

## Christ Alone is the Savior

*I, I am the LORD,*

*and besides me there is no savior. Isaiah 43:11*

<sup>10</sup> *For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.” Luke 19:10*

Of all the names given to Jesus, none is more meaningful or more precious than the name Savior. When we call Jesus our Savior, we speak to the very heart of who Jesus is and what he came to do. So it's a precious name, but it's also one of the most commonly used names for Jesus: we sing songs about Jesus being our Savior, we say Jesus is our personal Savior, every Christmas we remember the angel's proclamation: *unto you is born a Savior...*

And that is all good and right, but like anything we grow familiar with, after a while the word Savior can slip off our tongue without our even thinking of what it means. After a while we can lose the joy and wonder that the name Savior filled us with at first. We can forget all that Jesus saved us from...and all that he saved us for! So let's be reminded what a great Savior Jesus is. First let's remind ourselves of our need for a Savior and then let's consider what a Savior Jesus is!

### I. Our Need for a Savior

Being saved is a beautiful thing...when you need to be saved. Janice and I went to the Hammondsport beach last week and I was swimming, and the water there gets pretty deep pretty quickly so they have lifeguards stationed every so often. So I'm out swimming and I look to the dock and the lifeguard nearest where I am is standing like he's going to jump in. There's no one in the water near me - and for a second I thought, I sure hope he isn't planning on coming in for me. I'm not in trouble, I'm not in danger, I don't need saving. If he were to jump in and pull me to shore, it wouldn't have been a beautiful thing, it would have been super annoying. Cause I didn't need to be saved! Turns out he was just standing to stretch his legs.

In that sense being rescued is a lot like receiving mercy. It's only beautiful to those who need it and know they need it. History is full of stories about people who didn't realize they needed to be rescued until it was too late.

On a calm and relatively warm November afternoon a 730 foot long freight ship left port loaded with iron ore and crewed by 29 seasoned men. The ship had logged more than a million miles over its 17 years, so the crew of the Edmund Fitzgerald had no reason to think that this journey would be any different. Far away however, two volatile air masses were on a collision course for Lake Superior. 24 hours later, as 100mph winds and 25-35 foot waves battered the Fitzgerald, the crew would have given anything to be rescued. Sadly no rescue would come and all 29 souls would be lost as the Edmund Fitzgerald sank beneath the frigid waters.

24 hours earlier they had said their last goodbyes to their families and were living their last hours on earth, but they didn't know it. On that calm, peaceful day, rescue was the last thing on their minds, and the thing they needed most.

Jesus came to rescue us. He came to "seek and to save the lost". But that will only be a beautiful message to us if we know that we are in mortal danger and need to be rescued. The Bible tells us about three distinct dangers we need to be rescued from. They may seem far enough away that we don't see any need to worry about them but the Bible tells us that we are on a collision course with grave danger and Jesus came to rescue us – to save us – from that danger.

## 1. We need to be rescued from sin and death

***12 Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned...Rom. 5:12***

Sin and death are twin cancers that entered the world when Adam and Eve disobeyed God. They are really two sides of the same coin: on that day in the garden when Adam and Eve disobeyed God and sin and death entered the world, something came alive in us and something died in us. We became alive to sin and dead to God. What that means is that sin appeals to something in us, it stirs and excites something deep inside us and draws us irresistibly towards it, while the idea of a relationship with the living God and living holy, righteous lives seems irrelevant and boring to us and has little draw for us.

We are alive to sin and dead to God.

In a weird way the temptation to sin is kinda like the story of the Edmund Fitzgerald in that sin is always calling us into new waters. Picture sin as calling us to untie from a safe port and launch out into new and deeper waters of sin. And here's the thing: the beginning of the journey is always better than the destination. Temptation emphasizes the thrill, the pleasure, and the reward of sin. As we launch out into new sin, the waters seem calm and the weather pleasant.

It brings to mind the picture found in Proverbs 7 of the young man being tempted to commit adultery – in the beginning it's enticing and alluring and exciting. The writer watches the young man consider untying his ship and launch out into the waters of adultery. He is so caught up in the promise of adultery, he doesn't see the destination. The waters look calm and the weather fair and he doesn't see the storm clouds gathering in the distance, the frigid winds, and the powerful waves that will bring him down in the end. The writer of Proverbs ends with this warning:

***Now then, my sons, listen to me; pay attention to what I say. Do not let your heart turn to her ways or stray into her paths (we could say launch out into her waters). Many are the victims she has brought down; her slain are a mighty throng. Her house is a highway to the grave, leading down to the chambers of death. Prov. 7:24-27 (NIV)***

Proverbs 7 is about launching out into Lake Adultery, but the truth is that scenario plays out in this messed up world and in our lives in a million different ways. Rather than Lake Adultery, we may launch out into Lake Pleasure, or Lake Pride, or Lake Selfishness, or Lake Immorality, or Lake Drugs, or Lake Lying. Whatever the sin, whatever the journey, in the end it ends the same.

The Bible tells us that sin and death has infected us all, we are born alive to sin and dead to God. Shipwreck is just a matter of time for all of us. It might happen sooner for some and later for others: some may barely get out of port before their lives sink, others may experience fair weather and calm waters for a long portion of their journey, but eventually sin will destroy our lives and death will sink us.

We need to be rescued from sin and death. We need a Savior.

