

2nd Sunday after Christmas

Grace Mercy and peace to you because God sent his son born of a woman, born under the law to redeem those under the law that we might receive the full rights of sons.

NIV Galatians 4:4 But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, 5 to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. 6 Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." 7 So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.

Introduction: Fellow children of God by the love of our Heavenly Father, Thailand is home to hundreds of thousands of stateless children. Many of them are children of poor migrant workers from neighboring countries. Fear of deportation has led many mothers to deliver their babies with the help of midwives instead of going to the hospital. Of those who delivered their babies at state hospitals, many left without any official record of the birth. Either way, these infants do not have the necessary papers to prove their nationality and they will grow up stateless and unwanted by their home countries and by Thailand. Because of their vulnerability, these stateless children have become easy prey to exploitation and violence in the unregistered world. Without birth certificates, the children become nonentities. Without legal identity, they do not get the legal rights they are entitled to. These Thai children, grow into a miserable life of exploitation.

As children born in America to American citizens we enjoy a tremendous amount of rights and freedoms. Because of the child born in Bethlehem for us we now enjoy the full rights of children of God. Enjoy the freedoms of being a member of God's family. You are free from the slavery of sin and Free to call God, your Father.

1) Free from the slavery to sin.

Few of us can probably empathize with the apostle Paul's feelings when he was confined in prison. It may be hard to understand fully what it means when he says that we are "prisoners of sin" and "held prisoners by the law". In the most minor picture we do understand timeouts for our children. We take away their freedom to come and go and do what they want when they want. AS we get older as teenagers we do understand "being grounded" taking away our freedom. As adults, hopefully our parents taught us not to butt our heads against the Law which punishes violators with revoking driver's licenses, year long and life-long timeouts.

When it comes to enjoying the freedom of being a child of God, we first must realize that we are NOT natural born members of God's family. We were not born in his holy and righteous state. Instead we were born to prisoners –our sinful parents. Sin held our parents and now us in bondage and we are not able to free ourselves. And the truth is our sinful nature is perfectly content to live as a prisoner of sin. In fact our sinful nature feels that to live outside this cell block of sin guilt shame and death would be foolish and a waste of our time for there is no enjoyment in living without sin.

It is this picture of hopeless prisoners of sin that we are told of a jail break – God sent his son!

4 But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, 5 to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.

Few people show their hatred for Jesus like King Herod, but most people regard Jesus as a warm fuzzy Christmas present like a cute Christmas ornament you pull out and admire once a year. But this is God's

tremendous answer to our prison and slavery to sin! Jesus Christ was sent by God to break us free from jail and slavery to sin guilt and shame!

The first survival skill in any emergency situation is to call for help with whatever means you have: fire off signal flare, build a fire, wave a bright coat or flashlight, and use your cell phone! But what if you are helpless? Knocked out cold? Tied hand and foot and gagged? Our burden of sin and situation under the law is that impossible for us to rescue ourselves. We did not and could not call for help. Sure all sinners recognize the destruction of death and its great distress and discomfort but no one realizes that sin is to blame. Our situation is misdiagnosed. Sinners run around solving their problems with money, feelings, commitment, hard work. Yet none of that breaks the chains of sin that causes all our guilt, shame and ultimately death! God tells us in Isaiah God saw that we were in distress and he was distressed so he sent us His Son to be our Savior. God in his love sent the world His Son to save them from their root cause of their bondage and slavery and hopelessness.

God sent His Son to be born of a woman and born under the law” God is the author of His Law; he is not subject to it. It is something, my children understand. I am above the law in our household. God is then only one to take life, for he is the one who gives it. God cannot be guilty of stealing anything, because everything people included belong to him. But God placed himself as a man under His law, so that he would keep all the decrees and laws God required. He did this to redeem us from under the law. The Lord bought us back from sin death and the power of the devil. The price was high but the payment was matched in significance – the very divine son of God. So when we look at the Babe of Bethlehem we see through the eyes of faith the nail wounds in his hands and feet and slash in his side from a spear.

