

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

There is nothing more heart-breaking than to hear the news a child has been kidnapped. I can't tell you how much I hate those news stories, interviewing parents whose child has been taken. The pain and emotion they are dealing with. The grief-ridden pleas to please return their child home. The earnest attempts to locate the child, with posters, billboard ads, search parties. The lengths parents are willing to go to get their child back.

You know, many parents are even willing to go as far as to offer a reward, to buy back the safety of their child. You know why they are willing, don't you? Love. The love parents have for children will cause them to go the extremes to protect them.

Our loving God is no different. This morning, our verses talk about the second person of the Trinity, the Son. This is how much our God love us. He has redeemed you and me!

In the book of Galatians, that was the message the Apostle Paul was trying to get across, that the people were redeemed because of Jesus. Because, unfortunately, there were some people in the church at Galatia who weren't so sure of that. Mostly, the Gentiles.

You see, the Gentiles, why, they were originally classified as "heathens," "unbelievers." Because in the Old Testament, that's what they were by and large. They were outside of the promise of a Savior because they weren't Israelites. They weren't God's chosen people, the bearers of the gospel promise that the Savior of the world would be born through them.

But just because they were outside of the promise didn't mean these Gentiles were outside of God's kingdom. Jesus made that very clear when he spoke words, like these, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

That was true for the believers in Galatia who were considered Gentiles. But that truth had been called into question by the Jews, the promise-bearers. They said it wasn't enough for these Gentiles to just have faith in Jesus. No, to truly be a part of God's heavenly kingdom, well they had to go a little further. They had to do more. For instance, they had to circumcise themselves, because that's what true children of Abraham, true children of God supposedly had to do.

That just was not true. That, Paul made quite clear. At the beginning of this section our passages are a part of Paul told these Gentiles, and the Jews, for that matter, what was true, who they all were. He said, "You are all sons of God through faith in Jesus Christ...There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

Jesus Christ, the Son of God. That was the only way anyone could be sure they were a member of God's family. It didn't matter what walk of life they came from or what race they were or what their bloodlines were. All that mattered was the blood of the Son of God.

And here's why it did. Between the Jews and the Gentiles, there was one common denominator. Can you guess what it was? I'll give you a hint. You and I, we are no different. We are all sinners.

And if you need further proof you are, just take a look here. Look no further than the Law. You see the law is more than just a couple of standards for who gets to be part of the elite group, like the Jews were trying to do with their demanding that the Gentiles, the Galatian believers be circumcised.

It is more than just some suggestions for how to live a better life, you know, just give the old college try to trying to follow them, and if you do, wonderful, if not, no big deal. No, God's law is his demands of our lives, that we obey it perfectly, all of it, that we be holy, just as God is holy.

So how have you and I stacked up?

God's law says "remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy." That means joyfully and eagerly listening to what God has to tell us in his Word, and doing it regularly, doing it often. When's the last time your Bible at home was opened or when you sat down the dinner table with the family to have a devotion? Or those mornings where you almost have to drag yourself out of bed and force yourself to come to church, may not be so willing.

God's law says do not murder, which really entails much, much more than just killing someone else. Anything that can hurt or harm our neighbor, even just the hateful thought, in God's eyes that is the very same thing as murdering them. Now if there's anyone here who has never had so much as a hateful thought about anyone else, kudos to you. I know I'd never be able to say that.

God's law says to not give false testimony against your neighbor, meaning God's given each of us the gift of a reputation, and he expects me not just to do whatever I can to keep my own name clean, but to be doing the same for others. So when you and I laugh at jokes made at the expense of someone else or when we make passing remarks that maybe weren't intended to tarnish that other person's name but they did and when we flat out become part of the rumor mill by listening to hurtful words and passing along those same words, an easy trap to get caught up in, how have you and I done in keeping that law?

And the list goes on, "do not steal, do not covet, do not commit adultery, honor those in authority, do not curse or swear, love God everything else, making him number one." And if that's not enough to show you that you've fallen short of God's demand of a perfect life, then just know that you have, for no other reason that you were born. Because once Adam and Eve sinned, every human being since has been born into sin, the worst trait passed down from generation to generation.

You know, Paul says we are sons, and daughters, of God, but we don't often act like that, but you and I behave more like what each of us were at one time, slaves. Slaves to our sinful natures, slaves to our master, Satan. Slaves because we served their every wish and desire, opposing God the entire time.

And we were doomed. That same law that shows me how often I fail to obey God, it convicts me, tells me I deserve to be punished, with more than just a strongly worded warning, but with the prison of hell, spending eternity there.

"But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son..."

You see, God didn't want us to be slaves. He wanted us to be his sons and daughters. So God sent his Son. God sent Jesus. Note the obvious in our words for this morning. God sent his Son. We did not call for him. We would never have been able to do it, even if we had wanted to.

But at his time-table, which for God was the perfect time, the time he had planned before the creation of the world, he sent his Son. When our future looked bleak, an eternity of slavery to the devil in hell, God sent his Son.

Martin Luther writes about this Son in his explanation to the Second Article of the Apostles' Creed, "I believe that Jesus, Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the virgin Mary, is my Lord. He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver but with his holy precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death..."

This Son, Jesus, was born of a woman. That's how Jesus came to earth. That's how God became man. The virgin birth. Mary, a virgin, never had sexual relations, and she got pregnant. The Holy Spirit had conceived with her, of course. And the son born to her was not just the son of man, but he was the Son of God.

This Son, Jesus, he was born under law. As a man, Jesus was subjected to all of God's law. He was under the same demands you and I are, to obey that law perfectly, to be holy, just as God is holy. As God, Jesus did it. Perfect obedience. Never sinned, even though, yes, he did face the same temptations you and I have.

And that perfect life of Jesus led up to the greatest point in the history of the world. He redeemed you. He redeemed me. Do you know what a good definition for redeem is? Literally, it means to buy back. To pay the price to get something back.

Now, to buy back what is rightfully ours in the first place would strike us as unfair. But what does a father do when his children live contrary to the law and thus subject themselves to its punishments? What does a father do when the law requires a payment of perfection, much more than his children, than we could ever pay?

What our heavenly Father did is that he bought his children back. He redeemed us. The cost Satan was holding us for, his ransom, was be great—no less than the life of his Son. But God loved us so much he sent us his Son. And that Son, Jesus, paid the price with his own life, shedding his holy, precious blood on the cross. A death he didn't deserve, but he died so we could be forgiven, so he could break the chains of our slavery to sin, so we could be children of God.

By the blood of Jesus, we have been saved. We have been redeemed, bought back as sons and daughters of God. We have the full rights of children of God. That means we are in a loving relationship with our God, who cares about us, who provides for us, protects us, who forgives. We have a child's inheritance, life eternal, not in hell, but in the kingdom of heaven.

All that, because of the blood of Jesus. The ransom for us was great. God's love was greater. That's the God we believe in. He has redeemed us. We are his. Take comfort in that. Amen.