

This Christmas we're thinking about the miracle of Advent. Last Sunday Joe talked about the miracle of Jesus, this morning we are thinking about the miracle of the moment. We all have moments in our lives that change everything. The moment we realise we want to marry or the moment we get married. These moments change everything.

There are other moments in our lives that change everything, the moment our children are born, the moment we pass our driving test, or the moment we move out of home for the first time. Life changes on a series of moments, some of them good, some not so good.

What has changed because of the moment of Jesus birth?

For some of us the only real change is the fact that we have Christmas. We have a reason for all the Christmas trees, and while they certainly bring more than a degree of colour and cheer, can we really say that they have changed our lives? For others it is the reason to go and enjoy a good Christmas knees' up. A night to party with friends and let our hair down, for those of us who have hair to let down! Again, can we really say this changes our lives?

In our passage from Galatians Paul explains to us why the moment of Jesus birth has the potential to change all of our lives for ever. Let's take a few minutes to think about how our lives can be changed because of the miracle of the moment of Jesus birth.

For a moment to bring about dramatic change there has to be a difference between life before and after that moment. Paul describes what life was like before the moment of Jesus birth.

He said that we were living like heirs who were being prevented from accessing the fortune that should be ours. More than that, not only were we being prevented from accessing this incredible inheritance, but instead of living the life of privilege we should be living, we were being treated as though we were slaves in the house. ***What I am saying is that as long as an heir is under age, he is no different from a slave*** (Galatians 4:1)

What does Paul mean by this? He is telling us that we were created to enjoy an incredibly close relationship with God. More than that, when God created the earth and placed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, they were to rule over the whole of creation for God. If the Lord is the King, then we were supposed to be princes, crown princes who would rule in his name. It was an incredibly privileged position. Something the Psalmist picked up on this when he said: ***What is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them? You have made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honour. You made them rulers over the works of your hands; you put everything under their feet...*** (Psalm 8: 4-6)

This is the inheritance that Paul was talking about in Galatians, this is what we had, but of course we all know what happened back in Genesis. Instead of being content with this incredible position God had given us, we wanted something else. We decided God was withholding something from us and in believing the grass was greener on the other side of the fence we lost everything.

Instead of ruling over the whole of creation, it became a struggle to manage and maintain it. Instead of working on behalf of God we found ourselves working against God. Instead of being princes, we

became slaves, not to God but our own desires, our own wants and our own ambitions; none of which could ever or will ever satisfy us.

The reason none of this could ever satisfy us is because in the place of the close relationship we had with God, we were now under the care of a guardian. Someone who's role was to keep us on the straight and narrow, to keep us out of trouble and so God gave us the law. He set out the rules by which we are to live. Of course, we can't keep the law and so this is another reason for our inheritance from being kept from us. Paul put it this way: ***The heir is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father. So also, when we were underage, we were in slavery and under the elemental spiritual forces of the world.*** (Galatians 4: 2-3)

This is how we have been living up until the moment of Christ's birth. This frustrated almost half life with none of the fulfilment and purpose we should have.

With the moment of Christ's birth everything changes.

Paul said: ***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.*** (Galatians 4:4) The miracle of the moment, is that Jesus was born into our world, to live the life we live but crucially he did it in way that meant he maintained that perfect relationship with God that we fail to keep. He lived in a way that fulfilled every part of the law, he was that perfect crown prince that we failed to be.

This is incredibly important, because this meant that when Jesus went to the cross, he wasn't paying any debt or facing any charge that could legitimately be brought against him. Everything he faced and went through was to pay our debt.

So, how does this moment change everything? The answer lies in the last part of verse 4... ***that we might receive adoption to sonship.*** This isn't some chauvinistic statement, or characterising men as being more significant than women. This is something incredibly important and life changing.

When Paul wrote this letter women did not inherit. Everything went to the eldest son and families would have continued to have children until a boy came along. When Paul said we would receive adoption to sonship he was saying that all of us would be treated like the eldest son. This is what Paul was talking about when he said: ***So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptised into Jesus Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male or female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*** (Galatians 3: 26-29)

The miracle of the moment, the miracle of Advent is that we are all treated as the eldest son. Think about this for a moment. The inheritance is coming from God the Father, whose only son is Jesus Christ. So, what we are being told here is that the miracle of the moment, the miracle of advent is that we are treated, by God, as though we are Jesus Christ himself.

Remember the psalm we read: ***What is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them? You have made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honour. You made them rulers over the works of your hands; you put everything under their feet...*** (Psalm 8: 4-6)

This is how our lives are changed by the miracle of the moment, the question then is how, how do we claim this change for ourselves. The answer is very simple, we place our faith in Jesus Christ. We

trust and believe that our wants, our desires, our ambitions – none of that will ever satisfy, none of that will ever replace what we lost in Eden and so it is only through trust in Christ, hope in Christ that this is returned to us.

So, this Christmas, will it just be about the trees – as incredible as they are, as much as they brighten our world, but do nothing to change us, they don't give us one of those significant moments, or will it be about the miracle of the moment of Jesus birth. The one moment in history that has the potential to change our lives more than any other.