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St. Paul's Lutheran Church  
2100 16<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Austin, MN 55912-1749  
Pastor Ted Barthels  
Sermon preached on  
January 2, 2022  
2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after Christmas

Scripture Lessons: Genesis 17:1-7; Matthew 1:18-25

Hymns: 120; 91:1-5; 99; 97

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Galatians 4:4-5

“But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, <sup>5</sup>to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.”

(NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, God our Savior, who was born into the world, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Marking Time

Yesterday was New Year's Day. What New Year's Day is all about is how we mark time in our lives. So much of what we take note of has to do with reviewing our past achievements, or failures, and our intentions to do better or accomplish more, or experience different things in the coming year. We mark time according to our purposes in life. At the beginning of the year, we most often begin the new year with the best of intentions, indeed with determination that we shall make real progress in our personal life journey. It may be goals that we have in finances or health and wellbeing, or hopefully our spiritual lives, that we will do better in reading the Bible, or being more active in church, or memorizing Scripture or

reading our Catechism, being more faithful with our home devotions or our prayer life. Those are just a few suggestions from the Pastor for what we have come to call “New Year’s resolutions.”

We all know that New Year’s resolutions aren’t as resolute as we would like them to be. I’ve been a lot less than resolute about losing weight and getting in shape than I ought to have been even though it has been one of those things on my mind as I mark the passing of time as the years come and go.

What about the Lord? How does the Lord do with the marking of time and His resolve to accomplish certain things? We know that the Lord’s perspective on time is very different from our own. The Apostle Peter reminds us of this: *“Beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.”* (2 Peter 3:8) We should not imagine that this indicates any lack of resolve on the Lord’s part. Quite the contrary is true. And the Lord’s resolve is all about the salvation of sinners.

So it is, on this Sunday right after New Year’s Day, that we look at the Holy Spirit’s lesson regarding --

### **THEME: God Marking Time According to His Purpose.**

Sometimes we use the expression “marking time” for someone that is less than caring about what’s going on in one’s life, or for that matter the world. For the unbeliever that is their concept of God’s attentiveness. At best they perceive God’s interest in them to be “from a distance,” and fairly impersonal. The world regards God as being a doddering old man who is very forgiving because He can’t really keep track of all that’s going on anyway. Many like to suppose He maintains a tolerance of people’s imperfections, because who can be perfect? And really most people aren’t all that bad, at least that is what most people tell themselves about themselves. To the world, God marking time is God watching the world go by.

It is true that God’s perception of time may be different than ours since He is eternal, and we are temporal beings whose reality is

caught up in time. But that doesn't mean that time is meaningless to the Lord. In fact, the God of heaven is in charge of the earth, and He has done whatever He has pleased. (Psalm 115:3) That doesn't reduce God to being impulsive or whimsical. In fact, quite the opposite is true.

God was marking time, marking the events of this world which He had directed to this culmination of events that was right for Him, according to His purpose which He had established in the wise council of God before time began.

### **I. In the Fullness of Time God Sent His Son.**

When we read this familiar passage, it speaks to us of the gracious purpose of God. The incarnation of the Son of God was not haphazard, or by chance timing. God marked His time in world history. God had His time in mind when He would fulfill the promise made to the patriarchs, and all His promises would be fulfilled. However, God marking time wasn't a matter of turning calendar pages either. It wasn't that God thought to Himself, "Well maybe I'll just wait 4000 thousand years, and then I'll set things in motion according to my purpose and plan." Not at all!

The God who made the earth, as well as all the universe not only watched the course of human events in this world, noting the sin of mankind, but God intervened in the course of human events, guiding and directing the events of mankind to this central event in world history. "**The fullness of time**" was a matter of things being as events served the Lord's purpose for sending His Son into the world.

Now, we may look back in our history books and make observations about how different things may have served the Lord's purpose, but at our best our wisdom falls way short of comprehending the mind of God. We know from this specific passage that this was the right time, the time God comprehended as "the fullness of time," when He would fulfill the promises made to the fathers and "*God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law.*" (v.4)

We recite those words quite easily and may even say them without thinking about the profound truth these words express. If man were writing the script for Jesus' entrance into this world it would resemble a Marvel movie, science fiction. Jesus isn't a comic book superhero in any way. Jesus **is God** taking upon Himself our humanity. To do this He was born of a woman. He was conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary. He is fully human. Jesus is fully God.

