

Brackenhurst Methodist Church 12 October 2008
Salvation = Surrender 07h45 — Communion

Call to Worship: Psalm 35:9-10

My soul will rejoice in the LORD Yahweh
and delight in his salvation.

My whole being will exclaim,

“Who is like you, O Yahweh?

You rescue the poor from those too strong for them,
the poor and the needy from those who rob them.”

- Come, Now is the Time to Worship

Welcome & Notices

Opening prayers as per hymn book; worship team

Scripture:

Philippians 2:1-12

Luke 19:1-10

Message

INTRODUCTION

- I don't know about you, but this has happened to me every so often
 - You're happily going along, minding your business
- And somebody approaches you and asks you this question:
 - “Are you saved, my brother (or sister)?”
 - * “Are you saved?”
- And by saved they are usually wanting to know whether you have given your life to Jesus or not
 - And consequently whether you are going to go to heaven one day when you die or not
 - * And usually continue conversation with “Do you know where you are going to go when you die?”
- And so today, as we continue our journey of looking at theological words we are going to look at that word that is rich with connotation, and misunderstanding
 - The word “Salvation”
- And salvation is a difficult word because there are so many different aspects to it

- For many people the definition of salvation is what we spoke about earlier:
You are saved and will go to heaven one day when you die if you have given your life to Jesus
 - * If you don't give your life to Jesus you're destined for hell and that's that
- And for these people their life's mission is to evangelise, to go around to strangers on the streets or to speak at / organising rallies
 - Making friends and family uncomfortable
 - For the sole purpose of getting people to a place of giving their life to Christ
 - * So that their souls can be saved
 - * So that they will see them in heaven one day
 - And they use terms like soul winning
- And yet, as I look at scripture, and particularly Jesus' understanding of salvation, it seems to me that there is more to salvation than this
 - And a key difference is that when Jesus speaks about salvation he is speaking about something which happens in the here and now
 - * It's not pie in the sky when you die
 - But it is the opportunity to live differently, to approach life differently, to transform who you are today.
- When he healed a lame man he didn't say "your faith has made you well and one day when you die you will be able to walk in heaven"
 - He said get up and walk today
 - * And that is what the lame did. Or the blind, or the crippled, or the lepers
- Their lives were transformed from that moment on, they had a different and better life from that moment on, they were saved in a very real way from whatever it was that was preventing them from living life to the full.
 - and interestingly Jesus himself had very little to say about the saving of souls for a better life in eternity.
- But before we unpack the subject of salvation any further, let's go back and refresh our understandings of the words that we've already covered
 - Justification
 - Sanctification
- When speaking of Justification we said that it is the wicked and ungodly who are justified
 - it was while we were yet sinners that Christ died for us
- It's not that God stops seeing our sins, but in fact he sees them, and in spite of that, chooses to forgive us our sin.

- There is nothing that anyone can do to earn that forgiveness, we simply need to accept the relationship between us and God that Jesus has made for us through faith.
 - * As Wesley said, this is the basis for all our hope as Christians.
 - * In spite of our wretchedness, God loves us
- Now in that there is an element of salvation
 - Through what God has done in Jesus we have been saved from that wretchedness; from our hopelessness we have been given faith
 - * It is by grace that you have been saved, through faith (Eph 2:8)
- That was justification; And then we spoke about sanctification saying that sanctification is the process of being made holy
 - And we mentioned the pillars of Methodism in which we said that all could be saved to the uttermost, made perfect in their life
- And so sanctification, the process of us working together with the Holy Spirit recreates us more and more into the image of God
 - More and more into the people God wanted us to be when he first made us
 - * And so, also, in the process of sanctification we find an element of salvation
- But salvation is much more than just justification, or just sanctification
 - Salvation is about the whole process of becoming a whole person,
 - * about the process of becoming a whole community,
 - * about the process of becoming a whole and a healed cosmos
 - It is not just about me and my salvation; it is not just about God and what God is doing, but it is about me and God working together to proclaim his kingdom and bring about the new heaven and the new earth
- We'll speak about the Kingdom of God next week, but for now I want to focus on those three areas of salvation
 - Personal
 - Corporate
 - And Universal

(1) Salvation is personal

- And so salvation, firstly, is about me and my soul
 - But it is more than a confessing of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour
- While that is where salvation may begin, salvation can only happen when we truly allow Jesus in the person of the Holy Spirit to come and work within us
 - That's largely what we spoke about last week when we looked at sanctification

- You see, salvation is not just about acknowledging the things I have done wrong now and confessing them to Jesus as sin and hoping that somehow over a period of time we will sin less
 - Sometimes we do, but most often we don't, I think.
 - * It is about going with Jesus back into our past and working with the parts of us that cause us to sin in the first place.
- Salvation begins with the knowledge that God loves and accepts me just as I am in spite of the fact that I and others may see me as wicked and godless
 - And then in that acceptance having the courage to go into the places of darkness with Christ and to begin to experiencing healing in those places.
- One of the objections I have with this doctrine of instantaneous salvation is that often it encourages us to paper over the brokenness and pretend that everything is okay
 - Rather than to confront the brokenness in our lives, to working out those issues and to becoming holy
 - * And I often say holiness is not about being perfect, but is about being willing to confront the imperfections
- It is about me working out what I need to do to live a life that is full, that is whole and life giving not just to me, but to those around me.
 - When someone says something and I snap at them, what has caused that?
 - * Not about apologising for the outburst, but about doing the work necessary so that the outburst doesn't happen again.
 - Until we have dealt with all the issues in our lives
 - * And that can take a lifetime
- Salvation is about asking what is it that I need to confront to be saved to the uttermost?
 - So salvation is personal

