

Sermon Draft

Text: Galatians 4:4-7

Sermon: Time

It's no surprise that on New Year's Eve the subject of *time* gets center stage. Time is *relevant*, of enormous impact. Often it dictates when we eat, sleep, work, and play. Many of us are very dependent on our clocks and wristwatches to get us through the day. On the other hand, time is also *relative*, depending on one's perspective and situation in life. There are those who have much too much time on their hands and the moments of each day pass at a snail's pace: the lonely, the isolated, the imprisoned, the fearful, the invalid and infirm, the depressed.

By contrast, there are those who believe they have all the time in the world: time to pursue their dreams, to raise their families, to build their nest eggs, and, sadly, to order their spiritual lives. A person in one of our Bible classes observed that people seem to be more involved in Bible study later in life, when they "have more time." Unfortunately, she may be right. But she is also wrong.

We all have the same amount of time each day, each week, each year. The patterns and priorities we set for ourselves for the way we use our time in the prime of life provide a context for how we spend our time later in life. Most of us find time for whatever is important to us whatever we consider of value.

Somewhere between those who have too much time and those who believe they have all the time in the world are those who have no time—those who are pulled in many different directions each of which requires time: vocation, leisure, marriage, family, church. These find special comfort in the psalmist's words, "***The Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore***" (Psalm 121:8). Especially, when we find ourselves "coming and going," not knowing where or how or *when* to expend our priorities.

Thus, during these last days of 2019, let us take time to place time into the timetable of our timeless God. The eternal God enters into time.

Our text is Galatians 4:4–7: ***“But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are 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 a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.”***

“When the time had fully come . . .” With God, nothing is haphazard or happenstance. God has a time for everything, and everything God plans happens on time, especially God’s plan for our redemption. So it was that a little over 2,000 years ago, God decided that it was time—the right time, the fullness of time for the Savior to be born, a timeless God entering a time-driven world.

Why then? Why didn’t God send a Savior to deliver his chosen people from Egyptian oppression? Because, perhaps, about 1500 years later when the Savior did come, God’s people were under a more insidious form of slavery one with eternal consequences.

They had become subject to the expectations and exploitations of religious leaders like the Pharisees, who exulted themselves as exemplars of the faith, who deluded others into believing that their self-serving piety pleased God, whose religion became synonymous with rituals and rites and the rigidity of rules.

There is no greater bondage of our will and spirit than seeking to satisfy God. There is no greater spiritual enslavement than to believe that we are in charge of our eternal destiny. If, even for a split second, we believe that our relationship with the Lord and the fate of our salvation is dependent on the type of person we are, what kind of father or mother, husband or wife, pastor or plumber; how good, or effective, or productive, or kind we would be more oppressed than the lowliest, most subservient slave.

That's why the Father sent the Son into the world in the fullness of time; namely, to redeem us from the curse and burden of the Law and place it squarely on the shoulders of Jesus. He, born of a woman fully human and fully divine was also born "under" the Law.

He kept the Law perfectly not the superficial mandates penned by the Pharisees but the letter and spirit of God's holy, piercing, and penetrating Law. It is impossible for us to keep the Law. We can't even get past the First Commandment, "*You shall have no other gods,*" let alone the other nine without saying I plead guilty! Christ's keeping of the Law is an imperative part of his act of salvation.

Even that was not sufficient to meet the criteria established by God for our salvation. The only Son of the Father also had to pay the price of sin's consequence! And so he did, on the cross of Calvary, taking our sins upon himself, literally and spiritually dying our death.

As we know and believe and confess, our sin and his death could not hold him as a slave in bondage. Easter! Resurrection! New life! And, through Christ's holy life, sacrificial death, and powerful resurrection, we are called sons and daughters of almighty God. We have been given the incredible invitation to call the God who created time in the first place, "*Abba, Father,*" "Dear Father." For if we are God's children, then we are also God's heirs, heirs of life forever in heaven.

The message is simple and straightforward Law and Gospel, sin and grace, bondage and freedom, supremely relevant for all generations, for all years, for all time. For it transforms the temporal into the eternal. It puts into heavenly perspective everything with which we concern ourselves during this brief time that we are citizens on earth. What an appropriate way to conclude one year and invite a new one than with the assurance that we are God's children, beloved of the Father.

There is no ending for our lives, for we inherit *eternity*. Yet as we reflect and ponder the year now ending, on past decades, even on all our life, we see the hand of God upon us. A rhetorical, yet spiritual and relevant question: Can we dare enter a new year without an ever-deepening relationship with the eternal Christ?

There is no greater love than that which the Father gives us through the Son. There is no greater love than that which receives us and welcomes us, not on our terms, but through God's grace and mercy. That we are the children of God and may call upon God in the most endearing of terms, "*Abba*, Father," is not what we merit, but is a profound show of God's love. Amen