

What God Wants for Christmas  
Galatians 4:4-7  
Christmas Day 2011

I was driving in the car the other day and I heard people on the radio discussing how fathers are the hardest people for which to buy Christmas gifts. Their reasons ranged from speculation that it is because men go out and buy what they need or the other extreme is they won't tell you what they need or want for Christmas. Their discussion seem to suggest that when it comes to buying for the fathers, families just don't know for sure what to give them.

Our Heavenly father is different. Through scripture he'll tell you exactly what he wants from us and why. God wants to hear person after person call him Father. What God wants for Christmas is the same thing he desires every moment of life we live. He wants every person born to turn and trust in him as their heavenly father.

See if you don't agree after we hear together the following scripture from Galatians 4:4-7. Read text Message Version.

**God picked the right time; not just any time**

The book of Galatians reminds us how badly God wants everyone to call him father. God is everyone's creator; but he isn't everyone's father until we have been adopted by him. The Apostle Paul wrote and said in verse 4 that **"... when the fullness of time had come God sent his Son..." v.4** The scriptures insist that when the time was really right, God made a move. God had watched the events of this world unfold. He had seen kings and queens rise throughout history and then fall. But when God believed the world was ready to grasp the message of his good news he had for the world, he sent Jesus, his son.

**Illustration:** Every caring parent can understand this scripture when the Apostle Paul talks about God stepping in to send Jesus at

the right time. Every dedicated parents knows the value to timing your choices to teach and guide your children. You watch your child learn and sometimes struggle as they learn at anything from homework, to doing a chore around the house, to getting along with siblings to learning how to do a lay-up in basketball. You watch to see how they progress and sometimes you have to finally step in and help. When the Bible says, **“In the fullness of time”** it simply means for reasons God only fully and completely knows, he stepped in and sent Jesus Christ.

We could rightfully ask, why in the world didn't he send Jesus sooner? Ever read in the Old Testament accounts where as the people of God moved toward and into the Promise Land, that when they went to war, they killed women and children? Read Numbers 31 beginning in verse 17. Moses ordered all male children of the opposing people to be killed along with any woman who was not a virgin. Today we would call that genocide or ethnic cleansing. We might think Jesus who said love your enemy should have been sent on the scene then so innocent children were not killed. Or why didn't God wait and send Jesus later when the world was more civilized or better means to communicate? Only God knows for sure, but scripture says, that God saw the time was right, and one day when we get to heaven, we'll know why.

**Jesus Came to Redeem Us Who Had Been Kidnapped**  
Paul said according to the **Message version, Jesus was sent to “Redeem those of us who have been kidnapped by the Law.”**  
The law Paul was referring to was the collective religious instructions given under Moses. The law was good, pure and right; but the problem is people don't always live by pure, good and right hearts and minds. People kept breaking the law more than they were keeping it. The more they knew of the law the more it revealed how they were falling short of living by the law. So God had to do something so we could get the picture of what it really was going to take to have a relationship with him. **Paul is**

**basically saying to us is that none of us are able to have a relationship with God based on our goodness.** Sometimes we talk about our faith in God being based on the wonder of the universe, the beauty of creation and nature, the changing color of trees, the miracle when you witness a child or animal being born. All of that is inspirational. But Paul was saying the reality of our relationship with God is built on that first hand experience of us meeting that moment in time when we realize we are kidnapped to our own failings. Without God's forgiveness we're separated from him, because none of us are good enough.

When Paul said we are kidnapped to the law he meant all of us are over our heads in the game of being good enough doing enough right things. Today the NBA kicks off it season. Stars like Kobe Bryant, Dwayne Wade, and Lebron James will be back in action. Spiritually speaking our goodness cannot even come close to keeping up with God's purity and perfection. It would be like trying to play a game of one on one basketball with Lebron James or Kobe Bryant thinking we could beat them. Any of us would be way out of our league.

Sometimes when people are asked if they are Christian they will say they try to live by the Ten Commandments, they try and treat people good. If scripture is describing reality correctly, Paul's words is telling us, on our own none of us are that good. Jesus was born because none of us are good enough.

