

Adapted from a sermon by **Pastor** Phil Hueber originally delivered

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The stories and memories that come from Christmas are just priceless. Mothers cherish that moment their daughter opens a personalized keepsake. Fathers fondly recall the days they stayed up well beyond midnight, assembling one of their son's new toys. All of us can remember like yesterday that one surprise gift we got when we were little, that made us do a little victory dance around the living room because we were so excited.

This is what we love about Christmastime. Christmastime is About Family. Christmastime is when we make memories with our families. It's a time to cherish those we love and those that we are close to. It's a time to be thankful for those that we call family. That's what makes Christmas-*time* so special. Christmas-*time* is About Family.

Time is something that is in God's domain. As a God who is eternal with no beginning and no end, he stands outside the bounds of time. The Bible reminds us, that with God, a day is like a thousand years and a thousand years are like a day. It is hard for humans to understand, but God is not bound by the limits of time, as he can see the past, present, and future all in the same moment. And as the one who created everything, including time, God knows the perfect timing for everything.

There is no greater example than with His Son, Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul reminds us of this in Galatians 4. He writes, "**But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son to be born of a woman,**" When the time had fully come, when the time was just right and absolutely perfect, God sent his Son.

Jesus was born at a time when the Romans were in control of most of the entire world. The Romans were very structured. They were very smart. And the Roman emperor, Caesar Augustus, wanted to know exactly how vast his kingdom had become. He wanted to know how many people he could tax. So, "Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world . . . and everyone went to his own town to register." This meant that a man named Joseph, had to take his wife-to-be, to his home town of Bethlehem to register. There Jesus was born just as Micah had prophesied 700 years earlier, to a virgin just as Isaiah prophesied 700 years earlier. This was no coincidence.

These same Romans were very strict with their laws and rules. They invented a dreadful form of capital punishment that was only for the worst of the worst—for rebels, for disgraced slaves, for awful criminals. It was called crucifixion. This was the death that

was waiting for the baby Jesus, just as Isaiah prophesied 700 years earlier and David prophesied 1,000 years earlier. This was no coincidence.

Later on, when Christians were being persecuted by the Romans, they were actually able to flee to all the corners of the earth on the very roads that the Romans had built for commerce. As they fled, they shared the good news of Jesus everywhere they went. And they were able to share the message with everyone in the world because the Greek language was still known by everyone, a remnant from Alexander the Great's kingdom before the Romans. Greek was also then, the language of the New Testament.

These things are not some strange coincidence. God, who controls all time, knew the exact and precise time for Christ to enter this world. What a wise and powerful God we have! Therefore, Paul rightly says, **“But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son to be born of a woman,”**

He was born for two important reasons. First Paul says that he was **“born under the law,”** God's laws are the things that he demands. From “You shall have no other gods” to “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy” to “You shall not commit adultery” to “You shall not steal”. These are God's commands to put God first in our lives, and to live in love toward one another, perfectly!

There's an interesting App that came out many years ago. The App was a Santa counter. Every time your child did something naughty you press a bad button. Every time your child did something nice you pressed the nice button. So, if the display color was green, then the scale is weighing toward the nice, but if the color was red, the child had done more things that are naughty.

We won't even try to analyze the issues with a Santa naughty or nice meter. But imagine if God used this little piece of software to track everything you have done. What if God tracked on an iPhone, all the times that you have been naughty? It's a good thing he is God, because only he would be able to press the naughty button fast enough!

But I don't need a mobile phone App to tell me. I've done plenty of bad things in my life—things I would never want you to know about. There have also been plenty of times that I have not done good things in my life - I was too apathetic, too afraid, or just failed to do God's will. This means that I have broken God's laws. I have broken the law more times than an iPhone could ever count. You have too. That means that we are sinners.

But this is why Jesus came into the world. He came to be “born under the law.” He came to be subjected to all the same demands and commands as everyone else. The difference is that Jesus is God. He came to do it perfectly. He came to live under his

Father's laws and fulfill every command and to obey every demand. He came to live a perfect life in our place. That's the first part, of Jesus' purpose and our salvation.

Paul continues: "God sent his Son to be born of a woman, born under the law, **to redeem those under the law.**" The second part of our salvation is redemption. Jesus lived the perfect life for us that God demands, but our sins still needed to be settled.

God says that, "the wages of sin is death."

God says that, "The soul who sins is the one who will die."

There is a price to pay and a punishment for disobeying a righteous God.

It's death and hell.

You see, Santa's tracker App is so misleading. If you do naughty things in life, if you commit sins, you don't just get a flashing red light that says, "You're naughty." You don't lose out on Christmas presents from a jolly old man in a red suit. The reality is that if you sin and disobey God, you die and go to hell.

This is where redemption comes in. Jesus gave his life so that he could be our substitute. He carried the guilt of our sins. He suffered the fiery torture of hell. He died. That is God's demand. When there is sin, there must be death and bloodshed. So that is what Jesus did. He shed his blood and died to pay for all sins. In doing so, he redeemed us.

What remarkable and unimaginable love from our God! At just the right time, he "sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law." God sent Jesus into this world at the perfect time to save us through his perfect life, and his suffering and death in our place.

The result is mind-boggling. Listen to Paul, "When the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, **that we might receive the full rights of sons.**" The result of our redemption through Jesus Christ is that we have been adopted into God's own family. He considers us to be his own dearly loved sons and daughters.

Paul continues, "**Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, 'Abba,' Father.**" God the Holy Spirit has worked in our hearts to create faith and trust in Jesus. Through that faith we have been adopted as children. And having the privilege of being called children, we can call our God "Abba" or "Father." Abba was an Aramaic term of endearment for fathers. So, in other words, we can call out with love and trust to God, as a little child calls out to his father here in this world.

Everyone who is a parent here knows the passion that they have for their children. A parent will do anything for their children—defend them, protect them, provide for them, give their life for them. How much more hasn't our Father in heaven done for us! He defends us, guides us, provides for us, and protects us. He even sent his Son to give his life for us. It gives new and special meaning to praying, "Our Father in heaven."

Even better, there is a special privilege that comes with being God's own dear children. Paul mentions it in the last verse: "**So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.**" We used to be slaves. We used to be slaves to sin, bound and chained to the wrongs that we have done and destined to die in the prison called hell. But having been redeemed through Jesus Christ, we are no longer slaves. We are his children. And as his children we now have also become heirs.

Heirs always receive a gift. They didn't do anything special to get that gift. It was simply willed to them. When a person dies, that gift is transferred to the inheritor.

When Jesus died, the gift of forgiveness was willed to us. The gift of a new spiritual life was given to us. The gift of eternal life in heaven became our inheritance to receive. There is nothing special that we have done. There is nothing that we did to get. It is our free gift through Jesus Christ.

We love Christmastime because we love family time. We love to spend time with those whom we love. We love to enjoy the company of those whom we call family.

God planned it the exact same way! Christmastime is About Family! God sent his Son Jesus to be born into this world so that he could live for us and die for us, and thus make us part of his family! Celebrate Christmastime! Have fun with your families. Even better, celebrate Christmastime this year because God has made you part of his family! **Amen.**

Please stand

Now may God our Father, fill your heart with complete joy and peace as members of His Family, so that you overflow with confidence by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen