

Emmanuel Ev. Lutheran Church—Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Church
Christmas 2
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Sermon by Pastor Christopher Pflughoeft
Your heavenly Father keeps his promises

⁴But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son to be born of a woman, so that he would be born under the law, ⁵in order to redeem those under the law, so that we would be adopted as sons. ⁶And because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts to shout, "Abba, Father!" ⁷So you are no longer a slave, but a son. And if you are a son, then you are also an heir of God through Christ.

—Galatians 4:4-7

I make many promises to my daughters, especially with a schedule that asks me not to be home many evenings. The conversations usually go something like this; "I am sorry, Honey, but we can't play soccer tonight. I have a meeting. I promise that tomorrow I will take you to the park to play soccer." "No, we can't go to Organ Stop tonight, but when Uncle Tony and Aunt Erin come to town, we will go with them." "Honey, it is too dark to go for a walk tonight. I promise that I will go for a walk with you tomorrow morning."

Parents, perhaps you have made similar promises. Unfortunately, sometimes factors – either within my control or outside of my control – prevent me from keeping the promises that I made. Honestly, it breaks my heart to break a promise I made to my daughters, but it does happen. Sometimes, we get to the park, and the soccer nets are taken down. Sometimes, another responsibility arises, and I must cancel the plans that I made. Other times, it is my own fault that the promise wasn't kept. My daughters have a father that cannot always keep his promises. They can have comfort, though. You can as well. Today, through the readings for this Sunday, we see that **Your Heavenly Father keeps His promises**. We see this in the reading from Galatians as we see that He fulfilled His promise at the set time. This gives us confidence as we consider that He promises to give you an inheritance.

A group of people were teaching a message contrary to what Paul taught in Galatia. It was a message of righteousness based on works. In response to this, Paul defended that His message is from God. Then, Paul refuted their false teaching by expressing the true doctrine that both Jew and Gentile become acceptable to God through faith. In saying this, Paul wrote about the promise given to Abraham, demonstrated this doctrine based on the life of Abraham, and wrote about how a person becomes a son of Abraham through faith. About this, Paul wrote, "*And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants and heirs according to the promise.*" (Galatians 3:29) After stating this, Paul shared a parable about a young son. One could sum up this parable by saying, just as a son does not have full rights as a son until the appointed time, believers were under the law until Christ came. In this context, Paul writes the words that we consider today. In this section, we see that **your Heavenly Father keeps His promises**.

Your Heavenly Father fulfilled His promise at the set time. In His infinite wisdom, God determined a time that He would send His Son to the earth. You could speculate the reasons as to why God chose the specific time that He sent His Son. The universal language of Greek and the Roman road system would be two reasons. Ultimately, God has not revealed to us why He chose the time he did. The important thing that we see is that God promised to send a Savior, and **he fulfilled His promise at the set time**. He sent His Son. Paul expressed details about the Savior that God promised and sent. He was born of a woman. So, this Savior was the Son of God, and he was man. This Savior also submitted himself to live under the law. Paul shared the details about the Savior that God promised to send and did send. This Savior is Jesus Christ. He was born of a woman named Mary. He is the Son of God. As we see here, **your Heavenly Father keeps His promises**. He fulfilled His promise at the set time.

In the song from the Gospel for today, Zechariah recognized that God was fulfilling his promises. Consider some of the lines from Zechariah's song, "*Blessed is the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has visited us and prepared redemption for his people. He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, just as he said long ago through the mouth of his holy prophets. He raised up salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us to show mercy to our fathers by remembering his holy covenant, the oath which he swore to Abraham our father, to grant deliverance to us from the hand of our enemies.*" (Luke 1:68-74) Zechariah recognized that God was fulfilling the promise he spoke through his prophets. Zechariah recognized that God was staying true to the oath He swore to Abraham. We read that promise this morning in the first lesson. God delivered on His promise. The Father sent His Son at the time he determined. **Your Heavenly Father fulfills His promises.**

Have you ever looked at how Jesus is the fulfillment of God's promise and thought, "This all seems kind of convenient?" Have you ever considered the promises recorded about the Savior in the Old Testament and considered the New Testament fulfillments and thought, "what if the gospel writers are lying? What if people that knew a lot about the prophecies just claimed Jesus fulfilled these promises? What if they were liars? What if Mathew was a liar? What if Mark was a liar? What if Luke was a liar? What if John was a liar?" Are you ever tempted to think that way? Are you ever tempted to think that God couldn't fulfill His promises? Ultimately, that questioning is rooted in sin. It comes from putting yourself above God's recorded promise and fulfillment as the judge of it. That is sin. Sin that needs to stop.

