**Born Under The Law**

**Galatians 4:1-7 &**

**Luke 2:22-40**

Sunday after Christmas – 01.01.2023

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

Before I go too far, let me wish you a very Blessed and Merry 8th day of CHRISTmass.

I was on my way home from Green Bay one evening listening to the pundits on sports radio dissect the Packer game, when flashing red and blue lights reflected brightly in the rearview mirror. What do you think was the first thing that happened?

I’ll let you ponder that a bit. But before I tapped the break to shut off the cruise control and slow down, I did glance at the speedometer. The officer came up to the window and asked if I knew why he’d stopped me. looked him square in the eye and said, “No, I have no clue.”

He said, “Well, you have a headlight out. I’m not going to write you a ticket, but a warning, you need to get it taken care of as soon as possible.” So, as you were pondering, yes, I was a bit nervous as I sat there waiting for him to get to my window.

When we 21st Century Americans think of the law, that is often the direction that our mind wanders. Is that what is mean in our Epistle lesson when Paul writes, *But 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.*

Well, in part.

You all know the Christmas Gospel which speaks of the decree for the first census under Caesar Augustus. God in human flesh subjected Himself to human law, going to Bethlehem in the womb of His mother. The Creator of all, who sustains all that exists, who gives authority to rulers and governments, as an infant in the womb subjects Himself to the very authorities He put in place.

We should learn from this that we too are to submit ourselves to the laws of our land and the form of government in place. This means we obey what the law decrees. And, as our government grants us a voice, we should exercise it. It is our way of rendering unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s.

Do you? While Roe-v-Wade has been overturned, imagine Mary pregnant in 2023 in the U.S. The debate about the Divine gift of life – in the womb and at the end of life’s spectrum – still continues. How tempted might Mary have been by friends who encourage her to travel to a state which allows abortion on demand? End the pregnancy so you can keep Joseph and not be embarrassed. There are many who still erroneously believe that the question about pregnancy is all about whether it is convenient to the life situation of the mother-- if they can support it, if they want it, if it isn’t a burden.

For all those who have had children, we could all claim they were an inconvenience to our life and yes, they were a burden. Not much in life is convenient – and most of the things we face are challenges, burdens multiply daily. We could say the same about our spouse, our job, our home, our cars, our…whatever.

Children are also a joy! Children are a gracious gift of God! But the negatives we see in the bearing of children – as well as in spouses and all of God’s gifts – are seen as negatives because of our sinfulness.

So it was that while God sent forth His Son to be under human law, He also subjected Him to Divine Law. In our Gospel lesson, we learn that *when the time came for their purification* (that is, the purification of Mary and her infant Son, He who is also the Son of God) *according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord”) and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, “a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.”*

The purpose for purification is to be cleansed of sin. Mary’s Son was without sin, so there was no reason for Him to be purified. Mary needed to be purified, made holy, but Christ did not. As an infant, holy and pure, Jesus came to Jerusalem and fulfilled the requirements of the God’s Ceremonial Law.

Jesus and His family went to Jerusalem, *And when they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth.*

God’s Law places requirements upon us and our lives today, and we are swift to be obedient to obey them and fulfill what God requires, right? Or do we too often look for the loopholes to wiggle out of God’s Law. We can come to church occasionally, that’s good enough. We can pray once in a while, just so we don’t forget forever. As long as we have a Bible, it doesn’t matter if we read it and follow it.

Do we follow God’s Law for our life, just like we set the cruise control at 72 hoping that while we are really breaking the law, it is close enough that the officer running radar on 29 will just let us slide?

If such were the case with God, would God have 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? Wouldn’t it have been easier to just let us slide – than to allow His Son to suffer at the hands of evil men and finally be crucified?

For four more days, we get to celebrate CHRISTmass. It is a twelve-day season beginning on Christmas Day and ending on Epiphany. It is a twelve-day celebration of the fact that God took on human flesh. That infant Child, so precious and innocent, wrapped in swaddling clothes is brought into the temple today. While we are still rejoicing in His birth, that God would come and submit Himself in perfect obedience to the Law is simply amazing.

What a wonderful thing this is. God knows what your life is like – from the womb, through childhood, agonizing adolescence, the turbulent teen years, to adulthood – He knows your life in human flesh. He understands the betrayal of family and friends. He has shed tears at the death of a friend and bemoaned the fact that He was misunderstood.

When you wonder why we suffer under trial and tribulation, and ask if God understands, remember the manger and swaddling clothes and ask, “Did this child deserve to suffer the anguish of death on a cross?”

Born under the Law to redeem you and me, Christ did all, under the law, to fulfill all righteousness for you and me. He kept the Law in your stead and in mine and sacrificed His righteousness unto death, that He might give His righteousness to you and me.

Your adoption papers were drawn up, delivered and sealed in the waters of baptism. You were made a Son, for you were united to Christ. And if you are a son, then you are an heir of God. Everything that is God’s is yours, for in Christ, you and I have kept the Law.

Why are you here today? Are you here to fulfill the Law? Are you here to do your duty for God? Is this where you come to let everybody see what a good Christian you are? Is your presence here your way of saying to God, “see, I came today, mark it down on the calendar”?

If any of these are correct, you’re here for all the wrong reasons. That’s the law, and when you make the Law your purpose for being in church you fail every time you walk through those doors.

Yes, God demands that you do so, but for another reason. This is where Christ comes to you. Here you celebrate the gift of Christmas. That first Christmas, wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger was almighty God, hidden in the appearance of an infant child.

In our text, we read about Simeon. He was in the temple that day. He was a man under the Law. He knew and felt the weight of His sins. He was waiting for God’s salvation to come in the Lord’s Christ. In walked Joseph and Mary, holding the child Jesus.

Simeon saw through the disguise and recognized his salvation from sin hidden in the flesh and blood of that little Child. Having taken His Redeemer in his arms, he blessed God, saying, “*Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.”*

Do you recognize your salvation? Do you recognize your freedom from the Law? Do you see with the eyes of faith that God visits you and brings to you forgiveness, life,

 and salvation? Do you see God’s Christ?

You get the words right, singing Simeon’s words after you have eaten and drunk the holy food Christ places before you. Do you see past the outward forms of your pastor’s voice, the simple wafer, and the drink of wine? Do you hear Christ forgive sins? Do you eat of His flesh pierced for you and drink of His blood given for you?

You were born under the Law, but you have been redeemed from that way of life. You have been adopted and made a part of God’s holy family unto life everlasting. Today one more present has been unwrapped for you. Merry CHRISTmass. Amen.