

GLENWOOD COMMUNITY CHURCH

February 7, 2021

From Slave to Son

Galatians 4:1-20

Ben Cunningham

[music: "All Creatures of Our God and King," instrumental]

Pastor Paul:

Good morning! Welcome to our Sunday morning Glenwood gathering. This morning we gather around the word of God, discovering again who He is, who we are, what it looks like to love Him, to live for Him, to serve Him in meaningful ways.

This morning we resume our series in the book of Galatians, which we last heard from early March of 2020. Something happened in March, April, May. We moved more toward a subject format appropriate to what we were going through at the time. And now we pick up this rich treasure telling us who we are in Christ, what our identity is and how, if we have faith in Jesus Christ, that changes absolutely everything. These last months have been interesting times. I have thought often of Proverbs 3:5-6. *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Do not--" Do not. "--lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths."* I hope that you experience that lifestyle of trust this morning.

This morning we share with you news about two different families on our staff. First, to Ben and Lenea Rico is born a daughter! That is pronounced Annika Elyn, born February 2nd, 2021, seven pounds, six ounces, twenty and a half inches long. Congratulations to Ben and Lenea and big sister Soji. God's blessing on their family.

We also share news this morning of God's direction for Brandon and Amy Dickson. This last Wednesday night, Brandon shared some news with our high school

ministry, and this morning, Brandon is going to share with us where God is leading him and Amy. And Amy; where are you Amy? There you are, with little Frederick. Will you please come, Brandon?

Brandon Dickson:

Good morning, y'all. It's with a bittersweet heart that I tell you today that, in the next couple weeks, I'll be stepping down as the director of high school ministry here at Glenwood.

Amy and I have always had the desire to follow God's will for our lives. And during this past year, God has clarified a lot of things for us in regards to that direction. It's clear that the world needs the good news of Jesus now more than ever. One of my favorite verses is 2 Corinthians 5:17-18. *"Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away; behold, the new has come."*

All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself, and then He gave us the ministry of reconciliation. As I told the students on Wednesday, God's desire for all of us is to be faithful ambassadors of that ministry of reconciliation, with the end goal being that people from every tribe, tongue, and nation will stand before God, singing, praising, and glorifying Him. And we want to do our part for that mission here in Vancouver. And that means working and being among those who don't know Jesus.

As we shared this desire with Pastor Paul and the elders, they've been wonderful in encouraging us to follow God's will. As we've explored different options, Paul, Ben, and the others have helped in discerning the path forward for us. To this end, I'll be transitioning to work at a local Vancouver company where it's my desire to be a faithful ambassador to Jesus and His message of reconciliation.

Amy and I desire to remain members here at Glenwood, which has been our dear home for the past years. We'll still be involved in the lives of your students, though in a different role. We thank you for how much you have encouraged and supported us in my role on staff, and we look forward to serving Jesus alongside of y'all, albeit in a different fashion. Thank you.

Pastor Paul:

Thank you, Brandon. Brandon, it has been a true privilege to serve Jesus alongside you. Thank you. Thank you for your faithfulness to Him, for your fruitfulness, for your tender courage. Thank you for loving God, loving others, and modeling for us how to attend to the best interests of others as God would have us do. We delight in you, Brandon, Amy, little Frederick, and thankful that you remain a part of this body and that we'll be able to invest in you and Frederick, and watch him emerge and, hopefully, prayerfully, that he will love Jesus early and follow Him always. Thank you, Brandon.

Let's pray together.

