



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

December 25, 2023

Pastor James Enderle

Christmas Day; Nativity of Our Lord

First Lesson: [Micah 5:2-5a](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 98 CW

Second Lesson/Sermon Text: [Galatians 4:4-7](#)

Gospel Lesson: [John 1:1-18](#)

The Plan Comes Together

1. To _____ people
2. Who _____ the Law
3. _____ by _____
4. Made _____ of _____

Welcome to worship today at Morrison Zion Lutheran Church. We exist to glorify God. We have set out to do this by gathering around the Gospel so that we may grow in the Gospel and go to others with this Gospel.

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from Jesus Christ, our newly-born Savior: Amen.

If you are a fan of movies, you can picture this in just about any of those action movies or team-up movies. It's that montage where you know the conflict, you know the problem, and then the good guys/team is getting together and they are coming up with the plan to fix it. I think of the Ocean's Eleven movies. They have what they want to accomplish and they are putting the plan together and they are showing how it is all going to happen. My kids were just watching The Lego Movie and in there, they get the plan all together and they are going to save the day. There is that excitement of figuring out how to fix the problem. You get the plan and you come out and you accomplish it.

Maybe the most famous TV show/movie has to do with a guy that would hold this (*Pastor Enderle holds up a cigar*). The older generation would maybe remember: The A Team. Tobacco, that's not the point here. The A Team had "Faceman," "Murdock," "B.A.," and then "Hannibal." Every time the end of the show would come and everything worked out, Hannibal would say "I love it when a plan comes together."

Isn't it interesting that in almost any good book, any good movie, and any good story there needs to be conflict? There needs to be something that is solved and fixed. There needs to be a hero of the story. Why is that? Why is a book or movie only good if there is conflict? If you watch a movie and there is no conflict, you're kind of thinking *what's*

the point? I would put this out there that we need movies and stories that have conflict because our hearts are yearning for the true story that we see in the Bible. All the stories and things that we relate to are things that our hearts are yearning for.

What does it mean that we need stories with conflict? We see the brokenness of this world. We know that we struggle and we need someone to come and save us. We need a Savior to come and *to save broken people*. This is what God's plan was. In [Galatians 4](#) Paul writes, ***But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.*** There was a plan all along that this broken world needed to be fixed.

How do you see that this world is broken? How do you know that you are broken? Have you checked some of your relationships recently? Are all of your relationships fine and dandy? It's hard. Even the close relationships that we try to make amends with, they struggle. Then you look at the world in general and you see the wars and the conflict and they say our country is more divided now than maybe ever or at least since a true civil war. What brings about that conflict? What brings it is that we are broken people and it's not just their fault, it's my fault because I'm born sinful and I'm selfish, so we need someone to come and fix the problem. God has the solution. He has the plan. Paul is saying that at just the right time, God sent a Savior. This was planned out since the beginning of time. Through the Old Testament, it was prophesied, it was promised, but then there was even a time for about 400 years when no prophets, no voices, nothing, and then comes Jesus. In the small town of Bethlehem is born this baby, at just the right time, to fulfill all the prophecies and to show that He truly is not just a man but is God, the One promised. He came to save us broken people, to fix this broken world.

Notice what He says about us, who He came to save. He says He came to save those that are under the law, ***to redeem those under the law.*** He had to be born of a woman so that He could be under the law. We know that we are under the law as people. Why would we pick Galatians today instead of that typical John text? I think it's good to look at how we are under the law. But I think the truth is that we are those *who prefer the law*. You might say, "No, I'm Christian. I know about grace, but those other people, they are under the law. We are not under the law." Yes, we are no longer under the law. That's what it says Jesus has done. But is it true that we prefer the law?

Do you like to compare yourself to others? Do you like to show what good things you've done? Do you like to boast about who you are? The whole letter of Galatians was Paul writing to people who were given grace. They were given that message of forgiveness and peace, but there were people who were convincing them and saying "Go back to the law."

Think about Christmas Eve when we hear the kids say the story over and over again. Why do we need that message of Christmas? Why do we need that Gospel message?

So often we're like, "We don't need that anymore. I've heard that story. Give us the law. Tell me what I need to do. Tell me how to fix all these problems." Isn't that really the story of almost every Christmas movie out there? It's the story of someone picking themselves up, redeeming themselves, and making themselves the better person. It's all about what THEY do. Notice that we prefer the law, but what we really need to hear is that Gospel message, even that sinful message of our Savior born, spoken and sung from the words of children. But we so often say, "I've heard that before. I don't need that." Our hearts and the rest of the world endear and love the law, but we need that Gospel.

