Not What We Would Have Planned

Message Overview: Our plans and God's plans may be different. However, God's plans are perfect and His timing is always right. Therefore, we can always trust God's plans for our lives.

Key Scripture: Galatians 4:4-7

Key Takeaway: God sees the bigger picture and His plans are always good.

Key Points:

God's plans are always good because…

- Jesus came at just the right time (v 4-5)
    - Paul said, "when the set time had fully come, God sent His Son..." God's timing is always perfect. Jesus came at exactly the right time because the plans of God are always good.
    - When Jesus came, this fulfilled the bigger story that God was writing in the world that He began all the way back in Genesis 3:15 where the offspring of Eve would crush the head of the enemy. Even if this promise seemed like a long way away from being fulfilled when we read this in Genesis, Jesus came at exactly the right time to fulfill it. Why? Because His timing and plans are perfect.
- We can be adopted as children of God (v.5-6)
    - We can know God as our Father. We can cry out to Him as "Abba" (an aramaic term for Father). This is to know God in a deep, close, life-altering way because Jesus came at just the right time.
- We are heirs of God (v.7)
    - As children of God, we receive an amazing inheritance. One day we will be with Jesus forever and there is no greater inheritance than that - to spend all of eternity with the God who loves us.
    - The story of Christmas makes these truths possible. We are children now and forever.
    - We celebrate the story of Jesus coming at Christmas time but it should also point us forward...Jesus is coming again! We will spend eternal life with the one who gave everything for us.
- God sees the bigger picture and His plans are always good.
    - We are in the middle of the story and there is pain, loss, grief, that we experience today. But, remember, God sees the bigger picture and His plans are always good because God is good.
    - The end of the Bible talks about how Jesus will come back and all of our tears will be wiped away and death will be no more.
    - So, whatever we are walking through, remember that God is bigger than all of it. And if you are a child of God, remember that His plans for you are good. They are so good, in fact, that one day you will be with Him forever.

- We reflect upon the Christmas season but let it point us forward to the future hope we have with Christ. God's plans are way bigger and way better than what we could have ever imagined. The unexpected has truly changed us forever.

Gospel Proclamation: Jesus came to fulfill the plans of God in offering salvation to the world. He came to this world to die on a cross and rise again so that all who would believe can be forgiven. And when we come to faith in Jesus Christ, we can rest assured that our future is secure. We celebrate Christmas now but we look forward to our glorious future with Jesus.

Key question: If God sees the bigger picture and His plans are always good, do I fully trust Him today?

Application

Activity Suggestions

- Give a wrapped gift to a student at the beginning of the message. Tell them that it is a really good gift but they cannot open it until the end of the message (maybe it's a gift card or something). Illustrate that you know that it's a good gift but they have to wait to open it. They have to trust your word for it. Then, have them open it at the end of the message. Emphasize the idea that God's plans are always good, He can be trusted, and He knows the bigger picture. So, you can trust the Lord even in the waiting. We're in the middle of the story but when Christ returns everything will be made new. What a gift that this is! But, we have to trust His Word with that hope for today.
- Game idea: In light of Christmas being one part of the Gospel story, create 2 sets of 12 sheets of paper, each labelled with one of these pieces of the Gospel narrative:
    - Creation, The Fall, God's promise to Abraham, Israel, Prophets, Promises of Jesus, Jesus' birth, Jesus' death, Jesus' resurrection, The Church, Jesus' return, New creation
    - Have students break into two teams and try to put them in order on the stage. First team to do it correctly wins!

Community Group questions:

- In what ways do you need to further trust God? How can that trust grow and deepen?
- Since God sees the bigger picture and His plans are always good, what do you need to surrender to Him? How can the goodness of God bring comfort to you even in the hard and difficult things?
- In what ways can the story of Christmas bring you peace for today but also incredible hope for the future? How can this community group remind and encourage one another of this hope?
- Are there any action steps that you need to take from this series? How can you shine the light of Christ in unexpected ways this Christmas season?