**First Sunday after Christmas
December 27, 2020
Galatians 4: 4-7**

***“****But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, 5 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.” Galatians 4: 4-7*

There are two Greek words commonly used for *“time*.”The one is, “*chronos.” “Chronos”* simply means, *“time,”* as in, how we measure time, the time on a clock, what time of day it is, or the passage of minutes and seconds. It is where we get words like *“chronograph”* which is just a fancy word for a *“watch.”* There is nothing special about *“chronos;”* it is simply *“time”* unless, of course, you have an important appointment to keep for which you need to be *“on time.”* Beyond that though, it is just not that significant.

 The other word for time is a bit different, however. It is *“kairos.” “Kairos,”* refers to a special time or a critical time. It means the time is right or perfect for something to happen. It signifies a proper or opportune moment for action when everything is all in place and ready to go.

 We might be tempted to think that because we have a God who is not bound by time that timing is unimportant to him. When a day is like a thousand years, why does he really need to be concerned with timing? But, timing is important to him. Our God did not create the world and then, like a watchmaker, wind it up and walk away. No. He has been very involved with his creation from the beginning, even when his creation didn’t want to be involved with him. Paul, in our epistle lesson from Galatians, reminds us of the importance of timing to God. He reminds us that God has been actively working throughout history to bring about the salvation of the world, to bring about your salvation and my salvation. And, when the timing was right, or, as the King James Version so beautifully puts it, *“But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law.”* The word God chose to use there is *“kairos!”*

 Jesus’ birth did not come about by happenstance. It happened at exactly the right time. God had been planning the birth of Jesus for quite some time. Actually, he started working on it immediately after the fall of Adam and Eve into sin. And, when he told Adam and Eve that he would send one of Eve’s offspring to crush the head of Satan, he didn’t just make the announcement and then sit back in his heavenly Barca lounger until the mood struck him. After thousands of years he didn’t just suddenly wake up one day and remember, *“Oh, yeah, I promised a Savior. I had better do something about that.”* No, throughout history he was busy at work laying the foundations to save you and me.

 Much of that work is recorded in the Old Testament. He chose for himself a special people from who the Savior would come. That special nation was Israel. He worked through them, using them to keep the message of the Savior alive. He worked through nations and rulers. He worked despite the mistakes his people made, and he even worked through evil people and unbelieving nations.

 Read through the Old Testament and you will see how God was keeping his promise that through the *“seed”* of Abraham, all nations would be blessed. We see his rescue of the nations of Israel from slavery in Egypt and his bringing them to the Promised Land. We see how he promised David that his descendants would reign on his throne forever. We see the prophets foretell the coming of God’s righteous servant who would come to establish peace and justice. All that did not happen by accident. God did this. Nothing was left to chance and he did this with one singular event in mind: to send his Son into the world . . . born of woman . . . born under the law to redeem those under the law.

 My dear friends in Christ, the central focus of history . . . all history . . . not just *“church”* history . . . was the coming of Jesus Christ into the world. For a while there secular scholars were trying to change the nomenclature we use for telling time from B.C. (before Christ) and A.D. (ante-dominae; the year of our Lord) to B.C.E. (before the common era) and A.C.E. (after the common era). It was their attempt to remove Jesus from being the center of all things. It never really caught on. Regardless, B.C. and A.D. really do reflect the proper way to look at things. Jesus coming into the world is *the* thing that God was working toward. His love for us is so great, his concern for us so intense that everything was being worked together by the hand of God so that he could save you and me through his Son. That is Paul’s point in this text. When the time set by God came, when the time was full, when the time was complete and when everything was in order as God planned it, he sent his only-begotten Son.

 I think Paul makes that point pretty obvious. God’s plan was always to send his Son and so Jesus came, born of a woman. In the miraculous incarnation, the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. God became flesh. Jesus literally became one of us, our brother, our fellow human being and although he was still 100% God, he chose to place himself into the human condition. What I mean by that is this: Jesus chose to place himself under the same burden of the Law that we were under. And believe me, the Law is a burden.