Heavenly Father, thank You that You are completely trustworthy, that You know what we do not, that You know what tomorrow brings, what's around the corner, over the next hill. Thank You that You attend to us, to our interest, that You lead us in paths of righteousness for Your name's sake. Thank You for leading Brandon and Amy to us, for blessing them with Frederick, for their love for You. We ask that You would continue to abundantly bless them, that they would indeed be a light in a dark world as they move forward in trust of You and obedience to You. Thank You for Ben and Lenea. Thank You for Annika, their new addition. We ask that Annika and Soji alike love You early, follow You always, that You will use, continue to use Ben and Lenae and their ministry here in this church and this place. We also bring to you James Fitzgerald. Thank You for the success of the difficult surgery. We ask that he fully and quickly recovers, that the cancer disease is eliminated, that he

returns to full health, that he and Christy continue together to serve You in our county and our community in meaningful, practical, tangible, helpful ways. Thank You, Jesus. In Your name we pray, amen.

And now as the worship team comes, we invite you to meditate and reflect on the words of the song that they are about to sing. Please come.

Alex Schoening:

Such an ever present reminder in what we just heard this morning, with Brandon being called to a different line of work to serve the Lord, and births, and surgeries and recovery, that we're just in the middle of different seasons, whether it's we have to wear a mask for a little while or a long while. And one of the great reminders, especially in this song - if you just enjoy it with me - is that we can praise the Lord because of His inheritance that is unchanging, that is eternal, and it's given through the shed blood of Jesus.

[music: "This My Inheritance"]

Ben Cunningham:

Amen to that. Let's pray.

God of all grace, we thank You for the massive blessing that it is to know Your Son, to be indwelt by Your Spirit, to be given Your purposes, to be entrusted with the message of reconciliation. Father, we want to know You more. We want to delight in what Your Son has accomplished, and so would You help us as we look at Your word to find our inheritance there. Help us, as people who are looking through Your word as though we are looking through an estate that will be ours in Christ, to glean much from Your world. We need Your help to do this; we admit that up front,

and we look forward to Your help. I pray this in Jesus' name and for His sake. Amen.

Open your Bibles to Galatians 4. As Paul said, it has been a while-- probably felt like a hundred years that we were in the book of Galatians. And so, this morning we're going to be looking mainly at chapter 4:1-11. But we need to look back over what chapters 1-3 included as well. I thought that would be helpful.

So, we're going to be looking, actually, first, at verse 12-20, where Paul actually gets personal, and he talks about the relationship that he had with these Galatians, and he takes a purposeful trip down memory lane with them. It's going to help us recall a little bit about what was taught earlier.

So, Galatians 4:12-20, here's what it says. *"I beg of you, brethren, become as I am, for I also have become as you are. You have done me no wrong; but you know that it was because of a bodily illness that I preached the gospel to you the first time; and that which was a trial to you in my bodily condition you did not despise or loathe, but you received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus Himself. Where then is that sense of blessing you had? For I bear you witness that, if possible, you would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me. So have I become your enemy by telling you the truth? They eagerly seek you, not commendably, but they wish to shut you out so that you will seek them. But it is good always to be eagerly sought in a commendable manner, and not only when I am present with you. My children with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you-- I could wish to be present with you now and change my tone, for I am perplexed about you."*

We'll briefly notice three things from this section that remind us what Galatians is all about. First we notice that Paul is fired up about something. He is passionately engaged in this conversation. He begs them he calls them brothers; he asks them pointed questions; he says he's like a woman in labor, giving spiritual birth to their maturity, and he's perplexed about them. He dispenses with pleasantries in the beginning of the letter in chapter 1. Instead of thanking God for them or praying for

them - things he typically does - in verse 6 of chapter 1, he says, "*I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different Gospel.*" In 3:1, he says, "*O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you?*" Paul is passionate, and his tone is strong in this letter.

And it's severe because he cares about these people. These are some of the first converts of his first missionary journey in Acts 13 and 14. And he's concerned about them. He's worried about them. He even points back to their initial meeting in chapter 4 text that we read. In verses 13-15, we learn that Paul's presentation wasn't all that impressive, because it involved some kind of physical ailment or issue that he had, that by God's spirit the people in these region were able to look past and see that the source of this man's message is God. Paul goes to great lengths in chapters 1 and 2 to show that his message originated from God, that he isn't a hack, that he isn't peddling second-hand information.