So what do we need? We need one who was born under the law to redeem those that are under the law. We need to be *rescued by Jesus*. We need Him to come and save us. That's what the name "Jesus" means. When the angels appeared to Joseph, they said "You will name Him Jesus because He will save His people from their sins." In all those Christmas movies, they are all about saving self and redeeming self. It's a great message to improve, but that message of saving yourself and that it's all about your love, that's the farthest thing from the message of the Christian Christmas.

The words we spoke at the beginning of the service—"This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us..." to redeem us, to rescue us, to save you. What will that do? That will change our hearts and we will want to serve Him. Paul kind of describes what that looks like. He says, ***Because you are his 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 God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.*** He is saying we are no longer slaves, slaves to sin, but we are now children of God. What God does through baptism, what God does through faith, He makes us His children. We are rescued by Jesus and *made children of God*.

What does it mean to be a child of God? He says this and explains it a little bit: ***...the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father."*** He called God our "Father." But he also said we can call Him "Abba." Father is the correct term, but do your kids (if you have little kids or even older kids) come up and go to you "Father"? Did your kid ever call you "father"? Is that an endearing term? Maybe that's a tradition in your house, but I think most of the time it's "Dad" or "Daddy." That's really what "Abba" is. It's a close, endearing word that shows how close and special our relationship is. A way to kind of explain it is not that WE know God and that WE are close to God but the fact that we are His children means that HE is close to us. HE loves us and He is our Father.

Think about it this way. If you are out at the grocery store in Green Bay, I would previously use someone like Aaron Rodgers, but Aaron Rodgers is gone, so Jordan Love, let's say you see him. Say you see Jordan Love and you say "I know him!" Is that a big deal for you to say "I know this famous person"? Not really. But what if Jordan Love knew you? What if he comes up and says "Hey, how is it going?" and says "Hi" in front of all your friends? This is what God is for us. He is our Father. He knows us and loves

us personally. What this does is it says we are children of God, no longer slaves to sin, but under His grace and mercy.

What I want us to see in this is that this changes our identity. We know we are saved and rescued by God, by Jesus and His work. He forgives our sins. Our guilt is taken away. But I also want to think about what it means to be a child of God, to have an inheritance. I think sometimes we focus so much on guilt that sometimes we forget shame. Guilt is that I made a mistake. I've done wrong things and I need to be forgiven. But shame is something that says I AM the mistake. I AM wrong. I think we can lie to ourselves. The devil and the world will tell you that you are nothing, that you are made wrong, or there is something wrong with you, or that the thing you did is so great that no one could ever forgive you. That shame is who you are. But as a child of God, you know that's not true.

Jesus has rescued you and redeemed you. He saves you. He forgives that guilt. But He also erases that shame. He lifts you up and says "You are my child." That identity is something that can never be taken away. In all the midst of life, we fall down so many times. We are broken people. We needed a Savior to come down, to be like one of us, and to take on our sins and live perfectly in our place so that He could take all that sin, because He was our perfect substitute, and then to show where the plan really comes together. Really, this is just the start.

The plan was lined out for centuries and He came into this world, born, but where does the plan really come together? It comes together at the cross. Jesus, our Savior, had to come down to live for us, to be born, but then to die. There He pays for our sins. There His perfect life was sacrificed for us, for you and for me. So here it is; the beginning of the plan and where the plan really comes together at the cross, where you are redeemed and forgiven. As it culminates as He defeats sin and death and the devil and rises again for you.

I think if you look to all the stories you love, all the movies, you see these themes—the themes of brokenness, of conflict, and how much we desire for someone to come in and save us; all of the super hero movies, all the ideas that there is someone/something that can rescue us. It's not just a fairytale. It's real life. It's for YOU. This true plan that has been planned out from the beginning of time is all about you. This is what Christmas is—that Jesus came to live for you, to die for you, to show you what real love is, to show you that you have truth and peace, so that you can show that peace and that joy, that plan that God has for you and for me of forgiveness and peace that we can give to others every day. Don't you love it when a plan comes together? Amen.

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. [\(Philippians 4:7\)](#) Amen.