

Lost But Not Forgotten

Galatians 4:1-20

Introduction

- Lost Mail
 - A card or letter sent originally several years ago, just reaches its destination
 - By now, the message is mute- the person who the letter was addressed to has either moved or died
 - Reading the letter is like reading a time capsule
 - Not only has the message been lost, but it has been forgotten
- The Christmas story has the potential to suffer the same fate
 - An important message that gets lost with the passage of time and forgotten by the people it was sent to save
 - The Christmas story tells us of God's Special Delivery of His Son into the world
 - It reminds us that we are the one's who are lost BUT God has not forgotten us
- Today on this first Sunday of Advent, we will begin a new sermon series: *Special Delivery*
 - Each of the messages in this series will focus on why Jesus was sent
 - Although Jesus was born in a manger, Jesus has existed from the beginning of time
 - Jesus' birth was not some haphazard event produced by humans, but instead it was a carefully orchestrated event that was all part of God's plan
 - As we revisit the timeless message of Christmas, I hope that we will rediscover God's love for us and how we might play a part in God's redemptive plan.
- **Galatians 4:1-20**
 - Background
 - Abraham's Sons
 - Isaac (Sarah)- the heir
 - Ishmael (Hagar)- the slave
 - Abraham's sin separated him from his son and also from God's will
 - However, in an act of grace God did not forget Ishmael- Ishmael may have been lost but he was not forgotten by God.
 - **Galatians 3:28-29**
 - Galatians Problem
 - **Galatians 1:6 (ESV), "I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel."**
 - **Galatians 4:3 (ESV), "enslaved to the elementary principles of the world."**
 - Message has been lost and forgotten
 - Paul's message to the Galatians is to remind that while God's message may get lost, God has not forgotten them.
- We go through seasons in life
 - At times we get blown around by the circumstances, struggles and opportunities we experience

- We have a tendency to lose our way because we forget the message
- Christmas reminds us of God's Special Delivery- the message is that while we might be lost, God sent His Son to let us know that He has not forgotten us.

Faith Comes With A Responsibility

- **Galatians 4:1-3**
- When I was a young kid my parents set up a college fund for me.
 - While the money was mine, there were some expectations and boundaries for what this fund could be spent on.
 - It was called a "college fund" for a reason!
 - I can remember going to the bank and each time money was deposited into this "college fund" I had to sign a paper that said, "I cannot withdraw money from this account unless my legal guardian was present."
- The Galatians have been given an inheritance
 - They are heirs to the promise of salvation
 - But they have become slaves because they have forgotten the message
 - Elementary Principles of the World **Vs. 3 & 9**
 - Temptation to return to what we know
 - Blown around by the circumstances, struggles and opportunities
 - Forget the message and find ourselves lost
 - Squandering the inheritance
 - Why we need the grace and guidance of our Heavenly Father to protect our inheritance
- Special Revelation- Special Delivery
 - When God acts into human history on behalf of his people
 - Example of Hebrews enslaved in Egypt
 - Under the rule of Pharaoh
 - Delivered by the hand of God
 - Led into the wilderness- where they were prone to return to Egypt because the road to their inheritance (The Promise Land) seemed too difficult.
 - Had to be reminded of God's faithfulness
 - God's Special Delivery- Jesus
 - Sent to deliver us from the slavery of sin
 - When we forget the message we get lost and become slaves to the elementary principles of the world- weak and worthless
- Faith comes with a responsibility
 - Jesus has saved us from sin in order that we might live as heirs to His promise
 - That promise comes with a responsibility on our part
 - Throughout Paul's message he refers to the Galatians as "little children"
 - Still not mature enough to be responsible for the inheritance granted to them
 - We have to take responsibility for our faith by remembering the Story and living not as slaves but as heirs to God's promise.