That phrase, "*born under the law*" is extremely significant. He was born under the law in the sense that as a human being He was under all the requirements of the law of God. He didn't get a pass, or an exemption, or an exception to certain requirements of the law. Theologically we look to New Year's Day as the day of Jesus' circumcision. According to the requirements of the law this Holy Child was also expected to be endure circumcision. The eighth day was also the day on which children were named, and so the Son of God was given the name "**Jesus**," "*for He (would) save His people from their sins.*" (Matthew 1:22)

He was under the requirements of the law because it was necessary that all the requirements of the law be fulfilled, be met by mankind. This Jesus did from day one, to the moment He breathed His last breath on Calvary.

We have been talking around it, now let's get to it. God was marking time regarding the fulfillment of His purpose. What exactly was that purpose that was to be fulfilled in Christ Jesus. For believers like you and me, we aren't in great suspense. By the grace of God, we know the answer.

## **II. His Purpose: Redeem those Under the Law.**

We are the creatures who were under the law. That we are creatures reminds us that we are not God, but the ones who were made by God. Part of being God, the all wise God, is that God establishes order for the good of His creation. He didn't do this because He thought it might be funny to see man struggle to do what He wanted. He established His law for our good. Part of being God is that He gets to make the rules. Our flesh rebels at this because we want to make the rules for our own lives. Indeed, we

want to make the rules for this earth. We like to think we know what's best. We like to think we are the masters of our destiny. What man has managed to do with man's ways is nothing less than a shipwreck.

God was not fickle in establishing His law. He was loving and caring, and when Adam and Eve fell into sin, and the will of man was corrupted, and man was alienated from God, God did not abolish His law, and He did not eliminate mankind. He responded in love and promised the Seed of the Woman would come to crush the head of the serpent, and deliver man, who through fear of death was subject to bondage and destruction from the curse of the law.

*“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.”* (v.4-5) There was a debt that had to be paid. This debt was accrued by those under the law who in their stubborn arrogance thought themselves above the law and so ended up owing God an eternity of suffering because of their sin. But then that One who was above the law as the eternal Son of God condescended to become one of us, and be born in the world, and live under the law, that He might fulfill the requirements of the law on our behalf, **and** pay the debt we owed.

He redeemed us to God. We had alienated ourselves from God. We were NOT children of God. We were children of wrath. It doesn't matter how many people think that by birthright we are children of God, we are not because of our sin. We were outcasts without any way of restoring ourselves to God's family, to God's good favor. And yet this was what God's purpose was in sending His Son into the world. Jesus was born in Bethlehem for this very purpose, to redeem us so that we might receive adoption as sons. God chose us and adopted us into His family. What a marvel of grace this is.

Please understand why this expression is worded as it is. This isn't disrespecting daughters. It is expressing the truth of the gospel in terms that the world understood, and that conveys to us the richness of God's grace. Being adopted as sons conveys our status regarding inheritance. Until very recent times in this world only sons inherit. We are regarded with the status of sons that we might

know that we are heirs of eternal life, all of us together. It is in this regard that the Scriptures say: *“For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”*<sup>28</sup> *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*<sup>29</sup> *And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”* (Galatians 3:27-29) This special status came to us by God’s grace through our Baptisms, but it was secured for us by Jesus coming into this world, living under the law and fulfilling all righteousness for a fallen mankind, and then taking upon Himself the **debt** of our sin, the curse of our sin, the **death** of our sin, and thereby redeeming us to God.

And so, God’s Purpose in marking time was revealed for all the world in the birth of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Babe of Bethlehem.

Not let us consider God’s purpose --

### **III. And Time Going Forward.**

Is God still “marking time?” Absolutely, and it is still with purpose which is still God desire for people to be saved. There is a time known to God the Father when this world as we know it will come to an end, and Christ shall return, and the world will face its Judge. God is marking time. He has not forgotten. The world continues so that more and more people, people all over the world, might hear of how *“God sent forth His Son (into the world) born of woman born under the law to redeem those who were under the law.”* (v.4-5) that people might hear, and believe, and be saved.

Remember that passage we read about God’s perspective on time? Let’s hear it again with God’s purpose added on: Peter wrote: *“But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.”*<sup>9</sup> *The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”* (2 Peter 3:8-9)

Now we live under this grace while the Lord is marking time. For us it is a time of grace, a time for us to praise Jesus as Lord and Savior and glorify His name before the world. This is a time of

grace for us to share the good news of Jesus' birth with others that they too might understand the real purpose God fulfilled in His Son being sent into the world. Let us redeem the time that God has given us, making the most of it to serve this gracious purpose of God, living under this privileged status as children of God and heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

In this new year may we mark the time according to the God's purpose and thank the Lord for the blessing of each day as we glorify Jesus as our Redeemer and Lord.

**AMEN.**

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.