

Devotion for December 24, 2023 – Lessons and Carols Christmas Service

Galatians 4:4–5 (EHV)

There certainly is a lot to be said about timing – especially God’s timing. For example, I often felt at wit’s end, only to have something happen inadvertently to cheer me up at just the right moment. Haven’t you experienced something similar? Many people claim such encounters are just “lucky coincidences.” Hogwash. Such encounters are acts of God’s providence: not only giving me what I need but also when I need it most!

Yes, even if we do not immediately recognize it in our misery, God’s timing is always perfect. One of the best examples of this is Christmas: how the LORD waited patiently throughout human history so his Son could be born at just the right time to accomplish our salvation.

The apostle Paul writes:

*But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son to be born of a woman, so that he would be born under the law, in order to redeem those under the law, so that we would be adopted as sons.*

What exactly is the “set time” mentioned by Paul, and what does it mean that it has fully come? The set time is the exact moment in history when the LORD chose to have His Son born into the world to save us from the hell we deserve.

You see, ever since Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, humanity has been utterly corrupted by sin and enslaved to Satan. And what binds us to the devil? The guilt of our sins, which we are utterly incapable of removing. Because of this, we deserve the LORD’s righteous wrath and eternal punishment in hell.

Yes, we all are truly in need of a Saviour. Want proof? Tune into any news program to hear how messed up our world has become. Better yet, crack open your Bible to the Ten Commandments (recorded in Exodus 20) and meditate on how well you have kept them – remembering that the Bible says that *whoever keeps the whole law but stumbles in one point has become guilty of breaking all of it.* (James 2:10 EHV)

Harassed, helpless, and doomed to hell with no hope of salvation: that would have been our future had not God had mercy on Adam and Eve after their fall.

Thankfully, the LORD pitied not only them but all the people after them. He foresaw all the heartache and grief our sins would cause and, despite it all, devised a plan to save us. At just the right time, he would send his only begotten Son into the world. He would live a life of perfect obedience to God’s law, thereby winning the righteousness we need to stand before Him. His Son would also take all our sins upon himself – suffering the just punishment we deserved because of them. By doing that, the LORD would free us from our spiritual captivity to Satan. He would reconcile us to Himself – covering us with His Son’s righteousness and adopting us as His dearly loved children through faith in Jesus.

This is why – almost immediately after Adam and Eve sinned - God promised to send a special offspring of Eve, who would crush the serpent’s head (that is to say, render Satan powerless over us).

As the centuries passed after God made that promise, the devil did his best to tempt believers to doubt it. “Is God sending a Saviour? Look at how much time has gone by! Maybe the LORD doesn’t exist. Or maybe He doesn’t care about you.”

During times of severe temptation and trouble, God sent prophets to encourage his people to keep on trusting in Him. Little did they realize that the LORD was working through all the chaos of history to get everything ready so that His Son could fulfill all Scripture and win the salvation He promised.

And, when the right time came, God acted: He sent his Son, who is in very nature God, to be born of a Virgin so that he could be human, like us. Being born under the law, Jesus served as our redeemer, perfectly keeping God’s law in our place. He also served as our redeemer by allowing himself to be punished for our sins on the cross. Because Jesus did these things, the devil can no longer condemn us before God. Why not? Because Christ fulfilled the requirements of the law for us and paid for our sins in full. We are free.

Just think: the sinless Son of God (who is entirely free) became like us (subject to God’s law) so that we (who were enslaved under law) might become like him (sinless, free and at peace with the Father). Not only that, but the LORD has also adopted us as His children through faith in His Son – making us every bit heirs of heaven as Jesus himself. Yes, when the time God set for Christ’s second coming arrives, we will fully experience just how much God loves us. We will enter everlasting glory as his adopted children.

There certainly is a lot to be said about timing – especially God’s timing. Even though we might not understand his schedule – wondering why he sometimes lets us linger in our sufferings - one thing we can know for sure: God will always fulfill his Word at just the right time. Let us ponder this fact throughout the rest of our service: reflecting upon the Gospel promises God made throughout the centuries and seeing how he fulfilled them through the birth of His Son. Amen.