

Written Copy For: Jubilee-Children's Program Christmas Meditation

2nd Sunday in Advent
Sunday, December 8th, 2019

Text: Malachi 25:8-12

8 "You are to count seven sabbatical years, seven times seven years, so that the time period of the seven sabbatical years amounts to forty-nine. 9 Then you are to sound a trumpet loudly in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month; you will sound it throughout your land on the Day of Atonement. 10 You are to consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim freedom in the land for all its inhabitants. It will be your Jubilee, when each of you is to return to his property and each of you to his clan. 11 The fiftieth year will be your Jubilee; you are not to sow, reap what grows by itself, or harvest its untended vines. 12 It is to be holy to you because it is the Jubilee; you may only eat its produce directly from the field.

Exegetical Statement:

When Israel arrives in the Promised Land Yahweh wants them to continue to recognize Him as their Redeemer and their supplier of all things needful. In addition to celebrating the Sabbath day they are to celebrate a Sabbath year every 7 years when they do not plant or sow but live off the land. Just as Yahweh did with the Manna-providing extra on the 6th day so too would He provide a bumper crop in the 6th year. Then after 7 cycles of 7 Sabbath years they would celebrate the Jubilee. This was to be a celebration of their freedom from slavery to sin, death, the devil as in other years on Yom Kippur, but also to recognize the LORD had freed them from slavery to Egypt and made them His own special people. It looked forward to the freedom we will all celebrate when we live out the eternal Sabbath in the New Heavens and New Earth

Focus Statement:

The Year of Jubilee brought together a celebration of the freedom God provided from Israel's slavery to sin as well as their slavery to a foreign nation. Christ came on Christmas day: God born as a human, to free us from the debts we owe to the Father for our sins as well as the debts we incur against one another. The Jubilee reflected how life was supposed to be when Creation was new and what He will make it again when He returns on the Last Day

Function Statement:

Why it's important to know:

Like the Israelites in the Promised Land we can lose focus on who it is that provides our wants and needs. We focus on gift giving and parties and the secular celebration of a holiday that should have Christ at the center. We especially we lose focus on the greatest need that He supplied in Christ.

What the hearer should do as a result:

Live sacrificially to the LORD celebrating our freedom from sin, death and the devil and in worship and living a life where we forgive and live in peace with each other.

Subject Sentence: Christ came to provide the Eternal Jubilee

What is a Jubilee? In our day it refers to a special anniversary celebration of an event such as a 25th or 50th wedding anniversary or the 100th anniversary of the founding of a congregation. But Jubilee has a special context in the Old Testament Book of Leviticus.

From **Leviticus 25:1-11** **“¹ The Lord spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai: ² “Speak to the Israelites and tell them: When you enter the land I am giving you, the land will observe a Sabbath to the Lord. ³ You may sow your field for six years, and you may prune your vineyard and gather its produce for six years. ⁴ But there will be a Sabbath of complete rest for the land in the seventh year, a Sabbath to the Lord: you are not to sow your field or prune your vineyard. ⁵ You are not to reap what grows by itself from your crop, or harvest the grapes of your untended vines. It is to be a year of complete rest for the land. ⁶ Whatever the land produces during the Sabbath year can be food for you — for yourself, your male or female slave, and the hired worker or alien who resides with you. ⁷ All of its growth may serve as food for your livestock and the wild animals in your land. ⁸ “You are to count seven sabbatical years, seven times seven years, so that the time period of the seven sabbatical years amounts to forty-nine. ⁹ Then you are to sound a trumpet loudly in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month; you will sound it throughout your land on the Day of Atonement. ¹⁰ You are to consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim freedom in the land for all its inhabitants. It will be your Jubilee, when each of you is to return to his property and each of you to his clan. ¹¹ The fiftieth year will be your Jubilee; you are not to sow, reap what grows by itself, or harvest its untended vines.”** Jubilee was a special celebration God commanded of the Israelites on Mount Sinai to observe once they

had come into the Promised Land. It is closely connected with His command for them to celebrate the Sabbath.

The Sabbath itself was God's way of reminding them how things were intended to be before the Fall. At the end of the 6th day of Creation all was complete and God declared that it was all "very good". It was perfect. The 7th day He rested from His creating. Now this 7th day Sabbath rest was intended to last more than just a 24-hour day. The Sabbath rest was to be life here on earth forever for all of God's creation, including Adam and Eve, and their offspring. They were to live forever in God's perfect Creation and never die. God had provided all that was needed for Adam and Eve and they didn't have to toil and sweat to receive it. The land, and its vegetation along with the animals worked in perfect harmony with Adam and Eve; until the Fall that is. Then the harmony and peace of this perfect Sabbath was broken. The ground was cursed, and Adam and Eve had to toil and sweat to make a living. Life was hard. Nature no longer worked for them but against them. Even the animals stood against them in fear, seeing them as dangerous enemies.

