



Outline of our Christmas Series

****Note: Sermons on each passage will be preached on the Sunday following the reading****

Week of Monday, December 7, 2020

Galatians 4:4-7

Week of Monday, December 14, 2020

1 John 4:7-15

Week of Monday, December 21, 2020

Revelation 22:17-22

Week of Monday, December 7, 2020

Galatians 4:4-7

4 When the time came to completion, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. 6 And because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "'Abba', Father! " 7 So you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then God has made you an heir. – Galatians 4:4-7 (CSB)

HOPE Journaling

H – Highlight what stands out to you

O – Observe what it teaches

P – Practice this in your life

E – Express this in your prayers

Weekly Devotional

“God doesn’t have any grandchildren.”
– E Stanley Jones

In 2015, we adopted Hannah. Prior to her adoption, when Hannah joined our family, she held no claim to the Walters name or to any inheritance. However, through adoption, she was not only joyfully given the gift of the family name, she now has a legitimate claim to the inheritance. Through no doing of her own, Hannah has become our heir.

That is what it is like for us as Christians. Just think about the name Christian. It is a name that we can only claim because it was joyfully given to us by grace alone through faith alone in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The name of Christ alone is unique in that no other name can save. “There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to people by which we must be saved.” -- Acts 4:12. The very same name that saves is the name and the status that we can claim when we are adopted as the sons and daughters of God! That comes with a responsibility. Just as we do not want to soil our family name, we must also protect the name of Jesus that we claim as Christians. We often take the commandment to not take the Lord’s name in vain to refer to an exclamation that uses the name of God. However, it is also a violation of that command to take the name “Christian” and live as if you do not know, love, or serve the God you claim by name.

The claim we hold as a Christians goes beyond the name as well. We also hold claim to the inheritance that is given to Jesus as the Son of God. We share in Christ’s inheritance from the Father! The inheritance of Christ’s glory and an eternity spent in heaven with the Father is one that can only be granted to us through adoption as sons and daughters. A person who is outside the family cannot lay a legitimate claim to an inheritance. But anyone who is an heir can lodge a claim to the inheritance. We have that right. In fact, Paul, who wrote Galatians, also wrote in his letter to the Romans, in chapter 8, that we are co-heirs with Jesus Himself! We can stand in confidence that we stand as brothers and sisters *in* Jesus, because we stand as brothers and sisters *to* Jesus; literally we stand as having the same Father, making us brothers and sisters. And this title and right is given to us joyfully because of the sacrifice of Jesus.

However, it is important to reference back to the E Stanley Jones quote above. “God doesn’t have grandchildren.” That means that being born into a “Christian family” does not make you a Christian. God only has those who are His children and those who are fully outside His family. That means that to claim the name and to claim the inheritance, you must be His son or His daughter. That comes only through belief in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior and to trust and follow Him and obey Him. Jesus tells us in Mark 3:35 that “whoever does the will of God” is His brother and sister. We must believe and obey.

Read Also:

Mark 3:34-35	[brothers and sisters of Jesus]
Ephesians 1:3-19	[adoption and inheritance]
Romans 8:12-30	[co-heirs , brothers, and sisters with Christ]
Hebrews 2:10-18	[sons and daughters, brothers and sisters]
Colossians 3:23-24	[inheritance]
Psalm 16	[our inheritance is held by God]
1 Peter 1:3-5	[our inheritance is imperishable]
Galatians 4:1-3	[heirs and slaves]
Luke 1	[Christmas story]

Group Discussion Questions - Theological Considerations

- What is “the inheritance of the saints” that Paul references in so many of his epistles?
- What does Paul mean when he refers to Jesus as the “firstborn of many brothers and sisters?” (Romans 8:29)
- “Born under the law, to redeem those under the law” Was it necessary for Jesus to be subject to the law in order to save those who had broken the law? Was it possible for Jesus to break the law himself?
- This passage says that we are no longer slaves. However, in other parts of the New Testament believers are called bondservants, slaves to Jesus, and slaves to righteousness. Is this a contradiction? Explain. How can we both have liberty and be slaves?

Group Discussion Questions – Digging Deeper

- Share a story of adoption in your family or in a family close to you. How does that compare to our adoption as sons and daughters of God? How does that shape your understanding of our adoption?
- How does your understanding of your status as a son or daughter guide you in how you live your life?
- Read Exodus 20:7. What does this mean for us as Christians?
- Abba is a very personal and relational way of saying “father.” Much like how we would talk to our own earthly fathers. How should that guide our prayer life? How should that shape our understanding of our relationship to God?
- Understanding that God doesn’t have grandchildren, how does that direct our roles as parents? What does family discipleship look like in a practical sense?