- New Bible Study and Outreach opportunity

God Sent the Son

- Galatians 4:4-7
- Now we really get into why Jesus was sent
 - It's important for us to understand that Jesus' story does not begin at the manger. If we start there Jesus is only an extraordinary human.
 - When we step back and look at God's plan of redemption- we can begin to see that Jesus is more than just an extraordinary human- but that God himself has made an incredible sacrifice on his part to enter into human history to save us from ourselves.
- Fullness of time (4)
 - Appropriate time for God to act
 - Special Revelation- God reveals himself within human history to act on our behalf
 - Part of God's eternal plan of salvation (from the beginning, not the manger!)
 - O.T. Prophecies
 - Law had matured
 - In other words, the law had done its part to make people aware of their sin
 - Yet, it could not save
 - Think of a minor who needs rules to create boundaries for their life. At some point, we grow out of that stage and it's time to be free.
 - It was time to set humanity free from the bondage of sin!
 - Carefully orchestrated plan
- God sent forth his Son (4)
 - Beyond natural birth, this is God's plan- not humanities conception (all you need to do is look at Mary's expression- "How will this be?" Luke 1:34)
 - Sent with a purpose as outlined in vs. 5 (ESV), "to redeem those under the law"
- Born of a woman, under the law (4)
 - God sent His Son into the world- not as a grown man, but as a baby!
 - Humanity's experience- Fully Human and Yet Fully Divine
 - Significance of this is found in vs 8-9a (ESV), "Formerly, when you did not know God you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods. But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God"
 - Jesus' inception into the world as a baby, fully human and yet fully divine, allowed for us to have a personal relationship with God.
- God sent the Spirit of his Son into your hearts (6)
 - The Spirit is the seed that provides the promise that we are heirs, but the seed must take root and grow in order to produce fruit
 - Vs. 19 (ESV), "my little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you!"

- We must not only recognize the historic value of God sending his Son into the world, but we must recognize that God has sent his Son, through the Spirit, to live within us.
- Like a baby inside the womb, we must allow the Holy Spirit (the seed of Jesus) to grow in us and enable us to grow from little children to the heirs of Christ!
- Example of college fund reaching maturity
 - Special fund set aside for college
 - There was an appointed time for that fund to be used
 - I waited 15 years to finally access that fund
 - College took the majority of that fund, but when I graduated I was debt free
 - This is the significance of God's Special Delivery to us- Jesus paid it all so that we could be debt free!
- Galatians 4:4-7
 - As we returned to the Christmas story, our hearts should cry out for the God who sent forth His Son on our behalf
 - Forgave us, Redeemed us, Debt free
 - Adopted as his children
 - The cry of our heart should be to take responsibility of our faith
 - To give up the elementary principles of the world
 - To recognize our calling
 - To live for the God who sent for us

What Has Become of Your Blessedness?

- The Galatians have a problem- their problem is not unlike our problem
 - We've heard the Christmas story, but are we really living in the truth of that story?
 - Galatians 4:9-11
 - Turn back again- sin (weak and worthless)
 - Slaves
 - Observe the passing of time- as if caught in it without living the real purpose of your life
 - We must take responsibility for our faith!
 - Galatians 4:15a
 - What has become of your blessedness?
 - Here we have this incredible story- Special Delivery
 - God has sent His Son on our behalf
 - Adopted us from the enslavement of sin
 - Given us His Spirit
 - What has become of your blessedness?
 - Galatians 4:20
- We need to reclaim this Christmas story beyond the historical significance and "the Hallmark" feel and claim this story as our own.
 - The fact that God sent His Son to this world for you and for me should shape the identity of our faith

- It should cause us to take responsibility for our faith
- And remind us that we are children of God
- Romans 8:14-16 (ESV), “For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’ The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.”

Conclusion

- We have set before us a timeless message
 - While we may have forgotten it, we are reminded that God has not forgotten us
 - We can get lost in the elementary principles of this world
 - But at some point we have to allow God’s Special Delivery to take root in our lives.
 - We have to take responsibility for our faith- in order to take advantage of our inheritance in Christ.
- What has happened to your blessedness?
 - You may be lost but God has not forgotten you.
 - Jesus has been sent for you
 - Let’s be sure we receive His message!