(2) Salvation is corporate

- Secondly, salvation is corporate
 - See, unfortunately many, many people stop at the idea that salvation ends on a personal level
 - * You must accept Jesus as your personal Saviour
 - * Nobody else can do it for you, it is you who is going to stand before the judge one day
- And it is true that you are the only person to take responsibility for you life
 - But it is not just your soul that Jesus wants saved — our own salvation draws us into relationship with the rest of our community

- God is community
 - Father, Son and Holy Spirit
 - * And God created people in their image, in community
- So salvation cannot just be personal but has to involve the community as well
 - And too often the emphasis is placed on getting one's soul saved without any thought for the salvation of the world
- Our salvation often become the source of a sense of pride for us — we think we are better than others and they must go to hell.
 - I think that because I have given my life to Jesus I'm okay, and that's that.
- Yet my salvation, grounded in the hope that comes from the knowledge of my justification as a sinner, as ungodly and wicked
 - Should lead me not to a sense of pride, but a sense of deep humility in which I recognise that the brokenness of those around is no different to my own and therefore to a place where I approach others with a sense of humility and a desire for healing
 - * And I'm reminded of the parable that Jesus tells of the servant who is let off his debts but immediately goes to claim from those who owe him
- We are called as people who follow Christ to show to others the grace that God has shown us, in the attitude humility exemplified in Jesus
 - Your attitude, says Paul, should be the same as that of Christ Jesus
 - * People only don't find healing by our very often judgemental attitudes, but only in our acceptance of them as fellow sinners.
- It is interesting to me that Jesus doesn't use the word 'salvation' very often.
 - One of the occasions when he does use it is in the story that we read earlier
 - * that of Zacchaeus
 - Have you noticed that Jesus doesn't say salvation has come when Zacchaeus climbs down the tree
 - * or when he walks into his house
- Rather Jesus' statement that salvation has come to Zacchaeus' house is made after Zacchaeus has considered his situation
 - Has considered what it mean to follow Christ
 - And has made a commitment to the community
 - “Here and now” says Zacchaeus, “I give half my possessions to the poor and if i have cheated anybody out of anything, i will pay back four times the amount.”
- This is when Jesus says, “Today salvation has come this house...”
 - This is the salvation dynamic that we ought to be looking for in our communities, and in our lives

- * Not a soul saving commitment to Christ
- But a way of life that recognises brokenness in self and community and commits to changing it.

(3) Salvation is universal

- I may have mentioned the name Daniel Erlander before.
 - He is a Lutheran minister; wrote, among other short books, *Manna and Mercy* which is subtitled “A brief history of God’s unfolding promise to mend the entire universe”
 - * The Bible is God’s plan of salvation not just for me, not just for my church, but for the whole of the universe!
- Erlander draws our attention to Ephesians 1:9-10.
 - This is what the passage says:
[God] made known to us the mystery of his will... to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.”
- It’s a celebration of what God is doing in the universe!
 - uniting, gathering up, bringing together everything with Christ as head
- the Greek word which Paul uses here for “gather up” or “bring together” is the word: *anakephalaiousasthai* (and I did have to practice to say that word!)
 - and is really the word used in ancient mathematics to describe the total of many different numbers.
 - * This number gathered all of the other numbers into itself.
- That is the purpose of Christ, what Christ has done and what Christ offers to us
 - To gather everything together in one harmonious household.
- And so when we speak about salvation it cannot just be your salvation or my salvation
 - We cannot think that Christ just wants you to be saved or me to be saved so that we can be okay
- Christ wants us to be saved so that we can participate in and work towards his goal of an *anakephalaiousasthai* community under the head of Jesus Christ
 - And that, my friends, is salvation
 - * That is when we can speak of the Shalom peace of God; that is when we can experience *koinonia* and fellowship between one another and God
- Salvation is not my soul being saved from the fires of hell
 - is a re-creation of the world the way God intended it
 - * a new heaven and a new earth that we are called to proclaim in principle before it is realised in practise.

CONCLUSION

- Let me close off
 - Jim Peterson in *Living Proof* suggests that three elements of personality are involved in making a decision to become a Christian, or in being saved.
 - * They are the emotions, the intellect, and the will.
- For example, he says, a young man meets a young woman. They are immediately attracted to one another. They both say to themselves, “Now there is someone I’d like to marry.” At that point, if the emotions had their way, there would be a wedding. But the intellect intervenes, questioning the impulsive emotional response. Would we be compatible? What is she really like? Can I afford to support her? Both conclude it would be better to take some more time and answer a few questions before they proceed. So the two begin spending more time with each other. He eventually concludes that she is as beautiful on the inside as she is on the outside. Now his intellect has sided with the emotions on the idea of marriage.
 - But the final and heaviest vote remains to be cast — that of the will. It stops the march toward the altar with the questions, “Am I willing to give up this lifestyle for another? What about my freedom — is it worth the trade? Am I willing to assume the added responsibility?”
- The marriage will occur only when the will finally agrees with the emotions and the intellect.
 - And that is also true in being saved.
- Our salvation is not something which is instantaneous, an emotional moment when we respond to an altar call
 - but is something that is to be worked out, as Paul says, in fear and trembling.
 - * As we deal with the many different aspects of what salvation means
 - * As we bring our emotions, intellect and will into alignment with each other
- That means that we are not to just accept that we’re okay and are going to heaven one day
 - Although that may be the case
- But rather that we are to humbly examine ourselves and the implications of our salvation on a daily basis
 - So that we don’t just exalt in our own salvation
 - * But that we are continually called to work for the salvation of those around us
- And to look forward to the day when all of creation is drawn together under the headship of Christ.

- May it be so for you, even as it is for me.
- Amen

Service book p B7 — Intercessions and Response

Communion