

Christmas 1 – January 1, 2017  
Text: Galatians 4:4-7  
Theme: "St. Paul's One-Line Christmas Pageant"

**In my life I have watched and participated in dozens of Christmas Pageants put on by children, adults and a combination of the two. Some are good and some are not so good. For drama and special effects, Willow Creek does an amazing job with live animals and paid actors. For moonwalking camels, angels on stepladders, babies being swung around by the leg and other hilarity, come to Trinity Lutheran Church. But the pageant is not meant to be a Broadway show. It is a fun way to allow the children to participate and to actively learn the Christmas Story. We can overdo pageantry in general. We always have to remind ourselves that the miracle is not in the pageantry. The miracle is salvation for which God's people offer him praise and worship.**

**This applies to worship in general as well, not just children's programs. You might notice that worship is not always perfect around here. Occasionally, parts of the service are accidentally skipped. Sometimes a wrong note is played. Candles don't always light. We forget the water in the font for the baptism. But the reason for the mistakes is that we have normal human beings participating in worship. This is not meant to be a Broadway show. No one here is a hired performer. Rather, we are a part of the family**

**of God, gathered together and participating together to offer him praise and worship. Now, whenever we include people in the process, it's not going to be perfect.**

**Today, in our Epistle, we have incontrovertible proof that St. Paul must have been German. Matthew, Luke, John? Unquestionably Jewish. They loved pageantry. It takes them three paragraphs to describe the direction of the wind, but St. Paul? He is Germanicly efficient. Here, in our Epistle for today, you have the entire Christmas story wrapped up in one sentence.**

**"But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons."**

**It would make for a pretty short Children's Christmas Program but there you have it. All the important stuff about Christmas is there. When God determined that the exact right moment had arrived, he sent the second person of the Holy Trinity, his Son, into the womb of Mary to take on human flesh.**

**He did this because Jesus had to be under the Law in order to keep the Law perfectly. By keeping the Law perfectly, he was able to fulfill what had not been fulfilled since the fall into sin in the Garden. Jesus Christ, a fully human being, lived a perfect and holy**

**life and was sacrificed for all other human beings and because he was also fully God, his sacrifice was sufficient for everyone.**

**That's it. The whole Christmas story in one sentence. Don't become distracted by the pageantry of Christmas. We can enjoy it, but don't lose sight of this truth. Without Good Friday, Christmas would be useless to us. All the cute lambs and glorious angels would just be characters in a pageant and a pageant is all it would be. The real pageantry happens 34 years later when the very son of God hangs bleeding, dying and damned on a cross.**

**That is what we remember when we are watching Children's Programs or when we are sitting in the pews in worship. We are here not to relive the events of Christ's life but to glorify God for what he has done for us. We eat and drink his body and blood to strengthen us and forgive us and we do it in remembrance of him. Not remembrance as a fond memory of a happy time, but remembrance as a reminder of who we are and whose we are. In remembrance of the family to which we belong. In remembrance of the promise yet to be fulfilled. He will return for us and he will take us to the mansion he has already prepared for us.**

