

The Coming of God's Son.

Text: Gal 4:4-5

Suggested Hymns:

34, 33, 22, 282, 627

1) The time of His coming

2) The manner of His coming

3) The purpose of His coming

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is 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, ⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.*** (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

During the course of the year we are privileged to celebrate many grand festivals in the house of God. There is Good Friday with its mighty miracle of the death of God's Son. There is Easter with its splendid resurrection joy. There is Ascension with its breath of Paradise to come, and there is Pentecost with its life-giving Spirit.

But in a certain sense, from our vantage point on earth, it is fair to say that the loveliest festival of all is Christmas, because it is the source from which all others flow. Without Christmas there could be no Good Friday, Easter, Ascension, or Pentecost. The life which brought us all the holy associations of Jerusalem, the Mount of Olives and Calvary — had its beginning at Bethlehem.

Christmas is the festival of the love of God. It shows that God loves us. It is at Christmas that we receive our deepest appreciation of the mysterious loving sentence, ***“For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”***¹ The motive power of our salvation is the love of God.

We are not saved by anything that we are, or do, or ever hope to be or do, but we are saved entirely and only because God is a God of mercy, love, pity and

compassion, and because He determined to do for us in Christ what we could not possibly do for ourselves.

And that fact is the beginning of our salvation, and it is also the central truth of our Christmas celebration and the theme of the text with which we worship this morning.

Our text puts this wonderful fact into five words, *God Sent Forth His Son*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. The Time of His Coming

Thoughtlessly we often refer to the 25th of December as merry Christmas. We think of it as a time for somewhat extravagant rejoicing and celebration; but our text marks this event with a phrase which we hope God's Spirit will write into our hearts this morning so that we shall never forget it. The event which we are commemorating this morning marks nothing less than "*the fullness of time.*"

The Bible has a lot to say about time. In Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 the Lord tells us through Solomon that there is *A time for every purpose under heaven:* ² *A time to be born, And a time to die; A time to plant, And a time to pluck what is planted;* ³ *A time to kill, And a time to heal; A time to break down, And a time to build up;* ⁴ *A time to weep, And a time to laugh; A time to mourn, And a time to dance;* ⁵ *A time to cast away stones, And a time to gather stones; A time to embrace, And a time to refrain from embracing;* ⁶ *A time to gain, And a time to lose; A time to keep, And a time to throw away;* ⁷ *A time to tear, And a time to sew; A time to keep silence, And a time to speak;* ⁸ *A time to love, And a time to hate; A time of war, And a time of peace.*

Time is also very precious in the sight of God. We have a lot of anniversary celebrations. Once a year we remember our birthdays, the day of Reformation, Harvest Thanksgiving, Christmas, the Lenten season and Easter. When someone asks us how old we are, we give the answer in years; but the Bible tells us to evaluate time better than that, as we read in Psalm 90:12, ¹² *So teach us to number our days, That we may gain a heart of wisdom.*

When people are confronted with the issues of life and death and the necessity of salvation here and now, they shrug their shoulders and say, like Felix

who said, ***“Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you.”***²

But the Bible says in Hebrews 4:7, ***“Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts.”*** And in 2 Corinthians 6:2, ***Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.***

However, one of the grandest things which the Bible ever recorded from the Spirit of God regarding time is the short sentence of our text, ***when the fullness of the time had come.***

How important the event of our text is in point of time can be ascertained from the fact that the Lord God took almost four thousand years to prepare people for that moment in history when Jesus would be born in Bethlehem in the land of Judah.

God filled His Word to the people of the Old Testament with admonitions that they should prepare for the great moment of all history, as when He said in Psalm 24:7, ***“Lift up your heads, O you gates! And be lifted up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in.”***

He marked off their future history with specific references to keep their eyes fixed on that great day. He said, for instance, ***“The scepter shall not depart from Judah ... until Shiloh come.”***³ No wonder, then, that the moment in human history when the Son of God came, the moment when God’s angel proclaimed, ***“For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior,”***⁴ is the moment when all the multitude of the heavenly host sang the *Gloria in excelsis Deo* — that moment is ***“the fullness of the time.”***

Behind this expression lies the fact that time has little or no significance unless you appreciate the one event which gives it meaning and purpose.

Time is not given to us for what the great purpose of so many people is in this day and age, which is to try to lay your hands on as much wealth and property as you possibly can amass in seventy or eighty years.

There was a disciple of Jesus who thought that the getting of more wealth ought to be the purpose of time, but the voice of God’s Son said, ***“It would have been good for that man if he had not been born.”***⁵ For that matter, any life, regardless of the number of its years and the amount of its honour on earth, has

missed its real purpose of living if it has not been brought into the right relationship with this one moment in human history when God sent His only-begotten Son to save men from their sins.

