

Galatians 4:4-7

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!' So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God.

Sermon

Whenever there was a baptism of a child at the church that I grew up in, the pastor would take that baby in their hands and walk into the congregation. They would walk all the way down the center aisle of the church, saying "See what love the Father has shown us, that we should be called children of God!" They would carry that baby into the pews, with the water's of baptism still dripping from their head, and they would introduce those children to their new, adopted family. They would stop to meet the people who taught Sunday School, and those who made the coffee after worship, and the lady who organized the homeless shelter, and the man who wrote cards to the shut-in members. And all those people would get to meet, close up and in person, with that child that they had just agreed to love and care for as a fellow child of God and brother or sister in Christ.

- This is the reason that Jesus was born in Bethlehem. To create a new family, in Christ's love and salvation.
- This is the reason that the angels sang and the shepherds rejoiced. For not only were they invited into the manger, but they were invited to join the family. To sit at the table and share God's love. For in God's house there is always space available and a room prepared for all.
- This is the reason that the star shone bright and the wise men came from far-off lands to adore the holy child. For they had come to meet their new family member. They had come to get to know this one who loved them like only family can love.

And this is your family as well. Whether it has felt like home to you since you were a little child, or if you feel like you were just adopted and you don't really understand the culture and traditions of this new family. For the scriptures teach us that we were all adopted. We were all brought into this family, by God's choice. God doesn't love us because he has to, but because he wants to. God chooses to share with us everything he has, to include us in his inheritance and to lay down his life so that we may live. He chooses to send his Son into the world with hopes that we may learn to return that love. That we would draw close enough to God that when we call God Father, we would use the word "Abba," the same Aramaic word Jesus uses to address God when he needs him most, which can best be translated as "Daddy," a word that only the closest of family would use.

- So, when your thoughts turn to the child who was born in this Christmas season, remember that *this* is the love that the Father has shown us, that we too might be called children of God.

Amen

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