

**First Sunday after Christmas**  
December 29, 2019  
Christ the Rock Evangelical Lutheran Church  
Farmington, New Mexico

**Galatians 4:4-7** But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, 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!" 7 So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God. (ESV)

**"Right Time for Adoption"**

David was in the third grade when his father consulted him about an important family decision. David had been an only child ever since he could remember. Then, one year, Ronnie and Jerry came to live with his family. It was exciting to have someone to play with. The minor inconvenience of sharing a cramped bedroom was more than compensated for by the many adventures he enjoyed with his new foster brothers. But at the end of the school year, David's parents were told they could adopt Ronnie and Jerry and a third brother. The social workers really wanted to keep all three boys together. And they seemed to be thriving in this new home.

So David's parents sat him down to discuss the matter. As a young boy, he had no idea what it meant to parent children with behavioral challenges. He was still too young to think of finances and budgetary impacts or inheritances. When his parents ultimately decided to decline that adoption opportunity, David was just left wondering what could have been.

Those are big decisions. Decisions that change lives. And the main point of Galatians chapter four is that God made a decision for you to be his child. God did what was necessary to bring you into his family. And it's not just a relationship status that you change on social media. It determines your identity. God gives you rights from his relationship with you and powerful privileges and, most importantly, an ultimate destination.

So often we struggle with a sense of belonging. Who am I? Am I the product of both of my parents and their parents and their extended families? Am I all the trophies and ribbons, every accolade and acknowledgement I have accumulated over the years? Am I all the likes and hearts and group of people who I interact with across the globe and the people I have influence over? Am I who people say I am? Is my value determined by what people think? Or how I feel about myself?

And sometimes that changes. From time to time, from situation to situation, my status isn't always set in stone. My identity is a little complicated.

And then God interrupts all those thoughts. Amid all our wondering and planning and constructing our status we get this from God: **"But when the fullness of time had come."** (Galatians 4:4 ESV) God is trying to get your attention. See, one of our biggest

problems is that we think we should be in charge of our lives. Living our own lives and doing what we want is what we understand as the highest level of existence. Whatever I am, I want to choose my path through life. Whatever timing I see in my life, I want to be the one who decides.

Mike and Tina have been trying to adopt for years. They have spent thousands of dollars tons of energy proving they would be a good home for a child. Not long ago they thought they had an adoption lined up. A young mother was in trouble. She no longer felt safe in the home of her baby's father. She had trouble taking care of her other young children. So she reached out to find help with the baby she was now carrying. Mike and Tina were contacted. They flew half way across the country. They were happy to help the mother. But then the demands kept coming. The birth mother wanted to go through a different agency she felt would be more advantageous to her. But Mike and Tina had already spent a small fortune with one agency and would have to start all over with another. Finally, they had to say no and cut ties with this birth mother. The timing was off. More than that though, the parties couldn't agree on what was best for that unborn baby. The adoption was more complicated than they could handle.

When it comes to the complications in our relationship with God, pride is the primary culprit. The idea that I need God's rescue requires a dose of humility. It means whatever I have chosen for my life is not enough. Whatever I can offer to God won't be adequate. The timing seemed right for Jesus to come into the world when we analyze global history. The exile and resettlement of the Israelites meant there were gatherings of people holding onto God's promises scattered throughout the world. Alexander the Great had united the East and West with a common language. Roman military rule might not have been pleasant, but it brought about peace and stability. Apostles and missionaries like Paul could travel over roads without too much fear of banditry and sail across seas without great threats from pirates.

But God's timing coming to human hearts has more to do with humility than chronology. **"But when the fullness of time had come,"** really means that God had a plan for this world. More than anything, the time was right for Jesus to carry out the plan God had conceived in eternity. (Galatians 4:4) The final phase of God's redemption plan takes shape in the coming of his Son: **"God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law."** (Galatians 4:4) The Son of God had to become fully, and completely human because you and I can't do enough on our own. Jesus went through all the requirements. Jesus has done everything necessary to change the trajectory of your life: **"And because you are sons."** (Galatians 4:6) A couple attempting an adoption might spend tens of thousands of dollars to bring a new child into their family. It cost your heavenly Father infinitely more. The perfect life of God's Son was given to pay the ransom price. The blood of Jesus pays your redemption.