And so what happened? How would these people go from being able to pluck out their eyes for the guy to now regarding him as an enemy? Well, the second thing we find in this text is that there are enemies present. In verse 17 Paul says, "*They eagerly seek you.*" He has unwelcome competition in the form of these Jewish false teachers who come in and are teaching this hybrid of Christianity and Judaism. They have a much slicker presentation than Paul did. We find out that this rival group, in 2:4, are called "*false brothers, secretly brought in.*" In 6:12, they're described as avoiding persecution by trying to find this middle ground between Jewish practice and this new Christianity-thing.

And what they're doing is they're peddling crossless Christianity, this poison that Paul's concerned about. So Paul is not foremost concerned about preserving his reputation; he's defending his apostleship because the message he's bringin is under attack and is being threatened as well.

The last thing we see in this text and in the beginning of Galatians is that the Gospel itself is at stake. The stakes are high. Their message was "Jesus plus--."

Jesus plus circumcision. Jesus plus Law-observance. They were insisting that these things were means of receiving righteousness from God, to which Paul soundly rejects in chapter 2, verses 15 and the beginning of 16. He says, "*We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the Law but through faith in Jesus Christ.*"

And Paul goes all the way back to Abraham to show that this is always how God's people have been declared righteous. That it's by faith, not by obedience. He says that the Gospel was preached beforehand when it was told to Abraham that all the nations would be blessed through him. And this promise would not be given according to Abraham's DNA, but according to Abraham's faith. And that's why Paul invites them to become like him, because he has come out from under the curse of the Law into freedom of life in the Spirit.

So he's using his personal relationship and history with these Galatians to kind of jolt them out of this stupor that they're in, and get them back to the Gospel that they started with.

There's much more that could be said about the first three chapters, but let's look at chapter 4, the main section for this morning, 4:1-11. Paul carries forward this incredible word picture from the paragraph before to help to entice these believers come out from under the Law and to find freedom in the covenants and the promise of these covenants that's fulfilled. And he uses the example of a person being adopted to a family and being given an inheritance.

Now, as humans we all want to belong. We are born needing help and depending on others. And much of what we do in life is because of where we belong or whom we belong to. I belong to the Cunningham clan, and so we think there are certain dishes that should be present on a Thanksgiving table, we love Wendy's frosties, we-- there's just lots of things about the clan of our family. And because I belong to them, I live in such a way. I belong to my immediate family. I'm a father and I'm a husband, and so I'm constantly advising and protecting and coordinating and trying

to anticipate their needs and life with them. I belong to a church, which decides what time I get up on Friday morning and how I spend my time and how I spend my resources. And in all these ways, I belong to things, and that affects how I live. And we hunger for belonging. Even if it's the destructive variety like a gang or an abusive relationship.

This is what the Gentiles longed for. One author says about these Gentiles, "The Gentile Christians in the early churches must have wondered what they were doing following after this Jewish king from somebody else's religion. Had they wandered accidentally into somebody else's covenant? Were they clinging to some kind of exception clause to God's main purpose with Israel? Were they parasites on the promises of God?" This hunger made them susceptible to recruitment to false gospels.

And we too are tempted to settle in this regard, to embrace the kind of belonging that we know isn't true and isn't best. Instead of trusting what God says is true, we set the bat so that we can hit it. We pick standards so that we can measure up.

Where do you belong? To whom do you belong? And how does that belonging shape the way that you live and think? What does it mean to belong to Jesus Christ? That's the question that Paul is going to answer for us this morning in our text in chapter 4.

Helpfully, Paul starts off with an illustration in 4:1-2, here's what it says. *"Now I say, as long as the heir is a child, he does not differ at all from a slave although he is the owner of everything, but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by the father."*

The beginning of verse 1 connects back to what's said before in the previous paragraph. Paul's basically saying, "what I mean is--" which shows us that he's kind of mid-stream in his thinking. And he's just made the case that the tutoring of the Law is now done and that faith in Jesus has made it possible for any person in any

category to come to Him. He finishes his thought in 3:29 when he says, "*And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendents, heirs according to the promise.*" That's why he's talking about heroes in verse 1.

