

# Sermon for The First Sunday after Christmas

**Date:** December 27, 2021

**Location:** St. John's Lutheran Church, Austin, MN

**Old Testament:** Isaiah 61:10–62:3

**Epistle Reading:** Galatians 4:4–7

**Gospel Reading:** Luke 2:22–40

**Sermon Text:** Galatians 4:4–7

**Sermon Title:** No Longer Slaves



## Hymns:

LSB 389 – Let All Together Praise Our God

LSB 384 – Of the Father's Love Begotten

LSB 546 – O Jesus So Sweet, O Jesus So Mild

## Liturgy:

Divine Service III, p. 184

## Songs:

Angels We Have Heard On High

Of the Father's Love Begotten

Savior of the Nations Come

## Liturgy:

Creative Worship



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## **Text: Galatians 4:4–7**

When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. 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.

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Grace, mercy and peace to you from our Savior Jesus. Amen.

In some parts of the world, there's a custom that can help us celebrate the ongoing celebration of Christmas. December 26 is still in many places observed as Boxing Day. A tradition is that on Boxing Day wealth landlords would present gifts to their servants. At least in some small way, the roles of master and servant were reversed, with the master offering a sort of service to the servants.

In the Epistle reading we hear about the Master giving a gift to his servants that truly does reverse the traditional roles. The Master gives His Son so the servants actually become sons and heirs themselves. We might think of this First Sunday after Christmas as a spiritual Boxing Day. By the Master, God the Father, sending His Son, you are no longer a servant.

Jesus was born so we could be free. That freedom is for every repentant sinner who humbly comes before our Lord saying, "God be merciful to me a poor and sinful being." We were born slaves, even enemies of God. We had no hope. Jesus was born to give us hope. Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.<sup>1</sup> How sad it is that some would hold on to, harbor and hoard hate and slavery to sin and sin's master Satan, when such freedom has been give to us in Christ. They remain in the grip of that grotesque and dark evil beast rather than bask in the Light of Christ, and the freedom He provides.

That is where we were. We were slaves. Paul teaches us we were "enslaved to the elementary principles of the world."<sup>2</sup> That being, "You've got to earn your own way." That's the way of the world. If you want a paycheck get a job. If you want groceries earn money and take a trip to the grocery store. You might be able to buy on credit, but the bill always comes.

What happens if you can't pay? Proverbs 22 teaches, "the borrower is the slave of the lender."<sup>3</sup> If you think you own your house, skip some mortgage payments and see what happens. As long as you're in debt you are a slaves to paying the bill. Sometimes someone will let you cut a deal and reduce the debt, but that doesn't happen very often.

If we had to cut our own deal with God, we'd have to buy God's love. We'd have to earn His grace. We'd have to work for His love. The problem is the cost is too high. Just think of the total. What if you had to pay a dollar for every evil thought. What if you had to pay a dollar for every lie you told. What if you had to pay a dollar for every time you withheld Christian love, care and concern. At a

1 Hebrews 11:1  
2 Galatians 4:3  
3 Proverbs 22:7

buck a sin you'd be drowning in debt in days. Left to ourselves we end up like the guy who is using a shovel to dig himself out of a hole too deep to climb out.

That hole is already in a place called the Pit. It is home to Satan and his hoard. A place no human was ever meant to see. Our sin is the shovel and with it we just keep digging deeper and deeper, with no way out.

That's why Jesus came. He didn't reach down to pull us up out of the hole we'd dug. He jumped in with us. There He pulled out a much bigger shovel and dug Himself into the tomb of the cross and death. That's why He came. That was the plan. He was born in a stable, born under the Law, taking our place as a slave to keeping the Law, a slave to the debt we have built.

Remember who Jesus is. He is Lord of all that is. He is our Master. He is our King, but our King reverses the role with us, taking our place under the Law, fulfilling it, and paying the price for our breaking it. Then He marked us as one redeemed, bought back. That mark is what you received at your Baptism. There you were transformed from a slave to a saint. That water washed away your debt, and you were adopted into God's family.

As a member of the family you have all the rights and privileges of the family. You are an heir. God has put His name on you. You have the right to approach the Throne of God as His child, not as a slave. We can ask God for the things we need as a child asks, with confidence in His love, not as a slave hoping for His love.

The relationship we have with our heavenly Father is closer than most of us tend to imagine. We have the closest possible relationship to our God. Jesus taught His disciples to call God "Father," we have the privilege of calling him "Abba, Father." That relationship is closer still. Many of you can remember teaching your children to pray. You taught them to pray at meals, and before going to bed. As good parents you prayed for them as well. For their well being, and for them because they don't know the words, or how to pray. The Holy Spirit does that for us.

He prays with groans too deep for words. He who searches hearts knows... the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.<sup>4</sup>

This is why the Commandment stating, "Honor your father and your mother"<sup>5</sup> teaches that parents stand in the place of God over their children. With God as the example we raise children like God raises us. Though we fail often, and we

4 Romans 8:26-27

5 Exodus 20:12

struggle to always do the right things, we are to teach them, and bring them to the Christian faith, with God's help. You do that because you love them. God does that for us because He loves us. As parents you provide for, and protect, your children because you love them. God will provide and protect us for the same reason.

In fact when it comes to children the responsibility is profound. Listen to Jesus speak about children.

Whoever receives a child in My name receives Me, but whoever causes one of these little ones... to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe to the world for temptations to sin! Temptations will come, but woe to the one by whom the temptation comes!<sup>6</sup>

Grave warnings. Grave warnings to teach children diligently and faithfully. Grave warnings meant to keep you out of the grave called the Pit. Grave warnings to lead children safely home to Heaven.

Why? Because the lessons of life are often lessons about heaven. As you are a parent, God is our parent. God's expression of love for us should hold us in awe and wonder. That we would be called children and heirs of God. We live in that heir-ship now. We, as repentant sinners, live under the privileges of being part of the family. Members of the family are forgiven, loved and saved.

We can look forward to an eternal inheritance. Not the kinds of things you inherit here in this life. A house, car, bank accounts and stuff. From God you inherit life, life eternal. You get to live in the House of God forever. Who gives this kind of thing to a slave? We are no longer slaves. We are free in Jesus, because of Jesus. Because He came as a little babe, in a little burg, called Bethlehem.

One day a year, Boxing Day makes a fine tradition. The master reversing roles with his servants. Our Christmas celebration isn't a once a year thing. It isn't a two day thing, or a twelve days of Christmas thing. It is an eternal thing. Because Jesus reversed roles with us, taking our place as slaves under the Law, we can celebrate every day. We can cling to our Baptism every day, every moment, because of the Babe of Bethlehem.

Amen.

6 Matthew 18:5-7 (*Paraphrased*)

**Proclaim God's Word,  
Encourage one another in faith,  
Witness to God's love and  
Serve all people**

