

Being the Church at Brentwood
The Beloved Children of God

Galatians 4:4-7
(Hymns – 480, 811, 534, 556)

January 1, 2012 – New Year's Day

The most important Christmas gift we all got this year
is the reminder of the most important Christmas gift ever –
the sending by God of his own Son, Jesus Christ,
and his Holy Spirit,
to free us from slavery and make us beloved children of God.

It's a gift that was given over 2000 years ago.
It's *the* gift that keeps on giving.
It's a gift that is too easily ignored.
It's *the* gift that gives a truly flourishing life,
not only for each and every one of us,
but for the whole creation.

The primary reason for being the church here at Brentwood
is to express gratitude for that gift.
Everything we enjoy as a church,
as a community of the beloved children of God,
as the heirs of the grace of God found in Jesus Christ,
flows from the gift of adoption that God gave us in the Christ event.
As the realization of value of that gift
reaches deeper and deeper into our beings,
we are filled with the awe of genuine gratitude.
The words, "Thank you, my Father,"
come more often and more sincerely to our lips.
Worshipping together in that gratitude
is not something we *have* to do each week,
but something we *get* to do
out of joy and thanksgiving
for the gift of adoption and freedom,
for the fact that we are, by God's gracious love, the beloved children of God.

So, as we begin this new year,
the year of our Lord 2012,
what would be different in our lives
if we believed even more deeply
the central assurance of this morning's text,

the affirmation that we are indeed, by God's gracious love,
the beloved children of God,
brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ in Jesus Christ,
and heirs of everything God has to offer?

What would be different in our lives
if we saw things from this perspective,
from the perspective of God's own beloved children,
freed by his gracious love in Jesus Christ to flourish as blessings
in and for this neighbourhood, this city, this world?

Here is one thing to consider.
We would be less fearful and more confident.

"Confident" literally means "with faith."
If we had the faith this text credits to us,
the faith that we are the beloved children of God,
that God is our loving father who entrusts and supports
us with a mission of compassionate witness in this world,
then our way of seeing things would be much more courageous.
We would see more clearly that we live in and from the heart of God.
The world in 2012 could use more people
who had that kind of confidence.

Galatians is the letter in which,
a little later on in 5:22-23a,
we find that wonderful list of the gifts of the Spirit
that we remind ourselves of so often.

With the kind of confidence that comes
from being adopted by God in Christ as his beloved children,
here's the kind of perspective we can take into 2012
with the confidence that comes with God's love:
where there is hatred, we can bring love;
where there is depression, we can bring joy;
where there is war, we can bring peace;
where there is frustration, we can bring patience;
where there is meanness, we can bring kindness;
where there is badness, we can bring goodness;
where there is despair, we can bring faithfulness;
where there is arrogance, we can bring humility;
where there is self-hatred, we can bring self-discipline.

Take a moment and think of one situation in your life –
just focus on one for now –
where you could be a blessing by bringing a gift of the Spirit.

[Allow time for reflection.]

We build up our capacities to be these gifts
one situation at a time.

So, I encourage you to take the situation you have imagined
and make your giftedness as a beloved adult child of God happen this week.

Focus primarily on that situation.

Pray about it.

Think about it.

Act on it.

Learn from what you have thought and done.

Take the next step in being the blessing
God freed you to be as his beloved adult child.

And know that your soul is nourished to flourish at our Lord's Supper.

Come, let us taste and see that the Lord is good
to all his brothers and sisters.

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