



SUNDAY MAY 19, 2019

KEY VERSE

My little children, I'm going through labor pains again until Christ is formed in you. — Galatians 4:19 (CEB)

SUGGESTED VERSES FOR WORSHIP

Galatians 4:4-7, 19-20

KEY CONCEPT

Through Jesus Christ, born to redeem those under the law, we receive the gift of adoption and we are formed by the Spirit as children of God.

SERMON HELPS

This passage in Galatians lifts up three ways that the grace of God in Jesus Christ forms.

God is forming the world.

- In Galatians 4:4 Paul states, “But when the fulfillment of the time came, God sent his Son, born through a woman, and born under the Law” (CEB).
- In God's time God chooses to act in Jesus Christ to redeem humanity.
- God's new creation is breaking in to form the world.
- This impacts all people, both Jews and Gentiles, freeing them from all that holds them back from living as children of God, whether the law or the powers of the world.
- As children of God, we are formed by our relationship with God rather than by rules.

Personal Connection/Illustration

“All humanity, apart for Christ, is bound together in a solidarity of servitude. Even the most religiously devout—indeed, perhaps especially they—are entangled in subtle forms of bondage” (Hays, “Galatians,” *The New Interpreters Bible*, Volume XI, pg. 289).

How do we claim and trust the inbreaking of God's grace in Jesus into our lives today? Into the lives of others? Share how you have witnessed this grace that breaks into our lives and forms us.

God is forming us as children and heirs of the promise.

- The Holy Spirit is sent into our hearts as a sign and pledge of our new status as children of God.
- We are invited to have the same close, loving relationship with God that Jesus had, calling God 'Abba.'
- This is a confirmation of God's grace in our lives.
- As children of God we can't earn our relationship with God by following the rules. It is given to us as a gift of grace.
- We respond to the gift by being formed in the image and likeness of Jesus.

Personal Connection/Illustration

Share a story about a special name you have for a beloved elder such as a grandparent or parent that signifies a relationship of deep trust and care and the way their love has formed you. Share then how much more of a privilege it is to be invited to call God 'Abba' and to be formed by that loving relationship with God.

Theological Connection/Illustration

Sanctifying grace continues to form us in the image and likeness of Jesus throughout our lives.

"The word sanctify simply means "to make holy," but not in a holier-than-thou sort of way. Instead, God's sanctifying grace shapes us more and more into the likeness of Christ. As the Holy Spirit fills our lives with love for God and our neighbor, we begin to live differently.

Through participation in the means of grace, we put ourselves in spaces—physically, mentally, and spiritually—that open us up to allow God to fill us. We make room for the Holy Spirit to work on our hearts and lives.

We do not do these things to earn something from God. Our spiritual growth is a gift, given to us through the sanctifying grace of God.

As we seek to grow in love for God and neighbor, God works in us to eliminate sin from our lives. Why? Because God's grace is greater than our sin. Not only following our deaths, but in our lives today" (Joe Iovino)

<http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/graces-power-over-sin-sanctifying-grace>

God is forming us in community

- Our faith calls us into relationship with one another as the body of Christ.
- The same grace that has been given to us as gift of God compels us to share grace with one another.
- We have an identity together as God's children that unites us across our differences in practice and experience.
- As we come to faith through grace, we are formed individually in the image and likeness of Jesus, but we are also formed in his image together as community.
- Therefore, we both rejoice together and weep together.
- We are called to help bring to formation the image and likeness of Christ in others as we seek to help each other live in the freedom of grace rather than the bondage of the law and the world.
- Paul's concern for the church in Galatia is one of a parent who grieves over a child who turns from the way they have been taught.
- As a community formed in the image of Christ, we work with God to reveal the inbreaking of God's new creation in our church and world today.

Personal Connection/Illustration

Share ways that your congregation has helped you or others be formed in the image and likeness of Christ. Share ways that your congregation together has been formed in the image and likeness of Christ. Ask worshipers to think and pray about how they might be formed and help form others in the future. What would it look like for them to experience and exhibit the same deep care that Paul had for the Galatians that compelled him to write this letter and to describe his feelings as labor pains?

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