Adoption was a big deal to Paul's original audience. An adopted son went through an elaborate ceremony where he was sold and then purchased by the adopting father three different times. Then he would get all the privileges of a biological child. (Das, p. 403) Jesus came for a purpose: **"to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might**

**receive adoption as sons.”** (Galatians 4:5) Adoption means God is determined. God doesn't give up on anyone. Adoption means God doesn't put the burden for your identity on you. The oppression of having to measure up is removed. All the pressure to be what you need to be is taken off your shoulders and put on Jesus. Who you are to your Father is all because of what Jesus did. God's entire purpose for sending Jesus was to restore his relationship with you. God wanted back into his family the people he had created to be in a perfect relationship, a relationship destroyed by human pride.

A celebrity was explaining how he dreaded going home for the holidays. For most of his twenties and early thirties he simply avoided his parents because of how they criticized so many of his important life choices. Not how he held his fork at dinner, but the career he chose and how he could have made so much more money and better utilized his intelligence in another job. The person he loved was never good enough for him. And now that his father is in his eighties things are almost too mellow. He almost prefers the good old days when there was a good old fashioned family fight.

Conflict is a natural part of any human relationship. And your heavenly Father is here to bring healing to your brokenness. Every family suffers from sin-brokenness. That brokenness finds healing in the **“Son, born of a woman, born under the law.”** (Galatians 4:4) There isn't a family where sin isn't present. And there is no fault left uncovered by the blood of Jesus. There is no relationship that doesn't suffer from pain of some kind. And the price paid by Jesus **“to redeem those under the law”** is great enough to cover the worst hurts. (Galatians 4:5)

When struggling with your identity, you have an ongoing gift. Paul promises: **“Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.””** (Galatians 4:6) Other places in Scripture we learn that we come into God's family of faith through the work of the Holy Spirit. Here, we learn that the Holy Spirit doesn't stop working when we become God's children. Since we are in God's family, God continues to send the Spirit. The Spirit works in our hearts.

Here's how. Whenever you are troubled by your past, the Holy Spirit pulls you back to your present identity in Christ. Whenever guilt over past mistakes or shame over damage you have done torments your heart, the Spirit brings back to your attention the price your Redeemer paid to take them all away. Whenever Satan's accusing finger wags at you to label you with your sin, calling you a drunk or convincing you that you are an adulterer, turning you to despair that you are your greed or anger or bitterness, the Holy Spirit shows you the redemption price paid by Jesus. And God calls you his child. In times of doubt, the Spirit points you to the external Word of God - heard, read, preached - that defeats the feelings inside your heart. And the Spirit doesn't just whimper or mumble. The Spirit shouts, yells, lets loose with a guttural growl, **“Abba, Father.”** (Galatians 4:6)

The Spirit works freedom into your life. Because you are adopted by your heavenly Father, there is no better life you could find for yourself. Because you have an inheritance with the God of infinite grace, there is nothing this world could ever provide could give you that would be better than what you already have through Jesus. Nothing you could ever do or

achieve could bring you better blessings than what you already have through your adoption into God's family. There is no need to try to struggle to get ahead or scratch to exert your own independence. In freedom, we have a different focus for living: **"And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again."** (2 Corinthians 5:15) Our status as God's children flows out from our core identity into everything we do: **"Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers."** (Galatians 6:10)

During World War II, General Eisenhower and his staff planned the D-day attack, the invasion of Europe against the heavily fortified German defenses with everything on the line. So many things needed to go right. So many factors could have caused the invasion to fail. Ultimately, Eisenhower made the call to launch the invasion at one of the last possible moments before weather would have derailed the plans and the whole thing had to be called off.

The same was true when God sent the Messiah. At just the right time, when conditions were optimal, God launched his plan to rescue humanity. He sent Jesus to carry out a dangerous mission that would have universal implications. And Jesus did everything according to plan. Jesus lived his fully human life to purchase sinful humanity. Jesus lived with complete precision by every statute of God's law to ransom you and me. And because God's plan was successful in the life and death of Jesus, by faith you and I are now members of God's family. We are his children. We have all the blessed benefits of inclusion. You have a purpose and an ultimate destination. All because of God's perfect timing for his family. Amen.