 We were all under the burden of the Law. And when I speak of the Law being a burden, I am truly talking about a burden. When God says, as he does in Leviticus 20, “*Keep all my decrees and laws and follow them . . . You are to be holy to me, because I the Lord am holy,”* he means it. Now, we may not like to hear this but the Law, God’s commandments, require perfect compliance. They just do. We may desire to slough one or two of them off as unimportant or not that big a deal, but that is only a self-deception. God is clear: the punishment for noncompliance is hell. Plainly and simply, if you mess up, the Law condemns you. The problem, however, should be plain to all of us: we all mess up all the time. Worse, though, we were all born enslaved to the Law. None of us was born free. In fact, we were born slaves to the Law which from our very first breath required that we never do anything wrong for our entire lives. Think of that: absolute perfection from our very first breath!

 Now, I ask you, if you can, think back to your very first breath. Think about your life since childhood. Have you kept the Law? Have you always obeyed all the Commandments? Have you never faltered or strayed from God’s way? Of course, you haven’t. Even as small children, you and I failed to live up to God’s will. That may be hard for us to accept, but it is the truth from the Scriptures. We are born sinful. We are born under the Law.

 I know babies are cute, adorable, huggable, squeezable, kiss-able and every other *“able”* that we can think to call a baby. And looking into an infant’s angelic face we would never consider her or him anything but innocent. But, anyone here today who has had children will know that when that baby is hungry, she probably was pretty impatient for you to feed her. And, I will bet that in the middle of the night when he woke up wanting to eat, he pretty much didn’t care that you were sleeping, did he? If you all want to know the answer to that question, just look at the dark circles under any new parent’s eyes! This may sound a bit scandalous here, but the truth is that babies are a bundle of selfishness all wrapped up in a diaper, and they don’t care too much who they disturb. Even at this age, the evidence of sin is apparent.

 Now, my point here is not to slam babies. My point is that this is the human predicament. To be saved, you must keep the Law perfectly without every messing up. However, because we are born sinful, none of us can or ever will keep the Law perfectly. The requirement for perfection is there and we just can’t meet it. That is the burden. The Law demands everything from us but it offers no solution to help us keep it. Worse, the Law demands a very specific punishment for those who break it: death.

 Jesus, however, was sent by God, at just the right time, as God’s answer to our predicament. He placed himself under the Law and did what we could not do: he perfectly obeyed everything which God demanded of him. Jesus was indeed human just like us and he was indeed tempted in every way that we have been tempted, yet, he remained without sin.

 Jesus’ life and ministry as recorded in the Gospels is the record of his perfect obedience to his heavenly Father. He was circumcised at eight days old, just as he should have been. He was baptized, counting himself among the transgressors, to fulfill all righteousness. He was tempted by Satan in the wilderness when he was hungry and exhausted and still remained pure and faithful to God.

 Jesus did what you and I could not do. He was obedient in every way at all times, even obedient to the point of death. My fellow saints, for us and for our salvation, Jesus was obedient to the Law in every way, and this included being obedient to the punishment required by the Law, and this too was a matter of perfect timing. You see, at just the right time, God sent his Son into the world and at just the right time, he sent his Son to the cross. Timing is everything, and in God’s timing, Good Friday was just as purposeful as Christmas. The cross was no accident. It was God’s plan from the beginning that Jesus should die in our place to free us from the burden of the Law. The Law demanded satisfaction and it demands that sin be punished one way or the other: either we pay the price ourselves or Jesus pays it for us.

 The gospel is about Jesus paying it for us. And because of what Jesus did, we need not fear being punished for our sin. In his perfect timing, Jesus declared from the cross, *“It is finished!”* and with that, the burden of the Law has been removed from each of us, and we are free. We are free to live in the peace that only Jesus can bring and free to live for God as his holy people.

 That freedom has been granted today to each and every one of us. God has freed us from the burden of the Law. God has given us the right to call him, *“Father”* and he has made us heirs to his heavenly kingdom. We have been marked as children of God redeemed by the blood of Christ in our baptisms. Through plain water, combined with the power of God’s word, we all on the day of our baptisms . . . at just the right time, mind you . . . according to God’s time . . . have been granted salvation. And someday, again, when the time has fully come, when our Lord as fulfilled all he has planned for this side of the cross, when all things are in place, Jesus will return to give to us and all who believe, the inheritance he has had planned for us from the beginning. And all this through the perfect timing of God! To God be the glory. In Jesus’ name. Amen.