

The Fullness of Time

1st after Christmas

Pastor Josh Frazee

Gal. 4:4-7

Grace, peace, and mercy be to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

There are gadgets today for just about everything. HD TVs, laptops, tablets and iPads, iPhones, Fitbit watches—the list is nearly endless. Not many years ago, you had to have a device to do each of the tasks that just one of these devices can do. Along with the capacity to take photos, guide you by satellite, and log into the internet, most cell phones these days have a stopwatch feature. Years back, the device that would count down the time was an egg timer. Some of you may still have one or two of them at your home.

For any of you too young or who simply do not know what an egg timer is, it's a device in the shape of a figure-eight. The figure-eight is connected by a thin tube with each of the circles funneling through it to the other side. Inside was some sand that would be put into it in the proper quantity to complete its passing after a certain length of time. All one had to do was turn the device upside down and the sand would start draining down the funnel, through the connector, into the empty container underneath. When the sand had completed its path to the bottom, the length of time was up.

Our Epistle text begins with a phrase that alludes to the end of a passage of time. St. Paul wrote that “when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son.” As the one who created time, God views it differently than we human beings. Yet Paul makes it clear that God had determined the proper time to send His Son into the world to save us. At Christmas—Christ’s birth—two thousand years ago, He did just that.

Turn with me to our text and we'll continue hearing what God did at just the right time.

Verse 1

As we just heard, our text begins: “(W)hen the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law...”

At Christmas two thousand years ago, the bottom half of God's egg timer was filled—it was time for His Son to be born. He sent His angel messengers to proclaim what was about to happen. One of His angel messengers was sent to Mary, a virgin, who had been chosen by God to be the mother of His Son. So it was that Jesus was “born of woman.” Following His birth, as we heard in the Gospel text, Mary and her new husband Joseph took Jesus to the Temple for the purification rites of the Law of Moses. Even though Jesus Himself had no ability to say whether He wanted to go or not, His parents made sure that He was taken to the Temple so that He was also “born under the law,” that is, that He was doing, and fulfilling, the Law.

Parents and grandparents: how are you doing at having your children obey the Law? Each of us were all born under the Law, just like Jesus. And being born under the Law means that you must live according to it in every respect. But for those with children, it's not just the responsibility of the children to do what the Law requires, but also that the parents would bring the children up doing those things which the Law demands.

So again, how are you doing at having your children obey the Law? Mary and Joseph took Jesus to be purified in the Temple. They thus fulfilled what God had commanded of them and of Jesus as a new child under the Law. But Mary and Joseph were sinners. And we are sinners. And God knew that.

That's why He sent Jesus at just the right time to be born into the world, born under a woman, born under the Law, to redeem His people from their sins. Jesus would grow up, continuing to obey every iota of the

Law, even to His very death. At His baptism, He would receive the sins of the entire world of all time, and when He died on the cross, He paid the price for all of those sins—including ours—that price being separation from God the Father, hell itself.

He would do this to redeem God's people. He also did it so that we might be adopted into God's family; and we hear in the next phrases that we have been.

Verse 2

That's what Paul wrote: he wrote that God sent His Son to redeem us "...so that we might receive adoption as sons."

Two thousand years ago, God chose us and at our baptism, God adopted us to be His children. At the time, children had no say in who adopted them. Not much has changed in two thousand years. The children being adopted today still have no say in who adopts them. Neither did we.

It doesn't matter if you were baptized as an infant—when you most certainly didn't have a say—or as an adult—when it only appeared that you had a say. That's right, even those who are baptized as adults do not choose of themselves to be baptized or to be adopted by God. No more than a person who collapses unconscious on a beach can choose to have CPR done on them or a baby choose when to come out of the mother than we can choose to have God adopt us.

Scripture says that we are "dead in our trespasses." So what can a dead person do? A dead person can no more breathe than raise a finger to be helped. And a dead person is unaware of the passage of time.

But God is fully aware of its passage. He preordained when to send His Son to this world, to be born of a woman, to be born under the Law, and to redeem us so that we might receive adoption as sons.

Now some of you might take offense that the Scriptures read "adoption as sons," but in the New Testament era, it was the boys who received the inheritance. That's why the Scriptures say we have all received adoptions as sons, because we have all received adoption as ones who will also receive God's inheritance. You can choose to have whichever child of whichever gender you desire to inherit your inheritance, but in the New Testament times, it was always the boys, so that's why it says "adoption as sons."

Verse 3

"And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba, Father!' So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God."

As the ones Jesus would redeem by His death on the cross, we have been sent God's Spirit in the Word and in the waters of baptism. It is by the power of the Holy Spirit that we begin to choose to do God's will, whether that be being baptized as ones converted as adults, or loving God and loving your neighbors, even your children.

As the ones Jesus would later redeem by His death on the cross, we have been set free from the punishment of the Law, but not the Law itself. Through God's Spirit at work in our lives, we continue to grow, and learn, and see that it is not God's Law which is evil, but the sin in us. Rather, we begin to see that the Law is holy, and just, and good, and we desire to do it.

But if you have not been a perfect father or mother, brother or sister, friend or neighbor, do not worry. God sent His Son into the world, born under a woman, born under the Law, to redeem us—you and me—from our sins. He has paid for them all on the cross of Calvary. He has paid for them at just the right time so that you and I can live as God's dear children. In Jesus' Name. Amen.