But God was already at work on His plan to restore the perfection of that original Creation. He would restore the eternal Sabbath to mankind once again. Until then he set aside a day for remembrance of what once was before the Fall. A day where His people acknowledged the gracious gifts He continues to provide and returned thanks and praise. A day where they gathered in His presence to receive His forgiveness. A day that looked forward the restoration of that Eternal Sabbath in the world to come. Meanwhile He provide for their needs in the wilderness by giving them Manna: bread from heaven. They collected what

was needed for each day in the morning, collecting extra on the 6th day, because they were to rest on the 7th.

This was the pattern until they reached the Promised Land. There God no longer had to provide Manna since He now provided crops for them and their flocks to eat in this new rich and fertile land. But He still desired them to observe a Sabbath rest of worship and remembrance of what once was and would be again. Not only were they to refrain from work on the 7th day, but every 7th year they were in the land they were to observe a “Sabbath Year”. During this year they were to plant no crops or harvest their fields. They were to live off the excess that God promised to provide in the 6th year, supplemented by what grew up naturally in the fields. In this way the land too observed a Sabbath rest which pointed toward that day to come when once again mankind would no longer have to toil to provide sustenance because the perfection of nature would be restored.

After a cycle of 7 Sabbath Years, on the 50th year after the first Sabbath Year, they were to celebrate the Jubilee. It was announced on the Day of Atonement. The day when the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies with the blood of sacrifice and sprinkled it on the lid of the Ark of the Covenant as an appeasing sacrifice to forgive the sins of the people. Then for this next 50th year, they were to observe an additional Sabbath year of not planting or harvesting. And in addition, in this year all debts that any person had incurred against another were to be forgiven. If, for example, a person became too poor to make a living, he could sell his land or even himself as servant to another. The amount paid for his land and his service would be determined by the number of years until the next Jubilee year. It is the same way we might count the number of paychecks needed to pay off a loan. If it was closer

to that 50 year mark the amount paid for his service and land would be less. The further it was from that 50 year mark the more the man would receive for selling himself of his land. The purpose behind this was that when the Year of Jubilee fell all debts were not just forgiven, they were paid off. The Year of Jubilee meant that not only were God's people forgiven of the debts of sin they owed to Him, but they were to forgive the debts they owed to each other. Not forgiven because the amount owed was forgotten, but because the amount owed had been paid in full. What a wonderful gift this was! It was to be celebrated with the blaring of the ram's horn (from which the word translated "Jubilee" gets its name) and the pounding of drums, the clanging of tambourines, and the clashing of cymbals. It was to be a grand celebration worthy of the grace and mercy provided by a loving God from whom came the means for each to pay off their debts by causing the crops to grow and the flocks to multiply. And the Year of Jubilee looked forward to a better day to come.

It looked forward to the gifts that we have in Christ Jesus. We celebrate the arrival of Baby Jesus on Christmas morning as the fulfillment of these Sabbath promises. God had come to earth, becoming a man, to provide the forgiveness of all the debts we could never pay.

When Jesus came to the synagogue in His hometown of Nazareth, He read the following from Isaiah Chapter 61: **(Luke 4:18-19) ¹⁸ "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, ¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."** "The Year of the Lord's Favor". That is the Year of Jubilee. But with the coming of Jesus no longer to be celebrated every 50 years. It is to be celebrated every day of our lives. Christ has come to forgive all our debts, both those we incur against God and against one another. We live in the age of

the Church which is the Year of Jubilee, when through the Gospel Message Christ is at work through His Church to proclaim the good news to the poor in spirit, liberty to those held captive by sin, and the sight and knowledge of the truth through faith.

Christmas certainly should be a Jubilee for us: the remembering and celebrating of God's long-awaited plan of salvation for mankind being put into motion. God Himself coming to earth, to be born as a human baby. But His coming is also the fulfilling of the Year of Jubilee: the year of the Lord's favor. In Christ's birth we celebrate the cancelling of all our debts. We no longer have a debt of sin toward God because Christ's sacrifice on the cross and His resurrection from the dead have made peace with our God. And the love that we have that Christ shares with us moves each of us to seek peace with one another. To forgive the debts of others as we would have them forgive our debts. May what the children present for you this morning help you set aside the secular trappings of this holiday and move you to celebrate the Jubilee that Christmas truly is. Amen.