If you struggle to see that God fulfilled His promise at the set time, take confidence that the accounts of the fulfillment of God's promise in Jesus bear the marks of reliable accounts. The accounts of the fulfillment of God's promise in Jesus are shared by eyewitnesses that did not stand to gain from lying. They actually stood to lose their lives over what they shared about the fulfillment of God's promise at the set time.

If you struggle to see that God fulfilled His promise at the set time, listen to what I have to say now. Paul faced people that questioned the truth of what He taught. Paul shared what God had done for him and through him in response to them. Then, Paul proclaimed the gospel of Christ Jesus to them. Paul wrote the beautiful words that we read today. Paul wrote, "*But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son to be born of a woman, so that he would be born under the law, in order to redeem those under the law, so that we would be adopted as sons.*" If you struggle to see that God fulfilled His promise at the set time, listen to those words. It is the powerful word of the gospel that will convince you. The Holy Spirit works through these words. Through these words, God strengthens your faith. Listen to this powerful word of the gospel. God sent His son for you. Jesus, the son of God and son of a woman, lived under the law to redeem you. God has adopted you as his sons and daughters. You are a child of God. You know this because **your Heavenly Father keeps His promise.** He fulfilled his promise to send His Son at the set time.

We see that your Heavenly Father fulfilled his promise at the set time. Because of this fulfillment, you can have confidence that He will fulfill His promise to give you an inheritance. Jesus redeemed those under the law through His life and death under the law. Under the law, Jesus lived a perfect life. Under the punishment of law, Jesus died on the cross. By doing this, Paul says that Jews and Gentiles are adopted as children of God. Now, those who were at one time slaves can call out by the Holy Spirit to God and say, "*Abba Father.*" Now, those people have the full rights of sons. Now, those people are heirs of God. They are heirs who look forward to the inheritance of the riches of His kingdom. **The Heavenly Father keeps his promises.**

We all know what an inheritance is, right? When a family member dies, in the will, she may designate a certain object or amount of money that goes to you. Perhaps some of you have received an inheritance at one time. As heirs of God through Christ. We have confidence that when Jesus died, he gave us the riches of the kingdom of heaven. Then upon our deaths, we will experience this wonderful inheritance. **Your Heavenly Father fulfills His promises.** He promised to give this inheritance.

This inheritance was given through Jesus' death 2,000 years ago. You received this promise of an inheritance at your baptism. Many of you have known about this inheritance for your entire lives. Do you ever doubt that God will fulfill His promise? Do you ever question if he will really give you the riches of His heavenly kingdom? Maybe, you look at your sins and think there is no way that you could be with God forever in heaven. Maybe, because you cannot see heaven, you question if there its reality. Maybe, you question if this inheritance really only comes through Jesus. When we have these doubts, let us cry out, "*I do believe. Help me with my unbelief.*" (Mark 9:24) The doubting and unbelief within us is sin. Yet, the Holy Spirit works within us to cry out to God as our loving Father. You know that your loving Father will give you the inheritance He has promised. Listen to what Jesus, the Savior who was born in Bethlehem and died on the cross in Calvary, said, "*Do not let your heart be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions. If it were not so, I would have told you. I am going to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to be with me, so that you may also be where I am. You know where I am going, and you know the way... I am the Way and the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father, except through me.*" (John 14:1-4,6) God promised that he would send a Savior. He did that. He sent His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus is your Savior. Now, God promised to give you, His inheritance. You can be confident that God will take you to be with him in His heavenly kingdom forever.

As a father, I cannot always follow through on my promises, but your Heavenly Father always keeps his promises. He promised to send a Savior and did it. He promises to take you to heaven, and he will. Your Heavenly Father keeps His promises. Amen.