Week of Monday, December 14, 2020

1 John 4:7-15

7 Dear friends, let us love one another, because love is from God, and everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. 8 The one who does not love does not know God, because God is love. 9 God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his one and only Son into the world so that we might live through him. 10 Love consists in this: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. 11 Dear friends, if God loved us in this way, we also must love one another. 12 No one has ever seen God. If we love one another, God remains in us and his love is made complete in us. 13 This is how we know that we remain in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit. 14 And we have seen and we testify that the Father has sent his Son as the world's Savior. 15 Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God — God remains in him and he in God. - 1 John 4:7-15 (CSB)

HOPE Journaling

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Weekly Devotional

“God’s love for the biggest sinner is greater than the love of the holiest man for God.”
– Father Arsenie Boca

Likely you have seen a movie where someone made a grand gesture of their love for someone else. In *The Princess Bride*, Buttercup realizes that she has thrown her love, Westley, down the hill and then throws her own body down the hill after him. In *Wedding Singer*, Adam Sandler’s character sings Drew Barrymore’s an original song over an airplane intercom system. In *Top Gun*, Maverick and Goose pair up to sing “You’ve Lost That Loving Feeling” to Charlotte in the bar. There are so many grand and over-the-top ways in which people have expressed their love for others.

However, no matter how grand or large or expensive or cheesy those gestures get, none of them can hold a candle to the gesture that God made to show His love for us. God sent His One and Only Son to die for you and for I. This was, however, not just some empty show of His love. It was revealed to us in this way “so that we might live through Him.” As we look at the Christmas story, we see the beauty and irony that Jesus, God Himself, the All-Powerful, came to earth as the weakest and least powerful of human life, a newborn baby. God the Son born a baby in total dependence upon others for all matters of human life. We see that so clearly in the Christmas story. However, John, in this passage, does not leave it at that. He tells us more.

As it seems natural, during Christmas we focus on the birth of Jesus. We pay attention to the story of the shepherds and the angels and the manger. We look at awe in the way that God used a national census to fulfill the prophecy of the birth of the Savior taking place at Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). These are the things we look at with wonder and awe. But, even during this time, we cannot forget to remember that Jesus came, not just so we would wonder at the manger, but so that we would worship at the cross. God’s grand gesture of His love was not simply coming to dwell with us, but, ultimately, becoming sin on our behalf so that we might be saved. John reminds us that God “sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins.” This ultimate act of love, more than words, more than promises, more than a feeling. This love was a definitive statement backed by incredible sacrifice followed by the miracle of miracles in the resurrection. We cannot forget the cross and the resurrection at Christmas time.

And remembering these things spurs us to action as well. We cannot love just in words, just in promises, or just in feelings. We must also love in action. We must love one another in the way we live, the way we sacrifice, and the way we say and show that love. Remember that with your neighbors this Christmas season. There are people hurting every year during the holidays and that will be amplified in 2020 with all that has taken place this year and the increased isolation many will experience due to covid. Reach out and check in on neighbors. Take cookies or gifts to isolated friends and family. But more than anything, share the Good News of Christmas!

Read Also:

Micah 5:2	[prophecy of Jesus' birth at Bethlehem]
Isaiah 52:13-15	[prophecy of Jesus' death]
Isaiah 53	[prophecy of Jesus' life and death]
Isaiah 54	[God's love for His people is unshakable]
Romans 5:8	[God proves His love]
Galatians 2:20	[God loves us so that we might live through Him]
John 3:14-21	[God's love shown in Jesus]
Romans 8:31-39	[what can separate us from God's love]
Psalms 136	[God's love is faithful and eternal]
Luke 2	[Christmas story]

Group Discussion Questions – Theological Considerations

- Love is one of the characteristics of God. What are some other characteristics of God?
- How do the characteristics of God guide our understanding of who we are as image bearers?
- What is penal substitutionary atonement?
- What are some prophecies about the coming Savior? Why is it important that Jesus fulfilled the prophecies?
- What does John mean when he writes “God remains in him and he remains in God?”

Group Discussion Questions – Digging Deeper

- If we are to follow what John wrote and that we are to use God's loving sacrifice as an example of how we are to love, what does that actually mean for us?
- What is one thing you specifically commit to doing during this Christmas season to show that love? Give your group or another person permission to hold you accountable to this.
- How can you celebrate both the birth and the death of Jesus at Christmas?
- What is your favorite grand gesture of love from a movie? How does that compare to the gesture that God gave in Jesus?
- Think about your “one.” How can you show the love of Jesus to this person this month?
- How does the Spirit that God gave us help us love others the way He loves us?
- Why is God's love shown through God's sacrifice the Good News of Christmas?

