

First Presbyterian Church
Galatians 3:26-4:7, “The Story of God: Messiah”
by Pastor Matt Johnson, 2/20/2022

This is the seventh sermon in our series, “The Story of God.”

RECAP:

1. Creation – (place of mutuality)
2. Fall – (human independence from God)
3. Call (promise: people, land, nation, blessing)
4. Exodus – Law – (promises of People, Land)
5. Davidic Kingship (Israel as Great Nation, est. David’s throne forever)
6. Result: Exile

Last week we discussed the circumstances surrounding Israel being sent into exile and the ways that we experience exile in big and small ways in our own lives.

At the end of the service we asked, “What is it we need from God when we experience exile?” People said,
“An angel.”
“Someone who meets us right where we are.”
“Resources and connections with others around us.”

Taken altogether, when we experience exile, we need a savior.

Ancient Israel had similar needs, and similar prayers, which culminated in the hope of a Messiah—a savior—who would come and restore Israel to be the people God intended them to be.

Eventually Israel did return to the land, but it was never the same. The temple was rebuilt, but it lacked the luster of the first temple. Israel the spiritual people of God would never again have autonomous political rule.

The exile became an identity marker for Israel. It caused them to be spread out into many nations and cultures across the Mediterranean and into what is now Eastern Europe.

Synagogues sprouted up in these places
and the worship of Yahweh was maintained
while also learning the languages and customs
of their new countries.

As they spread out the Jewish people carried with them
both their spirituality of lament, and their hope of a Messiah.

At the same time, Rome became a truly dominant Empire.
This had a lot of down sides to it, but it also introduced
what is known as the Pax Romana,
a period of relative peace and civility
because Rome had dominated
such a large area of the world.

And this allowed Rome to invest in infrastructure
like the aqueducts and the famous roads
some of which are still in use today.

It was this setting that the apostle Paul recognized in his letter
to the church in Galatia as “the fullness of time.”

And it was into this setting that the Triune God
sent God the Son to live among humanity as a fully human person,
in reliance on the power of the Holy Spirit.

You may know that there are different words for time in Greek.

There is *chronos*, which is chronological time, like,
“What time is our dinner reservation?”

If you want to know a specific time of day, you are talking

There is also *kairos*, which is more of a season
or a moment that has a specific quality.

If you're a Blazer fan, then you know when Damian Lillard
starts draining three pointers as the game is on the line,
he slaps his wrist and says, “Y'all know what time it is!”
It's...Dame Time.

Dame Time is a *kairos* moment,
it happens not when specific numbers appear on the clock,
but when all the right elements of the game
have come together and things are about to change.

In the story of God, things have been stirring and developing,
rising and falling for millenia.

And now, finally, the time that was ripe.

A *kairos* moment was at hand with implications for the entire created order.
Everything had been fully prepared for the Messiah to come.

Galatians 3:26-4:7

In our passage from Gal. 3, Paul explains this *kairos* moment
by connecting God's story to the Galatian's story
through the promise to Abraham.

From v. 29: Those who are in Christ are the spiritual descendants
of Abraham, and heirs according to the promise.

Paul is aware of how central God's promise to Abraham's descendants
is in the Old Testament.

So in this paragraph he says look, Jesus is the one who ultimately
fulfills the promises God made to Abraham.

So if you belong to Jesus, then even if you aren't Jewish,
you are also an heir to the promises made to Abraham.

The Law of Moses was a means of distinguishing who was holy
and who was unholy, who was Israel and who was not Israel.

But Paul recognizes that because Jesus fulfilled the Law perfectly,
because Jesus was the epitome of what Israel was called to be,
we can see the character of God
perfectly in the person of Jesus.

When we come to God in faith, we are clothed with Christ,
covered with Christ's life, death, and resurrection,
becoming one with everyone else who comes to God in faith.

