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Christmas I
December 28, 2025
Text: Galatians 4:4 – 7
Title: Timing

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. It happened back in 1964. A group of musicians with a sound that was pretty popular to the time found a song written in 1959 by a man named Pete Seeger. The lyrics impressed this folk rock band, and they decided to record it on the album that they were working on. After the album was finished, the decision was made to release Seeger's song in the latter part of the following year. That's how it happened that towards the end of 1965, the band called "The Byrds" released one of their biggest number one hits, a song called "Turn, Turn, Turn" that can still be heard on certain radio stations today.

It's one of the ironies of history that during an era like the '60's when our society was in turmoil in so many different ways, including religiously, that a song taken almost word for word from the Bible would be the most popular in the country. Many people today still don't realize that with the exception of the refrain and a couple of other minor lines, the lyrics for this hit song were taken almost directly from the Bible in the first half of Ecclesiastes chapter 3. This is a section of God's Word that is telling us that everything happens at just the proper time, according to the way that God has timed it and planned it.

And with Christmas Day now past us many people turn their focus to the passing of time with the end of the calendar year. So it's fitting that we look at how the Scriptures view this unique part of God's Creation that we call "time." This Wednesday, on New Year's Eve, we'll look back on the year that has just passed, and we'll anticipate and celebrate the year that is to

come. It is a time to think about the blessings and challenges that we have experienced, and to anticipate and hope for a better time in the year ahead.

But that's not for a couple of days yet. Until then, we Christians face yet one more challenge from the fallen world around us. In spite of what the stores and television and radio stations may believe, Christmas isn't over yet. The proper time of celebrating the Incarnation of Jesus is still here. In fact, it doesn't end until January 6th, but by now the world around us seems to be trying to bury any evidence that Christmas even happened, almost as though they were embarrassed by acknowledging it at all. The media stations have given their annual nod to the so-called "spirit of Christmas" with carols and holiday specials played ad nauseum, and in the next couple of days you probably won't see or hear a single thing to remind you that Christmas even occurred.

It's amazing that with all of the hype and preparation that goes on for this one day of the year that people believe that it should just come to a screeching halt on December 26th. We began hearing Christmas music played in the stores as early as November 1st. Now it's nowhere to be found except on personal recordings, and in a few churches such as ours. This dark world is so desperate for a glimmer of light that it can't wait to get to Christmas, but then it blocks it out just as soon as it can because the brightness of the reality of Christ is simply too much.

Our society has taken the celebration of the Savior's birth, and made it into its own warped image. The "Christmas spirit" has nothing to do with the Holy Spirit pointing us to the Christ child whose destiny is linked to the cross, but with something vague and nostalgic that makes us feel good about ourselves and the stuff that we get or give. Instead of the joy of God's Word made into the flesh of Jesus Christ and dwelling among us being good enough for us, we strive to get "into the spirit" with emotions generated by our favorite traditions. News reports

have focused on how well the stores have been doing financially, and they continue to make a concentrated effort to remind everyone that there are celebrations at this time of year other than Christmas, even as they question the biblical facts of this historic event.

With everything in such a whirlwind all around us each December, it's hard to remember that we as Christians live a life that is different from everyone else. This month is a perfect example. Up until Christmas Eve, we have observed a time of repentance and self-reflection as we prepared for the birth of Jesus, but in the eyes of the world, that time isn't necessary so it's ignored altogether. Today the church celebrates the first Sunday of Christmas as well as remembering what history has referred to as the Holy Innocents – the children murdered by Herod in his rage against the Magi and Jesus. The world has already forgotten what we are still celebrating, if they even remembered it at all. On Wednesday, as I've already said, the world will observe the beginning of a new year, but we in the church are already through more than a month of our year. When it comes to the things of God, time is an entirely different matter.

That's one of the key points of this morning's Epistle text from Galatians 4. Paul was inspired to write, "But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of woman, born under the law..." God doesn't fulfill His promises until the time is perfect, regardless of what we may think or desire. Consider the example of Abraham in the book of Genesis. God had promised a son to him and his wife, Sarah. This promise was to be fulfilled when God was ready to fulfill it. However, not trusting in God's time and promise, Abraham had a child by Sarah's servant, Hagar, and the Lord did indeed give Abraham a son. But God made it clear that this was not how or when He intended to fulfill His promise. The result was a family feud that was so bitter that Sarah demanded that Abraham send away Hagar and her son, Ishmael into the desert.

One of the most common sins that you and I commit happens when we try to force God to act in our time instead of His. That's what Abraham and Sarah did with Hagar, and we still do it today. We think that we know best when it comes to deciding when God should help us out of trouble and even when He should send us His blessings. The old joke that says, "Dear Lord, please give me patience, and I want it right now!" says it well. We decide that there is something that we want or need, then we pray for it and then we sit back and expect it to happen almost immediately. Then, when it doesn't happen, we blame God for not being faithful to us and for not keeping His promises.

Our sinful nature's desire to be in control leads us to this point on a regular basis without us even realizing it. We devote our time to doing things for ourselves rather than for others, and when we have finished focusing on ourselves, we find that we have no energy or desire left to devote to the needs of others. The same thing happens in our relationship with God. We allow our time to be taken up by any number of things – sleep, work, sports, family or just about anything else – rather than spend even a minimal amount of time in prayer and devotion to our Lord. We are slaves to our sinful nature, and we have no opportunity to escape our slavery or to earn our freedom no matter how hard we try.

But that's the beauty of the Gospel at this and every other time of the year! God knew that you were enslaved to sin, and He knew that the only way the chains of that slavery would be broken was to send His Son to take your place and to break those chains for you. From the first sin in the Garden of Eden, God promised to send a Savior into the world, and it took several thousand years for Him to fulfill that promise. But in the fullness of time – in other words, when the timing was absolutely perfect – God kept that promise and sent Jesus for you and for me.

It's because of the patient grace of God Himself that it took so long to fulfill that first promise. The fullness of time arrived that first Christmas morning over 2000 years ago. It was then that the time was right for God's plan of salvation for the entire world to become more than just a promise. With that tiny child in the humble little town called Bethlehem, God's plan for humanity's salvation finally began, and it was completed about 33 years later when that same child who had led a life that perfectly fulfilled the requirements of God's Law was crucified as a sacrifice for your sins. The timing was just right, and when that happened, Galatians tells us that you and I were set free from the Law, no longer slaves to sin.

Instead, we all became adopted sons and daughters of God which makes us full heirs of the kingdom of God, and to the Roman mind that Paul was writing too that's an absolute thing. God has decided that because His only Son, Jesus, is worthy of Him, that His Son's perfection would be applied to every faithful Christian, even you and me, and therefore, He has declared us His adopted children and heirs.

He first claimed you as His own when the water was poured over your head in Holy Baptism, and you were marked with the cross and His name, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. From that day on, you have received parts of your inheritance from Him. You were given faith at Baptism. It has been nurtured and fed by His Word, and it continues to grow even stronger through His Sacrament of Holy Communion, even as the power of Baptism remains within you and keeps you connected to the hope and promise of the resurrection. It's all about that, my dear Christian friends, at the perfect point in time, this tiny baby whose birth we celebrate every year was born to die, so that He could rise again from the grave and defeat death forever for us, making us His own once again. Amen. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.