Week of Monday, December 21, 2020

Revelation 22:17-22

17 Both the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" Let anyone who hears, say, "Come!" Let the one who is thirsty come. Let the one who desires take the water of life freely. 18 I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book. 19 And if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share of the tree of life and the holy city, which are written about in this book. 20 He who testifies about these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon." Amen! Come, Lord Jesus! 21 The grace of the Lord Jesus be with everyone. Amen. -- Revelation 22:17-21 (CSB)

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Weekly Devotional

“Don’t call it a comeback! I’ve been here for years.”

– LL Cool J

I am a Washington Redskins (I’m sorry, Washington Football Team) fan. This has been a difficult three decades for people like me. We have not won a Super Bowl since 1991. The 10 years from 2010–2019, we won only 39% of our games and made the playoffs twice. We have not won a playoff game since we won a wild card game in 2005. Since our last Super Bowl 30 years ago, we have only made the playoffs 6 times never making it past the divisional round. Since 2000, there are only 8 teams with worse records than Washington (Bengals, Browns are two of those!).

So, when Joe Gibbs announced that he was returning to coach the team again in the mid-2000’s, Washington fans rejoiced! The man that brought us our most successful years and all 3 of our Super Bowl rings was returning! We had hope for once that we would be great again, or at least competitive and relevant! Even the stoic owner of the team showed great emotion at the press conference announcing his return. However, even with the great coach returning, the team had 2 losing seasons and went 2-3 in the playoffs. The great hope in Joe Gibbs as the savior of the Redskins fizzled.

So, with those types of experiences in our lives, when we speak of the hope we have in the promise that Jesus will return, we can be skeptical. We can be uncertain or think “I’m not holding my breath.” But, the promises and hope of God stand in stark contrast to the promises and hope of man. We can trust in the promises and the hope of God because He has never failed to deliver. As we have seen in looking at the Good News of Christmas so far, we know that God fulfilled His promise of sending His Son, Our Savior. We can look at all the promises of God and see them fulfilled time and time again. This gives us a hope that cannot be found in man.

That means that when we read that Jesus is coming again, we can trust in that! We can know with absolute certainty that Jesus will, without fail, return at the appointed time. Furthermore, we can trust this promise, because Jesus never really left us in the first place. God, at the moment of our salvation, gave us His Spirit to dwell within us. From the time we were saved, there was never a moment we did not have God. And because of that, our hope in the return of Christ is not some tenuous idea. The hope can be trusted, because the promise of a helper while we wait was realized. God hasn’t gone anywhere. He has always been here!

Even as we cry out “Come Lord Jesus, come!” we must also cry out to those around us, “Come and meet the Savior! The Promised One of God!” We must invite others to believe and be saved. We must share the Good News of Christmas with all peoples, starting in Marysville and going to the ends of the earth. Helping people find and follow Jesus. One person. One family. One community. At a time.

Read Also:

Matthew 24	[Jesus prophecies His return]
Hebrews 9:27-28	[Jesus will return]
Luke 21:25-28	[Jesus prophecies His return]
1 Thessalonians 5:1-11	[be prepared for His return]
1 Corinthians 15:50-58	[Jesus' return guarantees final victory over death]
1 Thessalonians 4:13-18	[Jesus' return offers comfort for grieving]
Matthew 25	[parables about being prepared for Jesus' return]
Revelation 21-22	[new heaven and new earth; time is near]
Acts 1:9-11	[the Ascension and the promised return]

Group Discussion Questions – Theological Considerations

- When is Jesus returning?
- What are the new heaven and the new earth?
- Why is Jesus returning?
- What is the new heaven and the new earth? Where will they be?
- How has Jesus won victory over death if we still die?
- What is the rapture? When will it take place?

Group Discussion Questions – Digging Deeper

- Are you eager for the return of Jesus? Why or why not?
- Is the return of Jesus good news for everyone? How does this inform our mission?
- How can you be prepared for the coming of Jesus?
- What do you want to be found doing when He returns?
- How do we find comfort as believers in knowing that Jesus will return?
- Is there a promise of God that you struggle to believe?
- Calling on Jesus to return is calling down judgment on those who do not believe. Is this ok for us as Christians to do?
- Knowing that Jesus' return signals judgment, who do you commit to sharing the gospel with in 2021?