

Sermon Title: The Appointed Christmas

Passage: Galatians 4:4-7

Introduction:

As you know I have recently become a Father and I'm learning all the tricks that calm a newborn. Ezra loves going for walks. He likes being strapped to my body and so I often go to the supermarkets to help him sleep. This week I went to Doncaster shopping town and I couldn't help noticing that many stores had begun to sell Christmas themed products. Christmas season has come.

If I took a survey and I asked people, "What is the one day of the year you look forward to", many would say Christmas! As we come closer to the end of the year, we all start thinking about Christmas! It is that time of the year where people who work can take a holiday. Many are forced to take annual leave. It is that time of the year where family and friends can get together and spend time catching up. It is that time of the year to have a special dinner eating delicious food. It's that time of the year to snatch a great bargain. For the children it is the time of the year for getting presents! But for Christians it should mainly be the time of the year to remember the birth of Jesus and to share that Christmas joy. The sad reality is, Christmas has become less significant, less meaningful for us because the weight of Christmas, the purpose of Christmas has been lost. Christmas is less about Jesus and more about ourselves. Today I want to draw your attention back to the importance and significance of Christmas. We are having a Christmas special in October.

Christmas alongside Easter should be the greatest time of the year! It is the greatest time of the year because, on Easter we remember the death and resurrection of Jesus. And on Christmas we remember that Christ is born! We rejoice in the son of God, born in Bethlehem 2000 years ago. We sing praises to God because he is with us. Immanuel. Today I have 3 truths about Christmas from Galatians 4:4-7.

1. Planned Redemptive Christmas
2. Planned Relational Christmas
3. Planned Glorious Christmas

Planned Redemptive Christmas:

Galatians 4:4 says, *"4 But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law,"*

I am not sure if you have ever noticed this verse or realised the impact of this one verse. It says, "When the fullness of time had come". To paraphrase, to reword it, "At God's perfect timing", God sent Jesus. In other words, God, from the very beginning of time, in his infinite wisdom and goodness, planned Christmas! He had planned from the very beginning that on Christmas day, more than 2000 years ago to send Jesus to be born in this earth. Jesus's birth came at the exact point in human history when God knew it was the perfect time. He could have come any other time in history. But God decided to do it then. And there are many other passages which agree with this idea that it was God's design to send Jesus during this time. A popular passage to prove it can be found in the Christmas story, Matthew 1:20-25. It reads like this:

²⁰ But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

²² *All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ²³ “The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” (which means “God with us”).*

²⁴ *When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. ²⁵ But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.*

And if you read it carefully, verse 22-23 says that the birth of Jesus was taken place to fulfil the prophets. To fulfil a promise God made. And the promise was made 700 years before the birth of Jesus. The prophecy is from Isaiah 7:13-14, where God spoke through the prophet Isaiah saying, *“Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”*

Christ’s birth was planned as far back as Isaiah. And there are countless other passages which tell us that the birth of Jesus is not just by chance but was all part of God’s big plan. God promised the messiah to David, to Abraham, even to Adam and Eve. In Genesis 3 at the fall God promised hope. In Genesis Adam and Eve ate from the tree that God had commanded them not to eat from. In their shame they wove loin cloths from fig leaves. They hid from the presence of the LORD. But thanks be to God that Genesis 3:15 exists. *“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”* We are given gospel hope right after the fall. We are looking forward to the seed of woman. The seed which will defeat Satan! A descendant of Abraham. A kingly seed from David. Jesus Christ. And at Christmas, he has come.

Now there are many human reasons why it was the perfect time. The Greeks had provided a common language and culture for sharing the gospel. Through the power of the Romans, there was safe transport so that people could safely go from one place to another for spreading the gospel. There was peace for the Jews, and they were able to worship at the temple. Now we can only speculate, but all these human things and that particular time in history were designed for the suffering and death of Jesus so that sinners could be saved.

