

“When the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children.” Galatians 4:4-5. (NRSV)

Dear Christian friends,

The month of December in our culture truly is focused upon Christmas. Whether one celebrates this event in a sacred or secular manner, Christmas preparations will consume our time and our talent. Many people, and I include myself, find this celebration to be taxing also. We who live in the northern hemisphere of the globe will find we need to fight against the natural instinct of our physical body. The natural world in our hemisphere at this season of the year is working to conserve physical energy. Plants are in dormancy or minimally functioning. Animals in the wild are restrictive in their physical activity – prioritizing their movements to foraging for food and conserving body heat. This is all dictated to these creatures by the diminishing daily light cycle that will continue for the majority of this month! They are preparing for the long weeks of winter that still will come.

We humans, the largest relatively-brained species, set ourselves up to be going in ‘turbo-charge’ mode for the month. Our culture dictates will have our schedules crammed with activities – whether social events, shopping or preparing. We will, colloquially speaking, ‘burn the candle at both ends’ and probably in the middle also. This super activity will not be the wisest way to be in this natural world at this time of year. But we do it year-after-year.

This year we have the added burden of guilt or stress. As we live with the bewildering conflict happening in Israel and Palestine; an addition to all the other human induced conflicts, many people in Canada are struggling to provide even the basic staples of daily life such as food, shelter and clothing. The expectations of our secular Christmas season only add to the debt of guilt and shame.

In ancient times adoption was deemed an extremely significant legal and social event. A natural born child could be disinherited; they could be written out of a will. An adopted child could not be disinherited. They had been chosen and their place in the family was assured. As the scripture indicates God has adopted the baptized to be his own.

For Christians, Christmas also is the reality of God becoming incarnate in the human flesh of Jesus. God does this to reveal to us his commitment to the value and potential that God sees in us. The birth of Jesus brings us into a journey of faith that leads to the events of Easter where God fully reveals to us the depth to which God commits for our redemption.

Now in this time, Christians live expectantly for Jesus’ coming again in which the full and permanent revelation of the kingdom of God will occur. These weeks of Advent, the immediate weeks prior to Christmas, are a time of preparing and watching. We keep our spiritual senses attuned to God’s subtle signs of his activity leading to the culmination of time: Jesus’ physical appearance again. We are watching for Jesus!

In the bustle and busy-ness that these weeks bring to us, may we continue to make a priority for that special presence of God in Christ Jesus for us. That is true wisdom being exercised. Jesus is the real reason for the Christmas season.

In Christ forever,

Pastor Kevin.