

Rev. Seth D. Bode †† Sermon 352, 12-29-2019 †† Christmas 1

“Lord God, you have appointed me as pastor in your Church, but you see how unsuited I am to meet so great and difficult a task. If I had lacked your help, I would have ruined everything long ago. Therefore, I call upon you: I wish to devote my mouth and my heart to you; I shall teach the people. I myself will learn and ponder diligently upon your Word. Use me as your instrument – but do not forsake me, for if ever I should be on my own, I would easily wreck it all.”

“Sir, we would see Jesus.”

Galatians 4

⁴But 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, ⁵in order to redeem those under the law, so that we would be adopted as sons. ⁶And because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts to shout, “Abba, Father!” ⁷So you are no longer a slave, but a son. And if you are a son, then you are also an heir of God through Christ.



A father had just settled into his recliner on Sunday afternoon, looking forward to wading through the newspaper. Yes, he could get it all online, but the dad liked the old feel of paper and smell of ink. Just then his 5-year-old son came scampering into the room. “Daddy, daddy! Can you play with me?”

The father tried to be gentle in his response, “Daddy wants to read the paper for a while.” The boy rumbled off, but not for long. “Daddy, can we play NOW?” “Not now, please. I would like to finish my paper.” The boy stomped off, but suddenly popped in between his father’s legs. “Please, daddy, can we play now?”

The father noticed his paper included a map of the world, so he grabbed a scissors and cut the map into about twenty pieces. He led his son to the kitchen table and told him to put the puzzle of the world together. “When you finish the puzzle, then I’ll play with you,” the father promised. He knew this would take some time, but ...

Not five minutes had passed when the child burst back into the room. “Daddy, I am through with the puzzle. Let’s play!”

“What? You finished already?” asked the father. He got up and went to the kitchen table to look. Sure enough, the puzzle was complete, with every piece in its proper place. “How did you ever do this so fast? Where did you learn to solve the whole world?”

“It was easy, Daddy. You see, on the back of the map of the world was a picture of a person. I decided to put the person together, and when I did that, the whole world seemed to fit right into place.”

The same is true of God. How would the Son of God solve the whole world’s problems? These weren’t just cut apart as a game or distraction. The whole world was cut apart by sin and death and the power of the devil. *We are all sinners and by nature the children of wrath* (Eph. 2:3).

As it turned out, there were many factors we could discuss today that cued God’s master plan. We could cite ...

- The common language of Greek;
- the peace of the Roman empire;
- the ability to travel;
- the dispersion of the Jews throughout all the world;
- all these set the stage to put in motion the greatest plan ever devised.

However, even greater than all of these things was the person who took shape. Every prophetic promise was in place. With a careful reading of the Old Testament, you could point out the most important things that one person had to be in order to solve the world’s puzzle, to be ... **God’s Master Plan**.

In our text, St. Paul defines Jesus Christ very carefully. He wanted each of us to learn purely the true doctrine of this person. What kind of person was the puzzle piece as God fit together the world’s solution?

- Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the son of a woman.
 - (The incarnation happened through a true human birth.)
- He was made under Law, to redeem those under the Law.
- He wanted His Father to adopt children of wrath as His sons & daughters.

What joy that this was the missing puzzle piece! True God and true man came to judge, condemn, fulfill and kill the power of the old Law over us.

Martin Luther calls this a “wonderful combat.” The Law normally binds a sinner to punishment and obedience. Here the Law, being a creature, attempted to assault its Creator. Against all rights and equity, the Law practiced tyranny against the Son of God. By accusing and sentencing the Son of God, the Law experienced a reverse effect. It was only supposed to convict sinners; but the Son of God is no sinner! *“Christ committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth”* (1 Pet. 2:22). But that would bring the Law to commit an injustice. So the Law is condemned and vanquished. It loses its whole claim and right over Jesus Christ.

Part of the plan had to be the payment of punishment. When Jesus was made a man, the plan was to sacrifice His life. To snap this puzzle piece into our place would mean He assumes our liabilities & responsibilities, and it would cost Him. The path of the manger-babe ran straight from Bethlehem to temptation to Gethsemane, to Calvary, and to Joseph’s garden. God imputed to Christ our sin, guilt, and punishment. That means they are credited to Him: all our wrongdoings and trespasses; all the heaviness of our hearts in the wake of sin; and all the just punishment we deserved.

The office of Christ was **not** to bring a new Law and **not** to abolish the old Law (John 8:15, 12:47). Jesus did not come to be a Lawgiver or a tyrant or more terrible than Moses. Nor did He come to reverse out the commands of God.

Now if the Law lost its claim and right over Jesus Christ, it loses every claim and right on the ones for whom He died. The Law loses its claim and right on all who believe in Jesus. *“Come unto Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and you shall find rest for your souls”* (Matt. 11:28-29).

Jesus invites you to the manger, but not just to marvel at the adorable child. Plunge your conscience into the wounds, blood, death, resurrection, and victory of Christ the Savior. Besides Him I will see nothing. Besides Him I will hear nothing. *“We are all sinners and by nature the children of wrath”* (Eph. 2:3). *“Christ committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth”* (1 Pet. 2:22).

As we have been declared righteous, we have been adopted as sons. At the same time, God offers us the gift of the Holy Spirit. Romans 8:14, *“You who are of the Spirit of God are sons of God.”*

Those who are offered the Spirit are given these words, a change of speech, “*Abba, Father!*” These are little words, but they comprehend all things. They surpass all the eloquence of the wise. No tongue can really capture what “*Abba, Father!*” must mean. “*Abba, Father!*” is no work of human reason, no power of man, no human will or desire. This prayer that erupts from our hearts in a shout is a gift of the Holy Spirit. This is how the Spirit operates.

“*Abba, Father!*” are two words for the Father, in both Aramaic and Greek. The whole people of God are called out of changed Jews and Gentiles. They have been brought together and unified in faith.

The Holy Spirit comes with the Word preached; He purifies our hearts by faith; and He brings forth spiritual motions in us. If anyone feels in himself a love of the Word, and willingly hears, talks, writes, and thinks about Jesus Christ, it is a gift of the Holy Spirit.

It is important for us to be fully persuaded we are under grace and that we have the Holy Spirit. If we feel any wavering or doubting, we must wrestle with our faith and labor to gain strength and assurance in the gospel.

The reason I know this is important is also in the text. If the Spirit was in our hearts to SAY or TELL or SPEAK, “*Abba, Father!*” or to PRAY it or even CALL it, we might think we join the Holy Spirit in these words with all kinds of confidence. But the word is “SHOUT” or “CRY OUT,” “*Abba, Father!*” This sets forth the temptation of the Christian; that we are weak and believe with weakness.

In Romans 8, the SHOUT or CRYING OUT of the Holy Spirit is an unutterable GROANING. The Holy Spirit is given to those who are afflicted, terrified, and ready to despair. He is given to raise them up and to comfort them. God gives us His Spirit so that we are not overcome by temptations and afflictions, but that we may overcome them, even if we have to pass through great terrors and troubles.

These are words that only sons say, not slaves. They aren’t words that come from a servile fear of being bound again by a different cruel master. They are words that recognize God as our true Love and Helper in all things.

Do you want to approach your Father with a right conscience, in full joy? See how the world is solved in Jesus’ name, Amen.