



The Anglican Parish of Whangaparaoa Peninsula
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Sermon

“Gifts That Don’t Disappoint”

Galatians 4v4-7

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Galatians 4:4-7⁴ But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.”

Who has ever been hanging around looking at their watch, anticipating a certain something very important about to happen? Maybe it was when you were at the altar, easing a tight collar and nervously turning around to see if your bride would finally appear. Maybe later, you kept on looking at the calendar, knowing that a baby was due to arrive but was lingering inside.

We read in Habbakuk 2:³ *For the revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay.*

We often have difficulty remembering that God knows the right timing for everything better than we do. Ian mentioned recently to his friend, who was waiting desperately for a house to be sold, “God is rarely early, but never late.” God is rarely early, but never late.

Here in our reading, Paul says to the Galatians, “But when the set time had fully come”. The Greek word “kairos” translated “time” here, means an appointed time with an important meaning, the time when God acts. In contrast, the Greek word “chronos” is the time that is measured by the clock, but God’s “kairos” time is not necessarily in sync with the time we stare at on the clock. Both situations when Ian and I have been wanting to buy a house, it has taken 9 months to find! But each time, God’s timing has been impeccable.

The set time had fully come and God sent his Son, who appeared in our world at a particular chronos time and in a particular place. We are not sure exactly when the date was, but most scholars agree that the dividing line was set slightly late between BC (the years before Christ) and AD, (the years since Christ came). So probably between 4 and 6BC.

Was anyone watching for the conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn that was visible a few nights ago in our Southern skies? That particular conjunction happens once every 400 years and some people have suggested that that conjunction was the star that the wise men were seeing 2,000 or so years ago.

Jesus' birth was at the time of God's choosing. We often chaff under duress of waiting, but we could avoid all that stress if we just trusted God's kairos timing. He is God and he is aware of all the things that need to fall into place to open the door to any long-awaited happening.

“when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law.”

Imagine the transition. Jesus has been King, enthroned forever, fully God and in charge of creating and maintaining the whole universe – stars, planets, solar systems, delighting in his creation. Now he is sent to live **under** the law that he has devised and been supreme over.

He became a tiny baby developing under his mother's heart. Unable to see at first, becoming able to hear his mother's heartbeat, able to sense all the emotions his mother went through during the pregnancy. Then the birth, at the set time. A baby boy, born into a culture which was dominated by the Law of God. Dominated by the strictness of the religious leaders, who desperately wanted to keep everyone in line, obedient to the Law of Moses. They were very keen that God would not send them away from their land into captivity in Babylon again.

Born of a woman, born under the Law...born ⁵ ***“to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.”*** This is the amazing gift that was given to us when Jesus relinquished his life. Adoption to sonship became available to anyone who believes.

To be taken from a position of slavery and given the rights of the son of the house is a wonderful picture of our position in God's family. Think of a son coming home after school. He bursts into the house, drops his schoolbag and heads straight for the fridge. He doesn't search for his mother and say, “O revered benefactress, of your kindness, might I possibly have something to eat and drink after the heat of my work?” No, he assumes, correctly, that as a son, he has a right to the food of the house. It is provided for him.

How might we apply this to our position as sons of God, heirs to the Kingdom of heaven? For Paul, “sonship” was not a gender-specific term, but using the word “sonship”, he spoke of the special, intimate relationship we all can have with Father God, when we step out of darkness into the Kingdom of God. He spoke of freedom from the curse of the Law, that religious ritual that governed Jewish life, and also of the privilege of the filling of the Holy Spirit that God enables. In addition, sonship gives us confidence as we contemplate that transition from time into eternity that we all must face in due course.

Richard Larsen, one of our congregation, has just made that transition, totally unexpectedly. His funeral is on 6th January. Because he had believed in Jesus, repented and been baptised, we can be confident that he is right now enjoying the privilege of sonship in heaven.

That's OK for him, but what about us still on earth? What does it mean for me, today, in the position of a son of God, to have free access to the fridge? There are everyday benefits and responsibilities that are true for all believers, all the time.

We find one in Hebrews 4:16 *“Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”* We get help. We get second chances. We get let off, even when we don't deserve it.

1 John 1v9 “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” That's a clear promise which we can appropriate. He has promised. He is faithful to his promise. He is just when he forgives, because the price has already been paid. We don't have to keep beating ourselves up about the past, just confess and receive forgiveness.

In Mark 7, Jesus describes healing and deliverance as “the children’s bread.” One of the reasons I like to tell people about healings that have occurred is because healing is part of our normal inheritance as sons of God. Some people shrink away from asking for healing, perhaps not being quite sure if God wants to heal. But healing is like the toast for breakfast, not caviar which might come once in a lifetime. Ask the Father in Jesus’ name.

We get love, enough to fill anyone’s craving. John 3:16 “*God SO loved the world that he gave his dear, precious, unique son to rescue us from perishing and give us everlasting life.*” Free gift to us; horrendous cost to him. If we are expecting a parent, wife or husband to supply all our needs for love, we will be disappointed. Only Father God’s love can do that. Everyone else will fail in some way to supply that perfect love.

We get a new family. In Romans 8:29 Paul says, “*For he knew all about us before we were born and he destined us from the beginning to share the likeness of his Son. This means the Son (Jesus) is the oldest among a vast family of brothers and sisters who will become just like him.*” (The Passion Translation) ...A new family to nestle into.

There are many other benefits for those who choose to receive the free gift of becoming a son of God. You can find them in the Bible, especially the New Testament. And as you read, if you find one you are not experiencing, there is a simple question you can ask: “Lord, what is preventing me from receiving this thing you promised?”

It’s a wonderful journey of discovery, finding out all those promises and receiving them. I encourage you to look for these gifts – if you don’t look for them, you might miss out because you didn’t ask. Open the fridge door and look. One of the most marvellous is in verses 6&7 of Galatians 4:

Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.” So you are no longer a slave, but God’s child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.

When we choose to believe and trust in Jesus, we become adopted children of God and Father God sends the Holy Spirit into our hearts and expresses His life through us. Paul describes it like this earlier in Galatians 2:20 “*I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

The life I now live, I consecrate to Him and ask him to express his life through mine.

v7 **You are no longer a slave.** Slaves have no choice. Slaves have no benefit from their labour. Slaves are at the mercy of their masters whims. We, who belong to Christ, are redeemed from slavery in the Kingdom of darkness. Because of love, we choose to please Jesus.

Let’s take a few minutes to come before God in prayer about these things. Let’s anchor these things in experience, not just theory. I want you to remember how it was when you were a child, coming home from school on a hot summer’s day. Close your eyes and picture it. Do you feel free to drop your bag and run to the fridge for a cool drink? If not, take a minute to forgive your parent and release him or her from your judgement.

God is more generous than any human parent. Let’s pray and ask him for his promises.

Lord, I want free access to the fridge. I want the gift of adoption as a Son of God, mercy and grace to help in time of need, freedom from the feeling of guilt and accusation in my thoughts, healing and deliverance, enough love to satisfy my longing heart, a new family of brothers and sisters who are becoming like Jesus, the Holy Spirit living in my heart calling out, “Daddy God!” Heavenly Father, please supply what I need NOW. Help me to live like a millionaire, not a pauper in your kingdom. Thank you. Thank you. Amen.