

All Saints Anglican Church of Southern Arizona, Inc. Christmas I Sunday Sermon on 2017-12-31

The Epistle for Christmas I Sunday

Galatians 4: 1-7

Verse 1 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,

Verse 2 but is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father.

Verse 3 Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world.

Verse 4 But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law,

Verse 5 to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

Verse 6 And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!"

Verse 7 Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

Sermon for Advent I Sunday

By Fr Reed Merino

4:1 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,

2 but is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father.'

3 Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world.

- Paul uses the example of an upper-class or royal family to illustrate the way God deals with those whom He is going to eventually call into His kingdom.
 - I think that Paul was wording it so that it would apply to both Jewish Christians, as well as gentile Christians.
 - The majority of His audience was likely to have been gentiles by this time, but it was the Jews who were the first Christians.
 - As those who were in the first covenant of God, the Jews were children by right.

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- Gentiles were children by adoption.
 - But BOTH groups, who were going to be called by their Father, were considered "heirs" from the beginning.
 - Like a prince's son, they were both "pre-destined" to eventually assume royal power and authority.
 - But, also like a prince's son, they had to live under the rule of tutors, in order to LEARN how to become royalty, with its privileges and responsibilities.
- For the Jew, that "tutor" was the divinely-created Law of Moses, making them "slaves" of the Law.
 - For the gentile, that tutor was the slavery of whatever worldly authority they happened to live under.
 - Whether under the Law or under worldly subjection, both sets of His elect were "heirs" from the very beginning: as it says "... He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world... (Ephesians 1:4)."
 - And, also for both Jew and gentile elect, Paul says that they started off life NOT possessing the "righteousness, peace and Joy in the Holy Spirit" (Romans 14:17).
 - They and we are formed as humans in a condition of "bondage".
 - We may THINK we are making our decisions freely, but – unknown to us – our decision center is being subjected to numerous influences that we do not even KNOW about: that is true for EVERY human being.
 - We ALL need rescuing: the biblical word for it is "salvation."

4 But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law,

5 to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

- When that phrase "fullness of time" is used, it does NOT mean something like "when the time was right."
 - That way of looking at it is thinking of the cause of an event being an impersonal cause, like saying "the Roman Empire fell because the Germanic kingdom grew stronger than it was."
 - In the Scriptures, that phrase rather refers to a decision made by God as the result of a plan He had been working out.

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- It would be more akin to a woman baking a cake: She had mixed the ingredients together, decided to cook it at 350 degrees for 3 hours.
- Then “in the fullness of time” she removed the cake from the oven.
- That did not just “happen” because of impersonal forces; it was a carefully planned operation.

- The coming of Jesus was the result of His carefully executed plan.
 - He spent several thousand years preparing Israel, creating the Greek and Roman cultures with their very advanced transportation and communication possibilities, and revealing through His prophets what He was going to do.

- God sent HIS Son so that we could be made sons through the adoption process that is centered around His Son Jesus.
 - God’s adoption process was not magic, like making an unthinking, undecided, noncommittable infant get wet for a few minutes.
 - Nor was it some form of universal magic, by which the incarnation of Jesus has made ALL people God’s children.
 - HIS process of adoption was outlined in His “*Great Commission*”: “*Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age*” (Matthew 28:18-19).

6 And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, “Abba, Father!”

- In the form of Christianity in which I was raised, when I heard passages like this being read I was taught by the preacher that the passage applied to me.
 - I just ASSUMED it applied to me, even though it did not at ALL.
 - Paul was talking to THEM, not to people who had been brainwashed from childhood into believing it was true.
 - It is not true until it IS true, made true by GOD’s and PAUL’s idea of that adoption.

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- And when it DOES become true for you, Paul says, you can then qualify to receive that Spirit of Jesus and feel Him experientially cry out within your heart that He is truly your Father forever.
 - THIS is the only true form of Christianity, the experienced Christianity of Jesus and His holy apostles!
 - Any other form is fraudulent.

7 Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

- Again, this passage was written to those whom PAUL had made and accepted as being "Christian," not to the later version of "modified" Christianity in which we find ourselves.
 - But if we DO make the kind of decision that they did, we will become inwardly certain that God Himself has made us become eternally yoked to Him and to the marvelous destiny that He has prepared for us; that we are no longer in the bondage He revealed we were in.
 - Those ancient Christians were not a special kind of human being.
 - They had mostly been led by the passions created by the same fleshly and demonic bondages, by the same hardness or insecurity that we are.
- BELIEVE what Jesus said: that all authority in heaven and earth is His, that He wants you to know
 - His joy,
 - His peace and
 - His anointing;
- and that what you cannot become in your strength, HE can accomplish for you.
- Amen?