Why do I say that all that? If you read with me in verse 5, *“to redeem those who were under the law”*. The purpose of Jesus’s birth was to redeem sinners under the law. It was to save those who by the law would be condemned. Because we can’t meet God’s expectations, because we are sinners, we deserve death. And that’s what Romans 6:23 says, *“For the wages of sin is death”* ... Every single person on earth, deserves judgement. They deserve to go to hell. There is no one who deserves to be saved. What we deserve is judgement. What we deserve is death. But *when the fullness of time had come, when the perfect time was right, God gave us Christmas so that you may be redeemed.* There were legal realities God had to deal with. God is holy and just. His own justice and law demanded that we are to be punished and excluded from his presence for our sins. God had to satisfy his justice and his law in order to adopt sinners into his family. And we know from the Easter that He did this by the life, death, and resurrection of his Son Jesus Christ. He freed us from what the law demanded and freed us from the power of sin and death. Redeemed is one of those big words that gets thrown around a lot. It comes from the idea of captivity. The idea is that someone is trapped, enslaved, held captive and there must be a price to be paid or a sacrifice to be paid in order to rescue them. It brings us back to the time where the people of God were slaves in Egypt. To be redeemed by the blood of Jesus is to be freed from the power of sin and death, to be freed from the punishment of the law because Christ overcomes all those things and he takes the just punishment for our sins.

Just think about it for a second, I am sure everyone in this room who are parents or going to be parents in the future want their children to grow up to be healthy and good people. Even before your child is born, you hope that they will be a certain type of person. Maybe you want them to have a good education, want them to be kind, patient, loving. Maybe some of you want your children to be a good leader. Maybe some of you hope that your children would be a lawyer, a doctor, a dentist or maybe even a pastor. But from this passage, God the father from all eternity, planned the birth of Jesus, his one and only son, to suffer, to get betrayed, to get beaten, mocked, despised, to have a crown of thorns on his head, to be nailed on the cross and rejected by men. The heavenly father, planned, had purposed his son to die for sinful men. It was to purchase a price which we could never pay for. He did it so he could redeem you. That is an amazing truth. It is a truth which should bring great joy. Christmas was not just by chance, **it was a planned redemptive Christmas.**

Planned Relational Christmas:

The second point comes at the end of verse 5 to 6, *“so that we might receive adoption as sons. ⁶ And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!”*

God planned the redemptive Christmas for a purpose. And that purpose is so that those who repent of their sins, for those who fall on their knees before the throne of God and recognize how much they need him and believe in him, may not only be redeemed but also to be adopted as sons. Now I know there are women in this room who might think why did Paul use only sons, why didn't he say sons and daughters of God. And there is a big reason. Because historically, in the ancient world, a father's inheritance was only for his sons. By calling his children sons, he is saying that no one, whether you are a male or a female, is excluded by inheriting **all** of God's will and testament, and I will talk more about that later. But the reality is, before we are a child of God, we are slaves to sin. Slaves to the punishment of sin.

Galatians 4:3 says *“³ In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world.”* In the simplest way, it just means being slaves to what the law demands. And because we are unable to obey the law, we must also take the just punishment of the law.

Or again in Jesus's words to the Jews who had believed in him in John 8:34-36, *“³⁴ Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. ³⁵ The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. ³⁶ So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.”*

The purpose of God's planned redemptive Christmas, is so that you could be free from the bondage of sin, to be free from the punishment of sin, to now be adopted and exalted as a son of God. As someone who will remain in the house forever. Who will be able to partake in all that God has to give. Can you picture it. All of you are slaves. Someone who has no rights. Someone who deserves death. But now you can be a child of God because of Jesus. And for those who repent and believe, you can now cry out in your hearts, *“Abba! Father!”*. God promises his Holy Spirit. The Living God is in you, it assures you that he really does love and care for you. To the fatherless, he has become a father. To the lonely, he has become the perfect and complete source of comfort. To Those who are needy, to those who are lost, he has come to provide and to love you. He is your heavenly father. Someone who cares for you. Christmas was planned so that you could come into a renewed relationship with God. Remember after the fall they hid from God. They had a broken relationship with God. Once God was in their presence in the Garden of Eden. Now it was not possible. But thanks be to God, that through the blood of Jesus, through his redeeming work, he adopts you as a child of God by faith. A renewed relationship with him. A father and son relationship. And so, if you are

struggling right now, if you are in desperate need, cry out to him. Cry out to your heavenly father. He hears you and he understands you.

