

In Nomine Jesu!

1st Sunday a. Christmas

December 28, 2008

Hecla

Text: Galatians 4:4-7 - *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.*

Theme: God's Reason for this Season

- Redemption
- Adoption

Dear fellow redeemed by Jesus, the reason we are able to celebrate Christmas,

I'm sure we're all familiar with that phrase - "The Reason for the Season." Unfortunately the Reason for Christmas gets lost from time to time - even for us! We get so consumed with preparation for our secular celebrations - the shopping, the long lines at the store, the cooking, the cleaning, and so on - that it becomes pretty easy for us to lose sight of "WHY" we have a Christmas worth celebrating.

Leading up to Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, maybe you became as disappointed and discouraged as I did listening to the news. There were countless reports about this being the worst economic Christmas in recent history. The news casters gave their gloomy report that people just weren't spending money like they have in the past. And this, according to them, made for a difficult Christmas. There were stories of families who didn't know how to handle this Christmas with their children. In past years their children had received expensive gifts because their parents had the money to buy such gifts. However with the economic slow-down parents didn't know how to tell little Timmy that he couldn't have the newest, greatest toy. They debated whether to spend well beyond their means or try and explain to their children that Mom and Dad just couldn't afford it.

This year it became more evident than ever that for most people Christmas was only about material possessions. And if you couldn't afford those extravagant gifts, Christmas lost some of it's splendor. Only when a child or spouse could get exactly what he or she wanted was Christmas then special. Then we begin to see how shallow Christmas truly is for so many. They have no idea what this season is all about.

We, however, have no such excuse. On Wednesday evening we heard our children tell us the reason for this season. Economic downturns do not affect this Reason. The Gift that was given to us by God on that first Christmas Eve never loses it's glory. God giving His Son to be our Savior from sin is the reason for this season. It is only knowing God's reason for this season that we can celebrate Christmas rightly. And celebrate Christmas not just on December 24 and 25, but celebrate Christmas in the heat of June, and every day of our lives. God's reason for this season is redemption and adoption. May the God bless us as we see the glorious reasons God sent His Son!

REDEMPTION

We cannot rightly consider God's reason for this season unless we go back to the beginning. The beginning of everything. The moment in eternity when the Triune God created the heavens and the earth. That moment when history itself began. When God said, ***"Let there be light."*** There was God's first blessing on His creation as light began to shine in the darkness.

During the next five days, God would create all of the heavens above and the earth around us using only His word. But on the sixth day God changed His usual practice of creating to do something very special. The Triune God said, ***"Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."*** (Gen 1:26) God took special interest and care when He created man. God Himself formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. God made man in His image - His image of holiness and perfection. God was personally involved, He was "hands on," if you will, in the creation of man.

To the jewel of His creation God gave but one negative command, ***"Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."*** (Gen 2:16-17) That was it. That was God's law - eat anything in the Garden of Eden, but do not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam and Eve demonstrate their love for their gracious Creator by obeying Him.

Here was God's perfect Creation - His holy Creation. Free of sin, free of death, free of hardship, free of sorrow, and man was the jewel of this most blessed creation. Everything in creation was for man. Yet it was not long before Adam and Eve changed everything. Tempted by Satan, first Eve then Adam disobeyed that one command of God and ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. At that moment everything changed. No longer was man perfect. No longer was man holy. Man was a sinner. And from here on out, every child would be born would not be in the image of the holy God, but rather in the image of their sinful father and mother.

Justice would require that God destroy sinners - for the most holy God cannot have fellowship with sinners. The two cannot exist together. Hell would be the only answer for sinners. Yet in spite of what man did, already in the third chapter of the bible we hear of God's grace being showered on His now corrupt creation. *The God who was personally involved in the creation of man, would also be personally involved in His redemption.* To Satan who tempted Eve, God said, ***"And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel."*** (Gen 3:15) Did you hear that? **I WILL DO THIS**, God said, **I** will put that enmity between you, Satan, and between the seed of the woman. That Seed of the woman will bruise your head, Satan. And all you will be able to do, Satan, is to bruise His heel. A blow to the head verses a blow to the heel. A mortal wound verse a flesh wound.