So, he starts with this illustration. There's three stages to this illustration that we need to see. There's a period of waiting. There's the father's timing. And then there's the giving of the inheritance.

Becoming an heir meant being responsible, and so Paul says that during this time of waiting, the heir is kind of the functional equivalent of a slave. Because even though he's the future heir, he still needs care, he still needs supervision; he's not ready; he's a minor. And the guardians that are overseeing him point us back to how the Law is a guardian in 3:25. So he's got to wait.

But then we find the second thing, that there's a father's timing involved. In Roman society they had a couple of different mile makers for young boys in becoming men: the age of fourteen and twenty-five. Roman society kind of saw those a mile markers. And yet, it was always up to the father when a transition would happen from a son being the minor to being the heir. The waiting period is ended by the father's timing.

And the last thing is when they actually receive the inheritance, when they assume the rights and privileges of being in that family. Receiving a parent's inheritance, one author calls the engine of survival in the New Testament world. It's not trust-fund baby getting millions of dollars kind of stuff when we think about inheritance. These are the resources and land that are needed and required to sustain generational progress in a family or in a clan. It's the passing of a legacy and a father's work, and it would pass through the son, which is why the analogy doesn't involve daughters, though it certainly obviously by implication applies to women as well. But that's how inheritances worked.

So he sets up this illustration in verses 1 and 2, to apply it in verses 3-6. Look at those with me. *"So also we, while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world. But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father.'"*

So Paul applies this illustration now to followers of Jesus. And he uses the same three phases we talked about. There's the period of waiting. Says, *"When we were children, held in bondage under the elemental things of the world."* You'll notice that Paul applies this analogy, but that the waiting heir isn't just waiting to come of age, there's a greater obstacle in transferring the inheritance to him, and that's that the heir is in bondage; he's serving a different master - these elemental things of the world.

Now, what are those? Well, sin's bondage takes a lot of different shapes, right? And it's important to remember Paul's audience were primarily Gentiles, and so their original bondage was in the form of idolatry. He says in verse 8, *"When you did not know God, you were slaves to those which by nature are no gods."* So that's kind of the first phase of their slavery. But they've actually entered a second phase of slavery in trying to keep the Law. And Paul says if you try to keep the works of the Law, you're going to fail, because you have to keep the entire thing in full, that the Law is meant to reveal God's righteous standard and to imprison everyone under sin, as 3:22 say.

He uses this phrase *"elemental spirits"* again in 4:9, later on. He says, *"But now that you have come to know God, or rather be known by God, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things to which you desire to be enslaved all over again?"* And he tips his hand a little about what these things are in verse 10. He says, *"You observe days and months and seasons and years,"* referring to the Jewish calendar and the observance of different rituals.

So the phrase "*elemental things of the world*" has a range of meanings. It's most common usage was referring to earthly materials or principles. It could refer even to spiritual beings. But I think Paul is doing something masterful here. What he's actually doing by using this term is, he's bringin together various version of slavery under one banner called "*elemental things of the world,*" and he's actually taking their observance of the Law and comparing it to their pagn idolatrous practices from before.

So, initially their idols were wood and stone, and now they've become food regulations and dates on the calendar. And Paul is saying, whether you miss the target to the right or to the left, the result is the same. It's the same spiritual bondage. It's the same pre-Christ life.

So we have a period of waiting, but it's much more dicey than the analogy. But we see the father's timing. Look at verse 4, "*But when the fullness of the time came.*" Historians like to talk about the Roman roads and the version of the Greek that was being spoken at the time, and all these things that show that this was an ideal historical window for the Son to arrive.

And while that certainly is the case, Paul has a much bigger view in mind. This is the calendaring of our sovereign God to decide when the Son would come. It was after thousands of years of foreshadowing and historical hints. All the far off promises, all the close calls, all the prophets and speeches and failed priesthood, and butchered pulls and lambs, and bondage of sin that was passed from generation to generation to generation and finally the Father says, "It's time to send the Son." In the fullness of God's timing, He came.

