Grace, mercy, and peace be with you from God the Father, and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father. Amen.

But when the time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.” So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.

**Galatians 4:4-7**

**THE TIME HAS FINALLY COME!**

Dear fellow believers in the Christ child,

The child wonders, “Will Christmas ever get here?!” The adult remarks, “I can’t believe another Christmas has come already!” It’s fun to see children’s excitement at Christmas time. As a boy, our family had the tradition of opening presents on Christmas morning. We kids would wake up when it was still dark and wait until we couldn’t stand it any more (which wasn’t that long, actually). We would go to our parents’ room and ask, “Mom and Dad, are you awake?” And sure enough, they always were! There was still a lot of time before sunrise, but we would drag poor Mom and Dad out of bed and open our presents.

Christmas has finally come. The anticipation is over. Now we have time to stop and think about our many blessings. We have time to think about our greatest Blessing of all: God’s gift to us of His Son.

The first chapter of the Bible tells us, “God created man in His own image” (Gen. 1:27). When God finished creating everything, “[He] saw all that He had made, and it was very good;” that is, perfect (Gen. 1:31). God originally made us human beings perfect, and made a perfect universe for us to live in. That’s the way God intended for things to stay. But the first two people, Adam and Eve, disobeyed God. They brought sin into God’s creation and ruined everything! That’s why we get sick, grow old, and eventually die. That’s why there are all the problems in the world and in our own lives. As soon as Adam and Eve sinned, God, in love, promised to send His Son to save us all from our sins (Gen. 3:15). Adam and Eve had to live for hundreds of years in the world they had ruined by their sin. How they must have yearned for the Savior to come and break sin’s curse! When Eve gave birth to her first son, she exclaimed, literally, “I have gotten a man – the Lord” (Gen. 4:1). It may be that she thought (hoped?) that her first son was the promised Savior.

Years passed, but God did not forget His promise to send our Savior. God told Abraham that the Savior would be one of his descendants. Abraham and his wife Sarah couldn’t have children. After they were past the normal age of childbearing, God miraculously enabled them to have a son, Isaac. And so God kept the promise of the Savior going.
Many more years passed and God repeated His promise to Abraham’s descendant, King David. David would also be a great grandfather many times removed of the Savior.

Many more years passed. Most of the Jewish nation – Abraham’s descendants – had forgotten God. But God never forget His promise.

About 4,000 years after God first gave His promise of the Savior to Adam and Eve, our text says, “The time had fully come.” God kept His promise and “sent His Son, born of a woman.” Isaiah had prophesied, “The virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel” (which means, “God with us”) (7:14). As we know, that virgin turned out to be Mary. The angel told her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God” (Lk. 1:35). The Son of God was born of the virgin, Mary, as true God and true Man. When Jesus was born the angel announced to shepherds, “Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord” (Lk. 2:10-11).

A lot of people think that we get to heaven by being good (by obeying God’s law – keeping God’s commands and Commandments – well enough). But the Bible says, “All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: ‘Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law’” (Gal. 3:10). God’s law demands that if we want to earn our way to heaven we have to be perfect. The Bible says that we “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Ro. 3:23). Not the sweetest little child or the most kind-hearted grandmother – none of us – deserves to go to heaven because of our goodness. In fact, the Bible says, “the wages of sin is death” (Ro. 6:23). The only thing we all have ‘earned’ is hell because of our sins!

God’s Son was “born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law.” The Son of God humbled Himself and was born as a human being: Jesus Christ (Philip. 2:6-8). Because Jesus is human, He could live a life on earth. Because Jesus is also God, the life He lived was perfect – “without sin,” the writer to the Hebrews tells us (4:15). Jesus was “born under law.” He, God, placed Himself under His own laws and obeyed them all perfectly. Thus Jesus “[redeemed] those under law.” Jesus lived perfect life in our place, earning heaven for us, so that we don’t have to try to live lives that are good enough to get us to heaven (which none of us can do). We’re not saved by how good we are. We’re saved by trusting in Jesus and His perfect life for us.

The Bible says, “The soul that sins will die” (Ezek. 18:4). Because none of us can keep God’s law, it demands that we all be punished in hell. Also for this reason the Son of God was “born under law, to redeem those under law.” Jesus took all of our failures to keep God’s law – all of our sins – away from us and placed them on Himself. He allowed Himself to be punished for our sins in our place with His death on the cross. Because Jesus is human, He could die. Because Jesus is also God, His death paid for our sins. We’re not saved by the sacrifices we make for God. We’re saved by the sacrifice the Son of God made for us. We believe in Jesus. God isn’t going to punish us in hell because He has forgiven every one of our sins.
Jesus did all this, we’re told, “that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, ‘Abba, Father.’” Jewish children used the word “Abba” as a very personal, loving name for their fathers. God put His Holy Spirit into our hearts who gave us our faith in Jesus. The Holy Spirit gives us the inner confidence that for Jesus’ sake God is our dear Father, and we are His dear children.

“So you are no longer a slave, but a son.” We’re not the devil’s slaves. Jesus made us God’s sons and daughters. John says us in his first epistle, “How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!” (1 Jn. 3:1).

“Since you are a son, God has made you also an heir” A child doesn’t have to earn his inheritance. He receives his inheritance simply because he’s his father’s child. As God’s children by faith in Jesus, we are heirs of heaven! Earlier we heard that “the wages of sin is death.” “But,” the verse goes on to say, “the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Ro. 6:23).

THE TIME HAS FINALLY COME! Another Christmas has come. My siblings and I don’t get up as early as we once did to open Christmas presents. But our gratitude to God for His gift to us of His Son keeps growing with the passing years. Jesus took all of your sins and my sins away. Jesus brought us to His Father and made us God’s dear children. And Jesus is coming again to take us all to heaven.

Let the earth now praise the Lord, Who has truly kept His Word
And the sinner’s Help and Friend now at last to us doth send.

What the father’s most desired, what the prophet’s heart inspired,
What they longed for many a year, stands fulfilled in glory here.

Abram’s promised great Reward, Zion’s Helper, Jacob’s Lord –
Him of twofold race behold – truly came, as long foretold. Amen. (TLH #91:1-3)