

*The First Sunday After Christmas*  
December 27, 2009  
Amazing Grace Lutheran Church - Pastor Chip Wilke

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.

A whole group of adults whom had gathered together were asked about their favorite Christmas memories. Suddenly, the room lit up with one story after another. But if you listened real carefully you would have noted that each and every story was about Christmas memories as a child. Maybe that is why there is that familiar expression most of us probably know that says: "*Christmas is for Kids.*" Is that really true? Is Christmas something for children and children alone. If that were really true wouldn't it be a sad statement? There would be no Christmas for the rest of us who aren't kids. No Christmas for those in nursing homes, no Christmas for the adults who pay all the bills, and no Christmas or Christmas break for college students. There would be only a small percentage of people who would experience all the joy and fun at Christmas time.

Well, guess what dear friends? I'm here to tell you this morning that Christmas actually is for kids. Because Christmas is for children, for you and me because we are children of God. Our text makes it clear that we, from the youngest to the oldest in here, are God's children. There is nothing that beats being God's kids, His children, at Christmas time. So this morning we celebrate the fact that: **Christmas Is for Kids. Christmas means a change in our relationship to the Law. Christmas means a change in our relationship to the Father.**

How does Christmas mean a change in our relationship to the law? At one time our relationship to the law was not a parent-child, but more of a master-slave relationship. Paul was writing this letter to a people who knew a thing or two about the law. Think of how the Jews had God's Old Testament civil laws (to govern their lives), ceremonial laws (for their worship), and moral laws (10 commandments) to obey. It had to be frustrating at times trying to obey the Lord's command to: "**Keep all my decrees and laws and follow them**" (Leviticus 20). Yet, somehow many began to believe by keeping those laws, God would be pleased with them. They thought they could earn some kind of satisfaction with God, some type of eternal life, and some manner of peace with an angry God. Their relationship with the law actually became more important than their relationship with God.

But the law is not a very good master for the end result was always doubt. "*Have I done enough?*" *Did I obey enough of the laws? Was I good enough?*" The end result was always being a slave to the law - always afraid of the master over them which they could never please. For they sinned. They broke the law. No matter how hard, how slavishly they tried to obey all the various laws, they never could. All they could do was slavishly try to keep the law better, change the law to fit their lives, or ignore the law and

just live a godless life without any real peace or eternal security. In short, mankind became slaves to Satan, sin and eternal death in hell.

And that sinner part of it describes us, too, doesn't it? The law also has mastery over us. Even worse the law condemns us and shows us we can't be in a family with God because of our sins. We don't fit in with His holiness. Think of the loneliness and sadness of being kicked out of an earthly family. But it is far worse to be on the outside looking in at God's family where there is every good blessing! Yet, because of our relationship with the law that was our case. Our law-breaking kicks us out of God's family and ostracizes us from heaven.

But Christmas changed all that. Christmas assures us that we are God's kids. Why? "***When the time had fully come***, when the time was set by His Father, ***God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law.***" We just celebrated what it means for us that God sent Jesus to be born of a woman. Now we are also reminded of what happened when Jesus became fully human. He was born under law. Now Jesus had to obey God. Jesus had to meet God's holy and righteous demands. He had to show perfect love for God and all people. Jesus had to please God with a sinless life. And you know what the good news is, don't you? Jesus did it. He fulfilled the law. We saw this already from Jesus at age 12 in the temple. Jesus obeyed. He remained holy and sinless.

And even better is what this means for us! For Jesus came "***to redeem those under the law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.***" Jesus obeying all God's law results in holiness and redemption - for us! He redeemed us. He bought us back and freed us from our slavery to the law. Jesus kept God's law perfectly in our place. Then on the cross Jesus took upon Himself our sins. Jesus paid the penalty for all our law-breaking. Jesus suffered hell on the cross and was ostracized from God's family so that we could be a part of God's family. When Jesus comes back alive from His grave, He says: "***Hello, my brothers and sisters. You are no longer slaves to the law, but are sons of God.***" That's what Christmas means for us. Christmas is for kids.

As God's kids our relationship with the law has changed. The law is not a harsh set of rules we have to obey in order to get to heaven. Jesus, by His death and resurrection has already given us heaven. Now the law to us, as God's children, is a joyful guide we want to follow and obey. For example when I was a teenager one of my chores or jobs was to cut the lawn. If I wanted to stay in my dad's good graces I would follow his laws and do it, but too often I would moan and grumble about it because it was something I had to do. But now something has changed. If I'm back at my parents house and the lawn needs to be cut, I am more than happy to do it. Isn't that a funny change? I want to do things for my dad who over the years has done so much for me. In fact, I enjoy helping my father when I get a chance. Isn't the same true now with God's laws to our new man in us? We want to please our Father. We want to show our love to God who loves us so much.

That's because Christmas changed not only our relationship to the law, but also to the Father. Prior to faith in our redemption by Christ, the Father was to be feared. We could not stand under His requirements, His holiness. He would punish us, send us to hell because of our disobedience. Now, because of what God did at Christmas in sending our Savior, the Father is no longer to be feared. "***Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, 'Abba, Father.'***" Look at how much, in Christ, our relationship with the Father has changed. He is now our dear

Father whom we call "**Abba**," the very same word Jesus would have used. It is the word a Hebrew child would confidently use to address his loving dad. "*Abba, can you get me some juice.*" "*Abba come with me.*" "*Abba, hold my hand.*" In the same way, we are able call out to our Father "**Abba**," for our every need. We don't fear our heavenly Father because we know He loves us and cares for His kids.

Our Father also has something else in store for His children - an inheritance. He has made us heirs. "***So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.***" What is our inheritance? Peter calls it an inheritance that "***can never perish, spoil, or fade –kept for you in heaven***" (1 Peter 1). This gift is much greater than any our earthly father's could place for us under the tree! Our Christmas gift is Jesus who comes to give us eternal life with our Father in heaven.

Yes, Christmas is for kids. Christmas is for us because we are God's kids. So in this new year I pray we act like His children. Smile with delight and sing for joy at the gift of Christ who kept the law for you, and who made God your loving Father. And like children, spend this new year carrying on many conversations with God as your loving and compassionate Father who cares so much for you. Go to Him in prayer with thanksgiving. Go to Him in times of trouble. Talk to Him daily. And let Him talk to you through His Word. Come to church. Read your Bible. Let God tell you how much He loves you, and let Him teach you how to love Him and others.

The other day I was told that one of our young men here at church remarked to his parents that if he ever gets too old to love and enjoy Christmas, than he is too old to live. I pray we all feel that way! How can we not all love Christmas! What a pity it would truly be if Christmas wasn't for all of us. Thank God that it is. Thank God Christmas was about God sending "***His Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem us under law that we might receive the full rights as sons.***" Because of Christ, Christmas truly is for kids - for you, and me, and all who are God's children through faith in Christ Jesus! Amen.