Now, the third category has to do with receiving the inheritance, but there is a massive problem. Because how in the world is God going to end up giving an inheritance to a people who are in bondage to different master? Any father would kind of cringe at that idea. Well, we find out how, that "*when the fullness of time*

came God sent forth His Son born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who are under the Law, so that we might receive adoption as sons."

God sent heaven's Heir into slavery. What Paul later says would be absurd to do, to re-enter slavery after becoming an heir, Jesus decides to do. And this is why Paul goes out of his way to say how it was that the Son came. He came "*born of a woman,*" meaning taking on human form. He existed before in full glory and power. And he takes on the form of a human being. He was born "*under the Law.*" He was born as a Jew. Not as one who is under the power of sin or of the Law, but one who is free, so that He might perform the greatest inside job in history, in redeeming people from under the Law. So that's how He was sent.

And why was He sent in that way? God sent His Son to become a man so that mankind might become sons and daughters of Him. It says, "*So that He might redeem those who are under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.*" That He, being free, would enter into the slavery of becoming a human being, and a Jewish one at that, and perfectly perform and fulfill the Law in order to extract God's people from under the bondage of the Law and give them freedom in the Holy Spirit.

How would He do that? 3:13, "*Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law by becoming a curse for us--for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who is hanged on tree'-- so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.*" Jesus freed us from slavery so that He might welcome us as siblings.

We are adopted as sons and daughters in the family of God. The riches of that transfer are unspeakably great. We have access to God as our Father; we have assurance of the forgiveness of sin; we have the hope of everlasting life; the Father's loving discipline, the active presence of God to defeat our sin and empower our obedience, the protection of God against our powerful enemy, the assurance

that all things serve our good, the help of the Spirit to understand Scripture and grow in maturity, power for ministry to others, participation in His global mission to make His name great.

A lot is loaded into that phrase: "*We've received adoption as sons.*" Don't fly by those words that "*we might receive adoption as sons*" without marveling at the Father's decision to send the divine Heir to fetch slaves. This is incredible.

And it doesn't stop, even after verse 5. Look at verse 6, He keeps sending. "*Because you were sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father.'*" Paul explains that the Holy Spirit - he describes Him as the Spirit of His Son - in order to show the necessity of the Son's work in sending the Holy Spirit. And so God-- this is crazy-- God not only sends His Son to adopt us and to make us as children, then He sends the Spirit to convince us that it's so.

One author said the purpose of the Son's mission was to give the rights of sonship; the purpose of the Spirit's mission, to give the power of using them.

And what does the Spirit do? What is described in this text? Well, He creates the desire, or the ability, or the impetus to cry, "*Abba! Father.*" This was the terminology a child had for his father. It was intimate and respectful. It was the language that Jesus addressed the Father with in the Garden of Gethsemane, when He asked the cup to pass from Him. This is more desperate, guttural cry kind of thing than baby bouncing on a lap kind of a thing. And as former slaves, we need to be able to do that, because we need help to realign our trusts. Our instinct will be to hedge our bets, to store our food in the high chair like we did in the orphanage instead of trusting the Father to provide for tomorrow. Or to live a life of self-preservation instead of sacrifice for the Father's sake. And so the giving of the Spirit is a substantial part of our inheritance. And he's going to talk about it more in the book of Galatians; it's wonderful stuff that's coming.

This is all because God had promised that there would be a time that God's people would have the Law written on their hearts, that they would have hearts of flesh and not of stone. Not that they would forsake and reject the Law, but they would actually obey the Law by the power of the Holy Spirit. So, the giving of the Spirit enables the promise of the Abrahamic covenant and the new covenant to be realized. That's what Paul was talking about earlier in chapter 3. And the sending of the Spirit is a preview of coming attractions. It's a downpayment for the full estate that is coming our way.

