

## **Galatians 4:4-7**

**4** But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, **5** in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. **6** And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" **7** So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God.

If I were to say bacon, you'd say eggs.  
If I were to say ladies, you'd say gentlemen  
    hammer, nail,  
    shoes, socks,  
    peanut butter, jelly

There are some words that just go together.  
Paul, in his letter to the Galatians, puts two words together  
    that don't sound like they go together.  
        Law and Adoption.

I suppose there is a law that says you cannot claim a child is your child  
    without following the rules and procedures for an adoption.  
    But that's about where the connection ends, so it seems.

Law conjures up words like obedience, punishment, must, shall, do, don't

Adoption conjures up words like family, mother, father, baby, longing, belonging, love.  
    Paul used the word child.  
    But when he talked about law, he used the word slave.  
    Slave should not be a child.

A strange thing happened to my two daughters as they became adults.  
    They became me,  
        taking on some of my quirks and tendencies and habits.

When they were young, I made them clean their rooms  
    and write thank you notes after birthdays and Christmases  
        because those were the rules.  
        You have a room. You take care of it.  
        You get a gift, you write a thank you note.  
    They didn't like those rules. There were other things they'd rather do.

Now as adults, they keep clean houses and they write thank you notes.  
    I'm very sure it isn't because I still hold some parental authority over their lives  
        they are 28 and 30 years old.

I think they came to know that those rules helped create space for responsibility and order,  
    helped to foster relationships and gratitude.

I suppose it was bound to happen that they became me.  
    After all, I became my mother - and my dad came to think of it!  
    When I was younger, my parents made me go to Sunday school.  
    They made me go to church.  
        and that helped nurture a community for me where I belonged as I matured.  
        that helped create space for mystery and love within a faith tradition  
        that I grew to call and still call my home.

I wonder if Mary had parents who made her follow some rules  
Write thank you notes after her bat mitzah.  
Clean her room before the Sabbath.  
Read the Torah, consider the prophets, say her prayers.  
She had to have obeyed some of those rules in order  
to create the space for her to receive God like she did.  
Those rules would have nurtured in her the hopes she sang about in her Magnificat.

I guess that's the connection between law and adoption.  
follow the rules and doing so creates something within you that changes who you are.

And that's a big shift.

It is a shift from doing things because you are told to do them  
and doing things because you want to.  
A shift from acting out of fear to responding because of love  
A shift from obeying to belonging.  
It's a shift from slave to child.

That shift most often doesn't happen overnight.  
It happens sometimes after years, in the fullness of time.  
No such shift is needed with God.  
There was never a time when I did not fiercely love my daughters  
even as I made them follow the rules.  
And God has always loved us with a fierce kind of love.

God said through the prophets, "I have written your name on the palm of my hand."  
The angel said to Mary, "Do not be afraid."  
Jesus said to the disciples, "What greater love is there?"  
Paul said to the church, "You are God's children."

It's time for new year's resolutions, setting goals, naming those things  
we know we should do to become the people we want to be,  
but somehow haven't quite done those things yet.  
Maybe whatever new year's resolutions you make,  
you could consider doing some things that would nurture in you  
the fact that you are God's child.

It is difference between law and adoption.  
Many people have said that is the difference between life ...and death.  
It surely is the difference between the kingdom of God on heaven ...and on earth.

Thanks be to God. Amen.