

Galatians 4:4-5
Christmas 1; January 1, 2017

Did you get everything you wanted for Christmas? Did you find the perfect gift for someone, only to realize that it wasn't that perfect at all. People will spend months trying to find the perfect Christmas present, only to have it returned a few hours later after Christmas. Even if you did get all you wanted for Christmas, you still had to go out last Monday to snatch up all the After-Christmas bargains so that we can get more things.

But now it is a week later. The trees are coming down. The ornaments packed into those nice green and red plastic boxes so that they are all ready to go in a year from now. All the Christmas decorations are on clearance so that the stores can use the valuable shelf space to get ready for the next holiday. The radio stations have stopped playing the Christmas music. We were driving on the day after Christmas, and it took some looking to find a radio station still playing Christmas music. Another Christmas has come and gone. One can't help but wonder: *What does Christmas really change?* That's the question that the Apostle Paul answers in our text for this morning.

Paul writes: **"But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law."** What would it be like to control history? Have you ever thought about that? What would it be like to control every single thing that happens in your life? Yet, that is what God did. He didn't wait around and watch for His chance to step in. God from eternity planned not only that He would send His Son, he planned the perfect time to send his Son. When God had set the stage of this world, he **"sent His Son born of a woman."**

Last Sunday, we took a look at the miracle of Christmas. Jesus took on human flesh. We saw that we are not good people. Nothing we do can change that. So, what did God do? **"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us."** Why would God do that? So that **"you may have life in his name."** The God who created all things by his word takes on human flesh. Yet, even though Jesus took on human flesh, he is still God no less.

So, what does Christmas change? It changes us. It changes us because we can't change ourselves. There is nothing that we can do to remove the stain of sin in our lives. So God stepped into this world to become one of us. Paul writes: (Jesus was) **"born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons."** For entrance into heaven, God demands perfect human obedience to his law. Since no human since Adam and Eve could do that, God sent his Son to do it. Jesus came to change us.

Everything in this world will some time change. We will change as we get older. The gifts that we got at Christmas will someday fail and become tomorrow's trash. Yet, no matter how hard that we might try, we cannot change our standing before our God. But Jesus changed us.

Jesus does not change. We have changed years once again. How was 2016 for you? I have no doubt that you had ups and downs in the past year. Through all those changes, who helped you through? Who held you in his hand and promised that he will not let you go? What dreams lie ahead of you for 2017? Will you even make it through 2017 before the Lord calls you home? Yet, no matter what lies ahead, we can trust the God who changes everything at Christmas.

I don't know what kind of debt you may have in your life. Wouldn't it be great if it was all gone? How would we feel? That's what Christmas brought to you. With his life and death, Jesus took away the debt of sin. So, what are going to do with Jesus who changes everything? You can pack him up and place him on the shelf in the basement with the Christmas decorations, or can rely upon him and trust him to see you through everything that is and lies ahead of you in 2017 and beyond.

Everything that Jesus did is now yours. The death he died is now yours. The forgiveness he won belongs to you. Where Jesus has gone, you will join him one day. What does Christmas change? It changes everything! Dear brothers and sisters in Christ – happy new year! May we all continue to trust the God who changes everything! Amen.