

Devotion for December 24, 2017 – Nine Lessons and Carols Christmas Service

Galatians 4:4–5 (NIV84)

⁴ But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, ⁵ to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.

There is something to be said about timing. For example, how often haven't we felt completely at wits end – only to have a friend cheer us up by inadvertently saying or doing something special? I can't tell you how many times I have heard a person tell me that a certain hymn or message was exactly what they needed to hear at that moment. To God be all the glory, because only he can guide history – allowing a person to unknowingly do or say something that another person needs to see or hear.

Yes, God's timing is perfect – giving us exactly what we need when we need it. We might not always understand this in times of distress, but it is most certainly true. One of the best examples of God's great timing is Christmas – and how the LORD set everything in order, so that his Son could accomplish our salvation.

The apostle Paul writes: *“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.*

What exactly is the time mentioned by Paul, and what does it mean that it had fully come? The time is the exact moment the LORD chose from before creation, when He would send his Son into the world to be the Savior it so desperately needed

You see, ever since Adam and Eve rebelled against God's command, human nature has been utterly corrupted with sin – bound and enslaved to the devil. And what, exactly, binds and enslaves us to him? Our disobedience to God's law – because of which we deserve the LORD's righteous wrath and punishment in hell.

Yes, we truly are in need of a Savior. Want proof? Open up a newspaper or tune into a news program to hear what's going on in our world. Better yet, crack open your Catechism or Bible to the Ten Commandments and meditate on how well you've kept them – all the while remembering the divinely inspired words of St. James: *whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.* (James. 2:10 NIV84)

Helpless, harassed and doomed to hell – with no hope of saving ourselves – this was the destiny to which we would have all been confined if God had not pitied our sorry state.

But here's the thing: God did pity us. He actually foresaw our sinful state before he created us; and yet - in spite of all the heartache and grief our sins would cause – God still made us. Why? Because he had a plan to save us. At just the right time, he would send his one and only Son into the world to break us free from the spiritual chains that kept us enslaved to the devil. He would pay the price necessary to reconcile us to himself. He would adopt us as his children.

This is why – right after Adam and Eve sinned - God made a promise: he would send a special Savior who would crush the power of the devil.

Thousands of years passed since God made that promise and, as time flowed on, the devil tempted believers with doubt. “Would God actually send a Savior? Look at how much time has passed! Maybe he changed his mind. Maybe he doesn’t exist.”

During times of severe difficulty and doubt, God spoke through his prophets – encouraging his people to be patient and trust him. Little did the world know that the LORD was working through the chaos of history: getting all things ready so that the good news of what He would accomplish through his Son might spread rapidly throughout the world.

And, when the right time came, God acted: He sent his Son - who was and is totally God - to be born of a virgin so that he might become like us – totally human and subject to God’s law. God did this so that, by means of his Son’s perfect keeping of His law in our place and sacrifice of himself for our sins on the cross, the devil could no longer use the condemnations of the law to keep us enslaved to him. Why not? Because Christ fulfilled the requirements of the law for us and paid our debt of sin. We are free.

Just think: Jesus (the free and righteous Son of God) became like us (slaves and subject to God’s law) so that we (who were enslaved under law and subject to God’s eternal wrath) might become like him (righteous, sinless, free and at peace with God). Not only that, but the LORD has also adopted us as his own children through faith in His Son – making us every bit his heirs as Christ Jesus himself – all to the glory of his name.

Yes, there is a lot to be said about timing – especially God’s timing. Even though we might not understand his schedule – wondering why he sometimes waits or sometimes rushes to fulfill his promises - one thing we can know for certain: God will always fulfill his Word at just the right time, when we need it most. Let us ponder on this fact throughout the rest of our service this morning as we reflect on the promises God made throughout the centuries and how he fulfilled them on that first Christmas by sending us Jesus. Amen.