Pastor Bob Russell once said that if we want to get picture of our sinfulness, then just think if we only commit one sin a day. One inappropriate thought, one unkind gesture, one jealous action, or one missed opportunity to do what is right. One daily sin adds up to 30 a month, times 12 months in one year equals 360 sins and over lifetime period of 50 years that equals 18,000 sins per person. Now we can see the truth in scripture why Paul said we we're kidnapped by the law. **God came up with a plan for us to have a**

**relationship with him that is not based on our goodness; but his grace and truth.**

**Jesus came to communicate our debt is cleared = redeem.** So the birth of Jesus in the fullness of time was God's plan. Paul said the plan was to redeem us. Don't let that word redeem fool you. We use that word a lot in church but many may not know what it means. **The word redeem means to buy back.** The word redeem is an ancient business term, it's a banking term. Today over 4 billion people on the planet each will average 18,000 sins equals a mess. Yet Christianity claims what no other world religion claims. God in Christ did what no other religious movement then or now had taught. God knew our goodness can never repay our way out of spiritual debt. The only way to get the spiritual debt off our backs is for God to forgive the spiritual debt. Our relationship would have to exist based on God's grace; not human goodness. God had to redeem us.

Remember a few years ago when it became possible and popular to use cell phones to send a text message to some one? Remember how when the first phone plans for texting came out they were mostly limited plans, meaning if you text more than your plan allotted, you could quickly have huge cell phone bill. The stories began to hit the news especially about teenagers on their parents cell phone plans running up huge bills that nobody but Donald Trump could afford.

In the fullness of time God saw it was right to send Jesus to tell the world that in spite of running up a spiritual debt of sin that we could never payoff; God still loves us and wants to adopt us.

### **What God Wants - "I'm sorry"**

While it might be difficult to know what to get earthly fathers for Christmas, it's a no-brainer what God wants. God simply wants

the gift of confession from us. God wants us to become his adopted children by admitting our wrongs. He is willing to wipe out the spiritual debt if we will turn to him. God wants us to tell him how we see the ways we have sought to replace him and have sole control over our lives. God waits to hear the confession that without him we're lost in life. Confession of our sinfulness is the evidence our hearts truly see the truth, that relationship/connection with God is not based on how good we are; but his gift of love for us.

Illustration: Often when I would be thinking about Christmas sermons I would see so many preachers that used in some way the story How the Grinch stole Christmas for their sermon titles. I resisted doing the same. But a few months back for the first time I watch the last part of the Jim Carey movie version of the Grinch. There is a great scene toward the end where the Grinch played by Carey has returned the gifts he had stolen from people in town. He is also surrounded by towns people as he is trying to return the gifts. The mayor and the sheriff are there as well. The mayor is an old adversary of the Grinch and he insist on the Sheriff throwing the Grinch into jail. The Grinch admits to stealing the gifts and then says, I'm sorry. The mayor points out the confession to the sheriff and says see did you hear him. The sheriff said, yes I heard him, he said he was sorry.

God is like the sheriff. The gift he waits for is to hear us say to him I am sorry.

The gift God wants is true remorse in our hearts that leads to a life that is available to God. Did you notice how the scripture says the spirit comes to us crying "abba, father." God's spirit comes to us prompting us to say what we really need, but its up to us whether we will accept or reject. So he waits.

You know there are four books we call the gospels which means they tell the story of Jesus Christ. The four are Matthew, Mark,

Luke, and John. Matthew and Luke are the only two that contain the birth stories of Jesus. Matthew, Luke, and John take a few chapters building up to the point where Jesus begins his ministry. Mark's gospel by verse 15 of the first chapter tells that Jesus ministry had begun and The first sermon Jesus preached was "The time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God has come near; (so) repent and believe in the good news." The word repent means to have sorrow enough in our hearts for our ways that defy God that we finally turn to him.

Mark didn't waste anytime telling people, Jesus knew the gift God wants most from us. He wants our hearts, so he can give us real life and eternal life to come. Amen