the law.” When Christ came he found us all in prison. What did he do about it? Although he was the Lord of the law, he voluntarily placed himself under the law and permitted it to exercise dominion over him, indeed to accuse and to condemn him. When the law takes us into judgment it has perfect right to do so. “For we are by nature the children of wrath, even as others (Eph. 2:3).” Christ, however, “did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth (1 Pet. 2:22).” Hence the law had no jurisdiction over him. Yet the law treated this innocent, just, and blessed Lamb of God as cruelly as it treated us. It accused him of blasphemy and treason. It made him

guilty of the sins of the whole world. It overwhelmed him with such anguish of soul that his sweat was as blood. The law condemned him to the shameful death on the cross.

God Sent Forth His Son! Indeed! He was born of a woman and under the law in order to live a perfect life for us and to become sin for us on the cross, that we might by grace through faith in him be released from the prison of sin, death, and hell. Whoever believes that Jesus has done this has the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. We are no longer banished from God. Rather, the law is banished from accusing us of sin and punishing us forever. While the law is still a mirror bright that reveals sin, while it is a spiritual autopsy that declares that we are spiritually dead, we find quick relief in knowing that Christ the Savior has redeemed us from the law.

Having been redeemed by Jesus the Savior, and believing in this redemption, we have been adopted as sons (offspring) of God. No doubt that the apostle Paul had Genesis 22 in mind when he said this. In the context of the sacrifice of Isaac, before the Word became flesh, God's Son spoke these words to Abraham, knowing that Abraham would be his ancestor according to his flesh. He said: "... because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you ... And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed ..."

The nations of the earth are you and me! Can you imagine? Even Gentiles who are not of the blood of Abraham are counted as true family by faith because of the magnitude of the sacrifice of Jesus! It is a great mystery that is no longer hidden. The Lord says of the Lord in Isaiah 49:6, "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."

Do you have any idea what that means for us? To be counted as the offspring of Abraham and of God through faith in the offspring of the woman (who is Jesus our Savior) means to be heirs of heaven! We have eternal life because we have God. We have everything good because we have the forever good God. We are ones who will have their tears wiped away and who will eat from the tree of life and its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month, and whose leaves will heal us! Even now, Paul writes, "God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying 'Abba! Father!' So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God."

The Spirit cries in us because of our weakness. What does that mean? Well, we are still down here and suffering from our own sinful natures. Every day the law is exposing us and the unbelieving world and Satan are doing what they can to deceive us and throw us into despair over sin and death. Because of our infirmities, the Holy Spirit has been sent forth into our hearts to pray for us according to the will of the Father because of what Jesus has done. What an incredible comfort it is that the Holy Spirit works in us so that our cry is in his speaking "Abba! Father!" We are of the household of God through his Son and are enabled to make a direct appeal as a child might come to his or her Father for help in all things. As Luther says, "Let us never doubt the mercy of God in Christ Jesus, but make up our minds that God is pleased with us, that he looks after us, and that we have the Holy Spirit who prays for us!" And I would add, he will bring us to our inheritance.

God Sent Forth His Son! All of human history is to be understood in this context. He sent Jesus to redeem us, who are under the law that we might be adopted! And as sons we cry out to our Father who by his Spirit will preserve us that we may reach the inheritance that is ours. I leave you with these final hard hitting words of Luther:

We are not the heirs of some rich and mighty man, but heirs of God, the almighty Creator of all things. If a person could fully appreciate what it means to be a son and heir of God, he would rate the might and wealth of nations as small change in comparison with his heavenly inheritance. What is the world to him who has heaven? No wonder Paul greatly desired to depart and to be with Christ. Nothing would be more welcome to us than early death, knowing that it would spell the end of all our miseries and the beginning of all our happiness. Yes, if a person could perfectly believe this he would not long remain alive. The anticipation of his joy would kill him!

Amen.

Pastor Brock Abbott