This is why Paul has explained the magnitude and the magnificence of this inheritance all to make the point in verse 7. Here's Paul's point; it's very simple. *"Therefore, you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God."* If you are in Christ, you have gone from being a slave to being an heir. You are exceedingly blessed and provided for in Christ. We have received a remarkable inheritance.

Let's consider this first implication this morning. Do we know the estimated value of our inheritance in Christ? Can we fathom the privilege of what it means to be adopted into the family of God? Our first implication: we must continually inventory and appraise the value of our inheritance in Christ.

If we think that the privileges of being an heir aren't valuable, then slavery will look promising. Won't it? Those who promise an early inheritance in this life by way of visible and tangible resources are only reducing the value of what is to come to us.

One example in the giving of the Holy Spirit-- this is a verse that I chose to meditate on earlier in my life and has been helpful, when Paul says, *"But I say, walk by the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh."* That's a part of our inheritance, is the giving of the Holy Spirit, and the empowering of the Spirit to overcome sin and to mortify it.

And so, if we understand and assess rightly the value of our inheritance in Christ, our outlook will be different. So how might you be underestimating the value of our inheritance in Him?

Paul's point leads to a great question in verse 8-11. Here's what he says. *"However at that time, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those which my nature are no gods. But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless things, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again? You observe days and months and seasons and years. I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored over you in vain."*

And this is why Paul has gone to such great lengths to describe the beauty of our inheritance, is because these people were chasing false gold. They were ready to exchange the true stuff for it. They're chasing security and approval and a right standing with God through alternative means, putting their inheritance in jeopardy. The gospel doesn't allow additives, and the Father defends the glory of the Son and will not allow anything to supplement His work and detract from His glory. And so the terms of this abundant inheritance are simple and single: they are Christ alone, by faith alone. Verse 8-9 set up the question where he's saying, you didn't even know God, and you were slaves to things you didn't even know you were slaves to.

And he has what seems like a bit of a mistake in verse 9, but it's not; it's intentional. *"But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God"*-- and what Paul's doing there, he's saying, actually the reason you know God is because of God. That God initiated your knowledge of Him. He's the one who knocked Saul off - right? - the animal. He's the one who sent Paul and Barnabas on this missionary journey that went through the region of Galatia. He's the one who opened your eyes and ears to understand this gospel. He's the one initiating this salvation.

Paul's afraid that all this labor will be in vain, that these Galatians would become slaves to a Jewish calendar and laws and to a Law that's been fulfilled in Christ. And here comes the devastating question, with the full weight of this passage behind it. *"How is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things to which you desire to be enslaved all over again?"* Or, in other words, if the gospel has made you an heir, why on earth would you return to slavery? It's a good question.

In our family, we have four children. Three children by biological means, and one child through the privilege of adoption. And I remember meeting her for the first time. We walked into this governmental building in China, and, having prayed for years for this day, knowing that we would finally meet her. We were nervous. And as much as we tried to not have a picture of what it would be like, we did. And it had all the Hallmark glow about it, right? And we walked into the room, and there she was. She was being held by the dear saintly woman who cared for her at that orphanage-- the same tearful woman who hung around outside the hallway to get a few last looks at her before taking off.

And I'll never forget what happened when we held her for the first time. She bawled. And screamed. And writhed. Stuffed animals and toys and clothes-- none of it mattered. We were unknown strangers to her. I remember walking her up and down this empty, creepy hallway, trying to not affect the rest of the kids in the room, and the rest of the parents. And she screamed the whole time.

It was actually a blessing, because it proved the ability to attach, and yet it was one of the strangest feelings I ever had. Because I was overjoyed to finally see her, but I was sad for this little grieving girl. Because she finally had a permanent, stable family who would rescue and resource her and pray for her and provide for her and protect her, and her future for the first time was bright. But all she longed for was the woman in the hallway. She wanted life in the orphanage, because that's all she knew. She wanted life instead of life as an heir.