St. Paul tells us that the life which he lived after he understood that the meek and lowly Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of the living God, he lived by the faith of Him who had loved him and given Himself for him.⁶ Everything else in human history is of minor importance when compared with God's sending forth of His Son "*in the fullness of the time.*"

2. The Manner of His Coming

As our text proceeds to give us the manner of the coming of God's Son, it mentions two outstanding facts:

Firstly, *born of a woman*. — Every year in the Christmas story we hear the emphatic word of the Angel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary, "*The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.*"⁷ Mary had not known a man as a husband, and upon her inquiry for further information, the angel says simply, "*With God nothing will be impossible.*" This is the Woman's Seed of the Garden of Eden, who would bruise the head of the serpent for us; for, "*Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.*"⁸

Secondly, *born under the law*. — The Law of God tells us how we are to be and what we are to do and not to do. Let us remember that the wonderful Child of Bethlehem was placed under that same Law. The Law which points its finger at us and says, as we read in Romans 13:9, ⁹*For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not bear false witness," "You shall not covet," and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."*

That Law was the guide of the life of Jesus of Nazareth. He came not to destroy the Law and the Prophets but to fulfil, and to fulfil the Law, He must keep the Law perfectly; for only to those who are free from sin in thought, word, and deed can the Law ever promise, "*do this and you will live.*"⁹ This wonderful Saviour takes our place as a true man, born of a woman, and placed

under the Law as our Substitute that He may truly be our Representative before the court of God.

3. The Purpose of His Coming

Here our text comes to a climax with two grand statements, ⁵ *to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.*

Firstly, ⁵ *to redeem those who were under the law.* — In view of our transgression and disobedience to God's Law there were two things the Christ Child had to do in order to redeem us from the Law.

As previously indicated, He must live his life in perfect harmony and agreement with every injunction of God's will. And we have the wonderful assurance that while He was tempted in all points as we are, yet He was without sin. His entire life was subjected to the most painstaking scrutiny of bitter enemies, but Jesus was able to face them and say, ⁴⁶ *"Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me?"*¹⁰ And no one has ever successfully accepted the challenge to point out in Jesus Christ a single wrong.

But our redemption from the Law demanded of Jesus much more than just keeping the Law perfectly in His own life. The Law also says, *"The wages of sin is death."*¹¹ And all of us have sinned. And God cannot lie; He must punish sin. So therefore our Redeemer must necessarily interpose Himself between us and the wrath of God against our every transgression of the Law, and that means He must suffer punishment and death for us in order to redeem us from the curse of the Law.

But you may say, *"Why bring up such gloomy thoughts at Christmas time? After all, that is what we expect to hear on Good Friday."* Dear friends, that is the message of Christmas: *"He came to save His people from their sins."* The very purpose of God in sending forth His Son, according to our text, is *to redeem those who were under the law*, and you cannot redeem sinners under the condemnation of God's Law without taking away the punishment of their sin.

In the wide open spaces there are sometimes fires. When a fire sweeps through the country, there is only one thing to do. You cannot run away from it, and you cannot outrun it. The thing to do is to burn out all the grass around you.

In the space already burned out, you are safe. You will hear the flames roar as they come closer and closer, you may tremble as those flames sweep so close by you; but you are safe because the place where you are standing is a place where fire has already burned, and so there is no danger, because there is nothing left to burn.

And today, in order that we do not lose the true meaning of Christmas and the real purpose of our text, let us remember that the fire of God's wrath against the sin of the world has burned itself out in the body and soul of this precious little Child of Bethlehem.

Let us not be so engrossed with the externals of a glittering Christmas season that we forget its final and ultimate glory in the matter of our redemption from the Law. Luther expressed this well in those wonderful words of the Second Article: *"At great cost He has saved and redeemed me, a lost and condemned person. He has freed me from sin, death, and the power of the devil - not with silver or gold, but with His holy and precious blood and His innocent suffering and death."*

The second grand statement in our text is *that we might receive the adoption as sons*. — When our text tells us that God sent forth His Son, you know that God's own beloved Son, His only-begotten Son, is meant; but you also know what many Christians do when in their homes they have no children or perhaps only one child.

They adopt children who have no home of their own. They receive them into their homes with all the rights and privileges of children who are their very own by birth. The reason why people adopt children is that they love them and realise that they may receive from their adopted children a return of that love.

Years ago in a certain orphanage a gracious wealthy lady came to take home with her a little girl called Jane. Now, Jane was a little frightened and rather timid, and she shyly held back from leaving her familiar surroundings.

So the lady began telling Jane all about the things she had planned to give her in her new home. *"You shall have beautiful clothes, a lovely doll, and many nice playthings; a room all for yourself, with a beautiful bed and a little table and some chairs, where you may play with your little friends."*

Little Jane began to think, and finally she said, “*But what am I to do for all this?*” And then the lady burst into tears and said, “*Jane, I just want you to be my little girl and love me.*”

Here, then, is the final and ultimate purpose of Christmas. This is why God sent forth His Son, *that we might receive the adoption as sons* and that we might “*love Him because He first loved us.*”¹²

Let us conclude with words of the hymnist,¹³

To this vale of tears He comes,
Here to serve in sadness,
That with Him in heaven’s fair home
We may reign in gladness. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ John 3:16

² Acts 24:25

³ Genesis 49:10

⁴ Luke 2:11

⁵ Matthew 26:24

⁶ Galatians 2:20

⁷ Luke 1:35

⁸ Isaiah 7:14

⁹ Luke 10:28

¹⁰ John 8:46

¹¹ Romans 6:23

¹² 1 John 4:19

¹³ Hymn 22 v 2