Because of this, those categories of who is in and out are no longer needed,
so Paul says, “Now there is neither Jew no Gentile,
neither slave nor free, neither male nor female,
for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

If the being in Christ brings equality to the categories of Jew & Gentile,
Slave & Free, Male & Female, then we should strive to exemplify
that quality in the church.

When the elders put together the vision statement to read,
“We are an open, loving, diverse community.”
It’s not being politically correct, it’s being biblically correct.

Paul recognizes that the story of God
which arrived through the people of Israel
and the land they were given
was truly about the whole world.

And all of that comes out of the promise to Abraham
that his descendants will be a blessing to all peoples on the earth.

So the first thing Paul does is he connects God’s story
to the Galatian’s story by focusing on that promise to Abraham.

**Paul then explains the whole thing again to clarify
any misconceptions.**

4:1-2 Even though the Israelites were God’s people,
they related to God through the Law in the same way, Paul says,
that underage child might relate to their father in the ancient world.
This is to say, without a claim to inheritance.

God’s law is good because it shows the difference between right and wrong.
But it was unable to transform people’s hearts to be like God’s.
As one of my Bible study members put it,
“You can obey the law and still hate the lawgiver.”

But God didn’t just want rule followers, God wanted a people
with hearts transformed by love.

And so we come to verse 4:

“But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son,”

The sending of God’s son is unlike any other prior event in the story of God.

Paul’s phrase here, “God sent his Son,”

assumes that this Son *was already in existence with God*
prior to being sent.

This is not just God calling another prophet, another Moses or David,

this is God sending the person we now refer to as

Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity

who was instrumental in the creation of all things.

Verse four makes reference to Mary, Jesus’ mother.

Paul writes that Jesus—the pre-existent and eternal Son of God—

was **“born of a woman, born under the law.”**

In Jesus of Nazareth we have very God in human flesh,

born of a woman, born under the law.

This matters because if Jesus just appeared with no
family of origin, then the Law of Moses
wouldn’t have applied to him.

Jesus couldn’t fulfill a Law that he wasn’t under the jurisdiction of.

And then he couldn’t have been

the representative of Israel, of humanity,
in the face of their plight before God.

And why did this happen?

Paul explains in verse 5, **“To redeem those under the law,
that we might receive adoption to sonship.”**

That we might relate to God the same way that God’s own Son does.

Freely, without fear, and with full standing in the family.

The answer to exile is a Savior who brings the family back together
(and more!).

And the sign that we belong to that family is the gift of the Spirit.

As Paul puts it, **“the Spirit who calls out ‘Abba, Father.’”**

This is Jesus' own way of speaking to *his* Father.
It was unheard of for Jews to call God "Abba"
because it's too intimate a word.

But by faith, we get the same Spirit in us that uses the same language.

So in this we realize that far from being exiles
we have been invited by this event at the fullness of time
to receive God's Spirit in our own lives so we can
walk and talk with God the same way Jesus did.

[PAUSE]

The life of Jesus in Palestine is a matter of history.
But is it also part of your story?
Is that part of how you understand who you are
and how you fit in this world?

In this moment, at the fullness of time,
Jesus accomplished everything that Israel needed at every point
along the Story of God we've covered in this series:

1. As God created the world, Jesus offers a new creation in us by the Holy Spirit—this is the pathway back to the garden of Eden.
2. As God called Abraham and made enduring promises to him, Jesus fulfills those promises and through him they are extended to all people.
3. As God brought Israel out of Egypt in the Exodus, Jesus frees us from our slavery—socially, politically, and spiritually.
4. As God established David's kingly throne forever, so Jesus reigns forever in the Kingdom of God which connects heaven and earth.
5. While Israel was unfaithful and sent into exile to suffer for their own sins, while we have committed our own sins deserving of exile, Jesus came as one of us—born of a woman, and born under the hardships of the law—yet he has overcome this and has redeemed the people of God, he has given all of God's children a permanent home in himself.
6. He has made us righteous by his life, death, and resurrection, and given us a new identity not as slaves or as exiles, but as the beloved children of God with transformed hearts who call out, "Abba, Father."