I'm guessing that circumcision or obeying the Mosaic Law may not be all that tempting to you. But this morning, let's ask the Spirit to show us ways that we reach for life in the orphanage instead of life as an heir. How are you tempted to turn back? How are you tempted to be like the Israelites who longed for slavery in Egypt again? How do you settle for what's seen over what Christ says?

Second implication for us this morning is to ask the Holy Spirit to help you identify ways that you are tempted to return to your former slavery.

We do this, right? Man-made ways of belonging to God; they've always been appealing. Golden calves are made everyday somewhere in the world. Faith and sight don't blend well, and sometimes we want something more measurable to vouch that we're good with God than what He says. There are days that we feel like we need more than a historical event and a Savior that we've never seen, and so we set up attainable benchmarks of righteousness and adopt supplements that give us an edge with God, we think. How are we tempted to turn back to our former slavery?

Maybe this morning you're realizing for the first time, that the grounds that you have believed make you right with God are not true. That you're a slave to something else that drives you to do what you do. If it's anything than what Jesus has accomplished, here are the words of Russell Moore. He says, "The universe was meant to be a home where the image bearers of God rule and serve under their father. It was all to be ours. But primeval insurrection in the garden, though, turned the universe into an orphanage. The heroes were gone, done in by their appetites. A serpent now holds the cosmos in captivity, driving along the posed rulers as his slaves. The whole universe is now an orphanage."

Hear the offer of Jesus to accept you into the family of God. If you repent of your sin and trust that His life and death and resurrection can make you right with Him. The offer is real, and the inheritance is real.

In closing, this morning, we are going to be taking communion together. Jesus knew that we needed regular reminders of why we are accepted by God, right? He knew that the church would need to take time to recall what the Father did in the fullness of time, and to rehearse again how He transformed us from being slaves to being heirs through His Son. So we proclaim the Lord's death as the covenant grounds for relationship with God, and we'll do this until the remainder of our estate is given to us. So, today, let this taste point forward to remind you of the inheritance that awaits you.

Let's take time now to reflect on this rich inheritance that we have in Christ, and maybe even confess ways that we've returned to our former slavery. Let's take a moment and just remember why God sent forth His Son, and we'll come back up and we'll take communion together.

[music: "When I Survey the Wonderful Cross," instrumental]

As we prepare the elements to receive them in just a moment, I want to read to you from Luke 22. *"And when the hour came, He reclined at the table, and the apostles with Him. And He said to them, 'I have earnestly desired to eat this passive with you before I suffer; for I tell you that I will not eat it until it's fulfilled in the kingdom of God.'* And He took a cup and when He had given thanks, He said, *'Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.'* And He took bread and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to them saying, *'This is My body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of Me.'*" Let's partake of the bread together.

It continues. *"And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying"--* and listen to this-- *"This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood."* The

new covenant that we talked about in our text this morning. Let's partake of the cup together.

Let's pray.

God of heaven, we thank You for the blood of Your Son and the empty tomb which secures the promises of the New Covenant. The kind of Law-keeping that You are behind, God, that honors You, that glorifies You, that's heartfelt obedience from the life of a transformed person. Father, we want to understand what You have given to us. We don't want to shy away from the full description of the inheritance that You have given to Your people, because You mean for that to be a ballast in our boat. And so we pray for the eyes of faith to accept the incredible generosity that You have shown to us and our inheritance. And we pray that You would stamp out rivals, the ways that we seek to return to the things that ensnared us, that, God, You would surface those things and by the power of the Holy Spirit give us greater tastes; give us gold refined. We love You. We thank You for Your help in this. And we expect great things this week as we ponder our inheritance, as we help one another to find ways that we are returning to slavery. We pray for Your guidance and Your leadership in this. We love You and we thank You. In Jesus' name, amen.

[music: "All I Have is Christ."]

Alex Schoening:

Amen. All we have is Christ. Go in peace, Glenwood. Have a great week.