## 2. We need to be rescued from the devil and his kingdom

The devil has been characterized as a kind of goofy looking red guy with horns and a pitchfork, but that's not how the Bible describes him. He once was incredibly beautiful – the most powerful, brilliant angel of them all. His soul has since become shriveled and ugly, but his appearance is still brilliant. We know that because Paul says Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Satan still presents himself as beautiful and brilliant and good. It's a disguise to fool us into following him.

Satan is a million times smarter than we are, a million times more powerful, and a million times darker than our worst nightmares. And he is committed to our eternal destruction. And we are born committed to Satan, and our own eternal destruction.

Sin has literally aligned our lives and our wills with his. We are born under Satan's rule, united with his purposes, subjects of his kingdom.

We don't stand a chance against Satan and we don't have the power to leave his kingdom. We need to be rescued from the devil and his kingdom. We need a Savior.

### **3. We also need to be rescued from God's judgment**

Strangely enough, our greatest danger doesn't come from sin, death, or the devil. Our greatest danger comes from God. The Bible says that one day every one of us will stand before God. Even the devil himself will one day stand before God Almighty and the Great White Throne.

God's holiness is brighter and hotter than the sun, and the Bible says that on that day no one will be able to stand before God and His wrath.

***<sup>15</sup> Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and everyone else, both slave and free, hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. <sup>16</sup> They called to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us<sup>15</sup> from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! <sup>17</sup> For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can withstand it?" Rev. 6:15-17***

Not only is facing God's wrath the most terrifying thing we can imagine, but God alone holds the power to condemn us to hell forever. Nothing we could ever imagine is more terrifying than that. More than anything we need to be rescued from God's wrath. We need a Savior.

## **II. Christ alone is the Savior we need**

In his song, *The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald*, Gordon Lightfoot asks the question, *Does anyone know where the love of God goes when the waves turn the minutes to hours?*

We actually know the answer to that question. Jesus said, *I came to seek and to save the lost*. Where does the love of God go when our lives are about to shipwreck, when we are lost and need to be saved? It goes after us. Jesus came after us, he came seeking us, he came to rescue us.

As much as we needed to be saved, Christ is that powerful to save. Christ alone is the Savior we so desperately needed.

Jesus rescued us from sin and death first by paying for our sins and giving us eternal life. Through Christ's work on the cross, we are forgiven and cleansed of our sins so sin no longer has the sting it had, and through his death we are given eternal life so death no longer has a hold on us. Rescued!

But Jesus isn't done rescuing us from sin and death. Remember how when sin and death entered the world so that we are alive to sin and dead to God? The Holy Spirit regenerates our hearts so that we are alive to God and dead to sin. Oh, sin still has its pull – it will until the day we're finally freed from this carnal body – but there's another, more powerful pull going on in our hearts – the desire to please and obey God.

We taste the better life of living for God instead of living for sin. It's an ongoing work, but it changes the trajectory of our lives so instead of a collision course with death, we are on a collision course with life.

Jesus rescued us from Satan by beating Satan. Jesus came as the humble servant, but don't mistake his meekness with weakness. Jesus said the only way you can plunder a strong man's house is if a stronger man comes in, kicks the strong man's butt (I'm paraphrasing a little), ties him up, and takes him out of the picture. Then the stronger man can take what he wants. Jesus is that "stronger man" – way stronger. Not even close. Only Jesus had the power to incapacitate Satan, destroy his works, and plunder his house.

Jesus plundered our souls back, transferring us from the kingdom of darkness to his kingdom of light.

***<sup>13</sup> For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, <sup>14</sup> in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. Col. 1:13-14***

Finally, and most importantly, Jesus rescued us from God's wrath by absorbing that wrath on the cross, thereby reconciling us to God, as friends and dearly loved sons and daughters.

Certain moments in history intrigue me. The story of the Edmund Fitzgerald is one of those stories and, this may sound strange, but I think about that moment when the crew of the Fitz realized they were going down. How terrifying it must have been as the dark waters closed around them and dragged them down.

One day – and it won't be long – we will all stand on the brink of eternity. Imagine the horror of standing on the edge of a dark, Christless eternity that stretches on forever and ever. Imagine peering into a chasm that is darker, colder, and more devoid of hope than the bottom of Lake Superior could ever be. Imagine standing on the edge of that eternal darkness and there's nothing you can do about it.

Now imagine strong hands gripping you and a voice saying, "I've got you." Strong arms pull you back from the edge of a Christless eternity and carry you to a Christ-filled eternity in the presence of Love Himself, in a kingdom that is brilliant and perfect and stretches on forever.

And then you look at the hands that gripped you, and you see that there are the scars of nail wounds in them. They are the hands of the only one who could have ever rescued us, the only One who could ever have saved us, the Only Savior, Jesus Christ.

What's our part? When it comes to our salvation, our part is to believe in him. We can't save ourselves. We can't help Jesus save us. We must simply trust him and let him do what only he can do. Christ alone is the Savior.

***I, I am the LORD, and besides me there is no savior. Isaiah 43:11***

If you've never received Christ as your Lord and Savior, won't you receive him today? He died to save you. He is powerful enough to save you. But you have to accept his rescue. You can refuse his salvation, you can refuse to be rescued, and Jesus will honor your decision.

No matter what the weather looks like now, the storms are coming. Trust in Christ today. Pray with me.