

June 19, 2016
Sermon for The Fifth Sunday after Pentecost
St Peter Lutheran Church
Bowie, TX
Larry Knobloch, Pastor
Galatians 3:23–4:7

J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus

Galatians 3:23–4:7 (ESV)

²³ Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. ²⁴ So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵ But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, ²⁶ for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. ²⁷ For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise. ¹ I mean that the heir, as long as he is a child, is no different from a slave, though he is the owner of everything, ² but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by his father. ³ In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world. ⁴ But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. ⁶ And because you are sons, God has 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 an heir through God.

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Amen.

Imagine this: everything you do is under the watchful eye of “the authority.” He claims you as his own. He tells you what to do—gives you your daily work, your responsibilities and tasks—from morning to night. And he pays you nothing at all. No check, no IOU, nothing. He chooses what you’ll eat and when you’ll eat. You own nothing; he owns it all, everything from food to clothes to whatever kind of roof he puts over your head. You are under his thumb in every single way, from morning to night, every day.

If you guess that I’m describing a slave, you’re right. But it so happens I’m also describing a child. Our first guardians and law givers are our parents...and often times, that role is entrusted to our earthly fathers, whom we celebrate today.

Of course, the two situations are very different. The slave is truly oppressed by such circumstances; the child, however, is being cared for...is being protected. Again, while mothers protect and care for us, I know I always slept better when my father was at home.

So, looking at these things, the question arises...Are you a slave?

Yes . . . but you are also a child

The two circumstances are indeed very different, yet they do have important parallels, and recognizing that will help us to follow what Paul wants to tell us in Galatians 3 and 4.

You are no longer a slave because Christ has exchanged places with us, becoming a Slave so that we might be children, and heirs.

The Law enslaves even its own children. We can call it enslavement but in reality, the Law is for our own good. Much like the Israelites needed laws, even for everyday things like their diets, because when they left Egypt, they had been enslaved for so long and told what to eat and when to eat it, that they had forgotten how to provide for their selves. So God came in

and gave the dietary laws to protect them from themselves. And if you think about it, God's Law is there to protect us from ourselves.

Children need laws for their protection. We live in a sinful world and the sinful world is dangerous! We need something to keep us safe (Rom 13:1–7; 1 Tim 1:9).

As children, no matter the age, we also need to be protected from our own youthful foolishness (Gal 3:23–24a). Every culture has a single answer: law of one kind or another as Paul tells us in Rom 2:14–15. *For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law.*

Congress, and the president, are constantly making new laws, piling more and more on top of the country. Trying to legislate and govern common sense.

It seems that laws can also always oppressive.

Human laws can be bad laws. Human enforcement is always uneven, law interpreted one way for one person and differently for someone else. And human laws can be tools of tyranny (e.g., Ex 1; Is 10:1; Dan 6:7–10). As governments make laws to suit and benefit themselves rather than the people that they claim to be caring for.

But God's Law suffers from none of that. Read Psalm 19:7-14. The Psalmist starts out by saying: *"The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure,..."*

As good and sure as the Laws of God are, in one way it is even more oppressive.

Well that sound strange...if God's Law is perfect...how can it be oppressive?

Don't forget...we have a sinful nature and we like to think that we aren't really all that bad. But you see...all of the Law demands are legitimate, but they are never-ending, always condemning, and finally crushing (Gal 3:10–11; see also Ap IV 38). We can't keep any of them, and to tell you the truth, it really cramps our style. 8th Commandment, don't bear false witness? But it's such a good story about my neighbor and I heard it from a "reliable" source, I just can't wait to tell someone else! Oh, come on God...it's such a good story!

The 5th Commandment says don't kill, well I really wouldn't physically harm my brother-in-law, but I really hate his guts! I'm secretly happy when he has problems. Oh come on God if I hate my brother, or anyone else I am a murderer? (1 Jn 3:15, Mt 5:22)

But that's not what we children want to hear! We want what we want, when and how we want it! So what do we do? Do we accept God's Law because it is good and perfect?

No, we rebel!

So Law makes for rebellion. On every level—from families to government to God's Law—all produce rebellion. We need law, but we hate it too. (See Deut 1:26–27; Prov 17:25.)

And Law makes for pride. We redefine Law, limit it, treat it selectively. Like the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector Jesus tells us about in Luke 18: *“Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. Luke 18:10–11 (ESV)*

How many times have you caught yourself saying “well at least I am not like my neighbor, or brother, or sister, or total stranger” Like the two men that are camping and were talking about what they would do if a bear came after them. They both agreed that they would run. One wondered how fast a bear could run; the other said that it didn't matter, because I only have to out run you.

So if we are actually able to stop the one upmanship, then we realize that we are beyond hope. So then Law makes for despair. When we take God's Law to heart, we see our sin, and guilt may crush us. As St. Paul observes in Romans 3:20 *“For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.”*

Thus the Law enslaves—even its own children (Gal 4:1–3). It knocks us on our backs and puts us under God's thumb. When we rebel against the law or when we despair because of the law we find that living under the Law is slavery!

But in Christ, God's children are heirs. You are an heir to God's Kingdom!

God's Son took your place as a slave under the Law.

He became a Child, one with us, born of Mary, born under and subject to the very same Law that had enslaved us (Gal 4:4-5; Jn 1:14; Lk 2:51).

He kept the Law in our place—fulfilling it fully (Heb 4:15). All those demands that oppressed us like not holding our tongue in gossip, not loving or forgiving our brothers and sisters in Christ and whatever else we have ignored or rebelled against in God's law, God's Law was fulfilled by Jesus!

And even more, Jesus, holy though He was and is, also took our place in receiving punishment. He made atonement for all our rebellion against the Law when He went to the cross (Gal 4:5; Rom 3:25; 1 Jn 2:2).

Christ has therefore put us into His own place—sonship (Gal 3:24-27; 4:5)! Again from our Text: *“So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith.”*²⁵ *But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian,*²⁶ *for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.*²⁷ *For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”*

In Christ by Baptism and faith—that's the place we are and who we are. We—like our sins—are covered by Christ.

We are forgiven! No doubts, no despair...you are forgiven!

In Christ, we go from hopelessly enslaved under the Law to adopted children (Gal 4:6).

We are free! Remember Galatians 4:6 *“And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!”*

That's you!

In Christ, we go from eternal slaves to heirs of everything eternally good (Gal 4:7; Lk 8:26–39).

We are favored!

“So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.”

You are a favored child of God!

While he is a child, the heir is no different from a slave. But there is a difference!

We, once children of the Law, enslaved in our sins, have been set free and in Christ possess everything!

Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds unto Christ Jesus.

Amen.