Here immediately after the fall into sin we see God's Reason for the Season of Christmas. God would send one from the Seed of the woman to give a death blow to Satan. That death blow wouldn't come immediately - but at just the right time. Because God promised it, it was as good as done. God would give one who would redeem all who are under law - all men. ***"But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law."*** At just the right time God's Son was conceived by the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin Mary.

The Son of God who was active in the creation of all things including the creation of man, would Himself redeem man who had sinned against Him. The Son of God who gave man His law would Himself be born under that law. We see even as an infant Jesus who was born under the Law, keeps the Law by being circumcised on the eighth day. 40 days after His birth He was presented in the temple as the Law required. This would be the case throughout His whole life on earth.

Do you hear the graciousness of God? It is God who gave this Law. Yet it is the Son of God who humbled Himself and was willing to be born under that Law! He did this to redeem those who had transgressed the law - to redeem us! *The God who was personally involved in the creation of man would now be personally involved in our redemption.*

The Son of God accomplished our redemption by purchasing us with His holy precious blood. The Child whose birth we just celebrated would go on to die on the cross to redeem those under law. To buy us back from the clutches of sin, death, and the devil by Himself tasting death for all of us. This is God's reason for the season of Christmas - redemption. The Son of God being born of a woman to purchase our forgiveness by His blood.

ADOPTION

Life as an orphan comes with a great deal of uncertainty. Uncertainty which maybe only one or two of us here can truly appreciate. Either by death or by desertion, an orphan is left with no parents. He faces the uncertainty of ever being loved, like all the other kids are by their parents. Uncertain whether he will have someone to teach him and care for him as a child with parents. But the moment an orphan becomes adopted, that all changes. He is taken to a home with someone to call Mom and Dad. He is treated as if he was their own flesh and blood. They feed him, they clothe him, and above all else they love him. They introduce him or her to other people by saying, "This is my son" or "This is my daughter." All the rights and privileges that come with being their child are now extended to this adopted child. And what did that child do to deserve this? Nothing. It is simply out of love that this husband and wife do this for him.

We are born under law. Law is our parent, as it were, but law can do nothing for us. Law cannot provide for us. Law cannot love us. All law does is condemn us and kill us. Law points to us and says "Thou shalt not do this!" and "Thou shalt do this!" Law points to us and demands that we love our neighbor unconditionally, and yet it does not provide for us the ability to do so. Law is like the person who runs an orphanage - incapable of caring for us and loving us as parents do, instead simply giving commands without supplying the motivation to carry those commands out.

If we were to have any hope of eternal life we needed new parents. Law could not give us life, it could only accuse and condemn us. This is another of God's reason for this season. ***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.*** God sent His son to redeem us. *And having redeemed us from under law, there was nothing to stop our adoption papers from going through.* God sent His Son that we might receive the full rights as sons. God sent HIS Son that WE might then become His sons. This is how much God wanted to save us. Sending His Son into the world that we might be adopted into His family.

Paul continues, ***And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!"*** Take note: Paul writes that God sent forth His Son and then he says the same of the Holy Spirit. God sent the Holy Spirit into your hearts, creating

faith. Faith which looks to Jesus for salvation. Faith which cries out in baby talk to God the Father, "**Abba, Father!**" Just as that orphaned child calls his new father "Daddy," having sent the Spirit into our hearts we now call to our heavenly Father, "ABBA!"

The blessed result of all this, our redemption and our adoption, is that we are no longer outside the family of God. **Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.** No longer are we that slave which is given orders to do this and not do that. We have been redeemed from under the law. We have received the adoption as sons. As sons of God, adopted by Him, we are now heirs of God through Christ. All the rights and privileges that come with being called a son of God is now extended to us! What a glorious statement!!! Through Christ we are heirs of God. And our inheritance? Eternal life - heaven! God showed just how great His love in redeeming us unto Himself and adopting us as His sons.

Next time you hear or see that phrase, "Remember the reason for the season," remember instead God's reason for this season. **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.** This is something that tough economic times cannot touch, cannot darken. We are sons of God! We are heirs of God through Christ! May God be praised for His reasons for this season. AMEN!