Philippians 4:6-7 says “do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.” And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

It says don't be anxious about anything, because you can bring it to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding will, for sure guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Now it doesn't mean that life will be all easy. God promises that the Christian life is full of hardship and that Christians will partake in Christ's suffering, but he does promise he will never leave you or forsake you. Romans 8 says that nothing can separate you from the love of Christ. Again, from John 8:36 *“So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.” You will 100% be free from the slavery of sin and adopted as a son. It was so that you could be in a familial relationship with God. It is a planned relational Christmas.*

Planned Glorious Christmas:

And that brings me to the final, short and simple point- because now for those who repent and believe in him, now because you can be a son in the family of God, you are also an heir through God. Verse 7 says *“So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.”*

As I said earlier, the son inherited the fathers will. He inherited all things. Because of Christmas, because of what Christ had come to do, he enabled people by grace through faith to be partakers of the eternal glory that there is in Jesus.

Romans 8:15-17 explains Galatians 4:7 in more detail:

“¹⁵ For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” ¹⁶ The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,¹⁷ and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.”

Christmas gave us an opportunity to be co-heirs with Christ. To be “fellow heirs with Christ”. When Christ comes back and reigns in all of his glory and authority, we, those who “suffer with him”, those who “repent and believe in him”, may join in all his splendor. And that is what Christians look forward to. This is the hope that we have. Is it not amazing, that before, we deserved punishment, because of sin and we who were slaves can now be heirs! An heir to the promises of God!

Galatians 4:1

“I mean that the heir, as long as he is a child, is no different from a slave, though he is the owner of everything”

The heir is the owner of everything.

1 Corinthians 3:21-23 says:

“²¹ So let no one boast in men. For all things are yours, ²² whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, ²³ and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.”

And again, in Romans 4:13-

¹³ *For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith.*

The promise is so amazing that it is almost impossible to describe and explain how great it is. What we know is that we, the heirs of Christ, will own it all one day with him. And yet the greatest treasure we will inherit is not anything God can give us, but God himself. He's the most valuable and the only thing that can full satisfy us.

Revelation 21:3 *"Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God."*

The source of all joy, the prince of peace will be ours. When he comes back in full splendor and glory, when he comes to judge the living and the dead and to put his enemies under his foot, we will be on his side. He will be the perfect king that will rule over us. And we will partake in his glory for all eternity.

Christmas gives us the gift of glory with Christ. **It is a planned Glorious Christmas.**

Conclusion:

I love Christmas. When I was younger, I loved Christmas because I got Christmas presents. When I started working, I loved Christmas because of the big sales. I still love the big discounts. But when I matured in Christ, I loved Christmas because I understood, from all eternity, God had planned to redeem sinners through the life, suffering and death of Jesus, to adopt us sons of God, co-heirs with Christ. That is something we do not deserve. That is something we can never fully understand. That is why Jesus is called the greatest gift. He is far greater than receiving a new wallet, a new phone. He is far greater than spending time with friends and family. He is far greater than going on a holiday and relaxing. He is far greater than all the worldly things this world can provide. Because the gift he gives, is LIFE. He gives dead men, an opportunity to have life in him. That is the purpose of Christmas. And so, if you don't know him today, if you haven't fully put your trust in Jesus, know this that if you don't repent and believe, you are a slave to sin and that means that you deserve death. And nothing you can do out of your own goodness, nothing out of your righteousness can bring you right before the living and holy God. Only the birth, the life and suffering and death and resurrection of Jesus can. And that's why you need to repent and believe and accept the free gift in Jesus. That's why the end of the same passage Romans 6:23 say *"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."* Repent and believe in him today and don't waste your Christmas buying worldly things. Don't waste your holidays in doing things which don't last for all eternity. This Christmas accept the free gift of God in Christ Jesus. The greatest gift is already here.

If you are a Christian, then what you need to do today, and the week to come and even the rest of your life, is remember how important Christmas day is. Enjoy the time with your friends and family. Enjoy the holiday. But most importantly give praise and glorify God, because *whoever the son sets free he is free indeed. (John 8:36)* Share that Christmas joy by taking this season as an opportunity tell people about Jesus. Share that joy by giving abundantly as an act of love. Don't waste this season just by pursuing happiness and peace apart from Christ. He has given you his Son. The greatest gift from the very beginning of time. From all eternity. Rejoice and proclaim it! Amen.