

## CHRISTMAS HOPE IN A HOPELESS WORLD

It's About Time

Galatians 4:4-7

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LISTEN: <http://www.fbcjc.org/sermon/christmas-hope-in-a-hopeless-world-its-about-time/>

I have this little ritual I enjoy right before the Advent season. I decorate my office with several nativity sets. Interesting--for the first time, I noticed something as I was placing one of my oldest sets. One of the shepherds has one hand over his mouth, as if words fail him and all that is left is silent awe and wonder. Yes, by this time, we've said and sung about all that can be said and sung. Now we just step back from all the frenzy and noise and we just wonder!

**"When the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman..."** The word "fullness" is used elsewhere to describe a fully manned ship, something that is fertile, overflowing, entire, consummated.

**"When the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman..."** John Buchanan once wrote, "Advent means the world is pregnant." Have you ever thought about one of our euphemisms for the word "pregnant"? There was a day when that was not considered polite to say. So we would say, "She is expecting." So much better. Now think about the theme of our Advent season: Christmas Hope in a Hopeless World." We are people of hope. We are...wait for it...expecting! So when someone walks up to you and says, "Hi, how are you?" Just reply, "Oh, I'm expecting!"

**"When the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman..."** Sent his Son. You see, Jesus became a child of God so you could become a child of God. Through Jesus, God becomes deeply involved in this world. He sends his Son. Then God sends His Spirit (v. 6). And that Spirit allows us to cry, "Abba, Father!" So that what God has made possible in Christ is not an institutional relationship or a legal one, but an intimate and personal relationship.

**"When the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman..."** Remember those old revival sermons that overflowed with alliteration? Each of the preacher's points began with the same letter? Well, shamelessly, here is an alliteration for you: On Christmas morning, as never before, we are aware that God's love for us is *personal, passionate and planned*. No accident. Planned. **"When the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman..."**

A moment ago, I shared with you the many shades of meaning for the word "fullness." Here's another meaning. Fullness is not merely something that has run its course, but something that is full in its content, reaching its ripe completion. Theologian John Haught has pointed out that while much of the post-modern world has given up on hope and abandoned the notion that history is going anywhere, followers of Jesus need to insist on purposeful history. He reminds us that history is like a good book: A compelling plot and order, an element of surprise and sufficient time for the drama to unfold. **"When the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman..."**

We used to sing it all the time. You wouldn't think of it as a Christmas song. "He's got the whole world, in His hands...He's got the little bitty baby, in His hands..." How about we close this Advent/Christmas season on hope with a quote from one of the Beatles? John Lennon once said, "Everything, in the end, will be OK. If it's not OK, it's not the end." **"When the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman..."**