The feeling of going from hopeless, helpless confinement to freedom to live and do anything is one we may never have. But the truth is that we have gone from a helpless and hopeless prison cell of sin guilt shame and death to freedom as a forgiven child of God, dearly loved and cherished by our heavenly Father. That reality is seen in the Babe of Bethlehem. We are free from the slavery of the Law. NIV 1 John 3:1 How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!

2) We are free to call God our Father.

The apostle Paul’s letter to the Galatians was written because believers were giving up their rights as children of God. Believers were actually going back and living in their prisons of sin guilt, shame and death. Jewish believers were insisting on earning their freedoms and rights by their ceremonial rules. Non Jewish believers were following their lead and looking to their performance to free themselves from sin.

But in truth both of them were back in a terrible slavery. They were separating themselves again from the great blessings which come from being “heirs according to the promise” not according to their performance. Promise or performance? I’m not a gambling man but when it comes to putting it all on the line I bet on myself and take matters into my own hands. I hate relying on others to win or lose. When it comes to traveling on bad roads, I want to drive. Carrying the children on a hike, I want to be the one carrying them. But what if it is a no-win situation? What if there is no chance of winning, succeeding? Do you still want to go on performance? That’s what life under the law is all about. It is a no-win contest! Sinners cannot be sinless by their performance. Sinless means by definition no mistakes. Sinners means by definition missed the mark, failed! Living under the law and performing to win God’s favor and blessings is a no-win situation, helpless and hopeless.

We live under the promise! We are free from the no win situation of the law and instead live under Christ and his promise of forgiveness and grace by His performance of perfection. No more

pretending to be God's dearly loved children and Christians by ignoring our sins or excusing our sinfulness. We ARE God's perfect and holy and sinless sons and daughters according to the promise through Christ Jesus our Savior.

With that comes great confidence. We can and are able to call the Creator of the universe, "Dad". That name Dad packs so much meaning into it. When a child calls out, "Dad" love, trust and respect are all part of the package. In Hebrew a child would call out "Abba, help me. Or Abba, can I have some more?" My children are very important to me – the more helpless they are the more important they are on my priorities list. Nothing would crush me more than if my children would no longer trust me. Because that would mean that they had lost their confidence in me to love and care for them. I pray that I will never let them down and will never give them a reason to doubt my love for them and lose confidence in me. Because sadly I know that I am sinful and make bad decisions. Our Heavenly Father is not sinful and has never and will never make a bad decision for you. AS children of God heirs according to the promise in Christ Jesus, we can have full confidence to call our God my Heavenly Dad. The Lord put it this way in Isaiah

NIV Isaiah 49:15 "Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you!"

Since we are sons and daughters of the Lord according to the promise we can also expect that we will receive everything a member of God's family should receive.

One of the devil's diabolical attacks on us children of God is to make us think that we are 2nd class Christians. The devil brings our sins back into our brains and whispers in our ears, "A child of God? A child of God doesn't talk, think and act like that. You are worthless to the Lord. He is disappointed in you. He is angry with you. He is punishing you for disrespecting him and his family. You are one slip away from losing your status as a Christian and falling into hell."

Shove these words into the devil's face, "So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir!" The Lord doesn't change his mind or go back on his Word. He has made you a son and daughter of the King through Jesus Christ! That means you are an heir and stand to receive an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade away!

All of us at one time or another have received scams in the mail or over the phone promising a truckload of money by simply paying a small amount comparatively speaking. If it sounds too good to be true – IT IS! But this is no scam – this deal requires nothing from you – no small payment, no contact information. It's absolutely free and relies only on God's promise and Jesus' performance. It's all up to the Lord. And the Lord has revealed to us what he wants. Jesus prayed on the night he was betrayed: "Father I want those you have given to me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory." Again he told his disciples, "In my father's house are many rooms. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back to take you to be with me, so that you can be where I am."

The inheritance we have waiting for us is eternal life in heaven – it is guaranteed according to the promise. Enjoy the freedom to call your God, your heavenly Father with full confidence and expectation of eternal love and blessings.