

A Child Born to Save...Us!

The Need for a Savior

Genesis 3:8-15 – When you think of Christmas, I would guess that being saved or rescued is not necessarily the first thought that comes to mind. We think of beautifully decorated trees, of twinkly lights amidst freshly fallen snow, of traditions and customs that bring together family and friends. Perhaps you even think of giving and receiving, but when you sat down and took a look at the cover of the worship folder, did you think of your need to be saved, to be rescued or delivered from a great threat hanging over you? Probably not, but as we'll see tonight, as we'll hear tonight, as we'll sing tonight, a Child was born to save us and we need saving.

Our first parents, Adam and Eve, probably didn't have to think too hard to realize they needed a Savior. They were hiding in the bushes with feelings and a reality they had never known before. They felt shame for the first time because they had guilt for the first time. They had doubted God's goodness and wisdom. They had disobeyed his holy command to grasp at something they could never have, and so they hid because they knew God's threat. *"Anyone who eats from this tree will die."* Imagine the terror they felt when the Lord called out to them. Rather than confess their sins, they blamed one another and the serpent. The holy God had every right to strike them dead then and there, but in merciful love, he knew they needed a Savior. He knew that every generation after them down to us needed that same Savior from guilt and shame and worry and fear and death. So he promised a Savior who would crush the Serpent's head and set us free by his own sacrifice.

Hear now a lesson from Genesis 3.

An Improbable Savior

Genesis 22:15-18 – For centuries, the Lord passed along his promise of a Savior from generation to generation and finally to a man named Abram, whom he later named Abraham. The Lord promised Abraham a son through whose descendants *"all nations on earth will be blessed"*. There was one problem, though. Abraham was 75 years old and his wife Sarah was 65 years old when he received that promise—and the Lord was going to make them wait, not nine months, not even a couple years. No, Abraham and his wife Sarah had to wait 25 years before the Lord fulfilled his promise. Imagine that! Abraham was 100 years old and Sarah 90 years old—and only then did the Lord in power and grace grant them their promised son.

If that wasn't improbable enough, when their son was an early teen, the Lord commanded Abraham to sacrifice his son to demonstrate his trust in the Lord. Abraham trusted in the Lord and his promises, so God saved Isaac from being sacrificed, because through his *"offspring all nations on earth will be blessed"*. An improbable Savior would come from Isaac's line, who would be both the eternal God and a mortal human being. He would have the power to judge the living and the dead, yet would submit to his own holy Law as our Substitute and then as the sacrifice in our place for all our sins. Sounds improbable, but this improbable Savior would come.

Hear now a lesson from Genesis 22.

A Savior of Peace

Isaiah 9:2,6,7 – Ever since Adam and Eve fell into sin, mankind has been at war with God. All who oppose him, all who disobey him, all who reject him are his mortal enemies. By nature, that includes every single one of us, because every single one of us has failed to perfectly obey God's holy Law. So we try to fight back. We fight back with excuses and disobedience, rejection and blame. We even fool ourselves into thinking that we don't really need God, that we could make it on our own without him, but then darkness sets in and the old shame and guilt and fear and worry come back. Peace with God, peace for our hearts seems impossible.

It was no different for the people in the time of the ancient prophet Isaiah. War ravaged the land of Israel as pagan empires ran roughshod over the land God had given to his people. The darkness of unbelief had covered their eyes and shrouded the hearts of the people bringing on God's judgment. Peace with God seemed like an impossibility. They needed a Savior, so the Lord used Isaiah to build on that promise—a child would come, a son born of a virgin. As true God and true human, he would bear all the titles of the almighty God, especially that of Prince of Peace. The peace with God he would bring would last forever. His coming would bring the Light of God's peace to shatter sin's darkness and restore peace between us and our God.

Hear now a lesson from Isaiah 9.

A Royal Savior

Micah 5:2-4 – From where would this Savior come? What kind of Savior would he be? You would expect the Savior of the world, our Savior, to come from an important place in an important region in an important nation. Yes, the Savior who comes—the Child who’s going to be born—is a King, in fact, the King of kings, but he wasn’t going to be born in a palace. In fact, his birthplace would be about as much of a backwater as you could find in the ancient Roman Empire. This King would come from the ancient royal line of Israel’s king, but this Savior-King would be more than your average human king. He would be the Good Shepherd for sheep who love to wander. He would be the Good Shepherd who would lay down his life for his sheep. He would be the Savior that we need, rather than the Savior we expect. Watch, O Bethlehem, for your Savior is coming soon!

Hear now a lesson from Micah 5. (ME!)

A Savior of Fulfillment

Luke 1:26-35, 37-38 – Finally! After all those centuries of watching and waiting, of promises made and prophecies proclaimed, finally the Savior was going to come. The Son of God would become the son of a young virgin named Mary. For such a young woman, her trust in the Lord and in the fulfillment of his promises is nothing short of amazing. Yet what’s even more amazing is that the Savior who was foretold after the sin of our first parents came to fulfill all the promises he had made. He would crush the serpent’s head. He would be a blessing to all nations. He would be the righteous God and the Prince of Peace, the suffering Servant and the living Savior. Finally that fulfillment would begin in the womb of a virgin. For us today, there can be no doubt that when God makes a promise, he fulfills it in our Savior Jesus Christ. When it comes to God’s promises of forgiveness and rescue and grace and eternal life, may he also grant us the confidence to trust our Savior.

Let us read responsively a lesson from Luke 1

A Savior With Us

Matthew 1:18-25 – The good news that Mary received with trust in her Lord was not so well received by the man to whom she was engaged—Joseph. He was a faithful man who knew the Scriptures and longed to see the Messiah, but the possibility of his bride being pregnant while still a virgin was just too much. Rather than subject her to great public disgrace, he planned to end the marriage quietly, but the Lord had other plans. The Lord himself had to reveal to Joseph who was in Mary’s womb. This wasn’t a child conceived in adultery, but a Child conceived by the Holy Spirit, a Child who had been foretold by the prophets, a Child who would be known as “God with us”—Immanuel. “God with us”—God come down from heaven to take on our earthly weakness, to take on our human flesh. God was going to be among his people, among us to save us. For that was going to be the child’s name—“Jesus”, “Savior”. Our Savior. Our God with us.

Hear now a lesson from Matthew 1. (I start and finish!)

A Marvelous Savior

John 1:1-14 – Peer into the manger filled with hay and what do you see? A child newly born and wrapped in strips in cloth, but take a closer look at his hands—hands that had formed the heavens. Take a closer listen to his cries and hear the voice that brought this universe into being. Yet there he lies—the eternal God in mortal weakness. There he is—the Word made flesh to dwell among us. Let that mystery and miracle take your breath away, because that eternal God lying in a manger is the One who came to save you from guilt and death, the One who makes you a child of God through faith in him, the One full of grace and truth for you.

Hear now a lesson from John 1. (ME!)

A Savior...For Us

Luke 2:8-20 – You may not have come this evening because you thought you needed to be saved. You may not have come thinking you had a great threat hanging over you, although the great threat of death hangs over us all. Yet listen to the good news of the angel to average people, normal people doing their job. Listen to that good news and consider what it means for you. *“Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.”* That’s your Savior—from sin, from guilt, from worry, from fear, from grief, from death. He comes to step into your place as that great threat comes crashing down. He comes to take your punishment and suffer your death to conquer death and give you eternal life with him in the glories of heaven. So then let’s sing with the angels and run with the shepherds to glorify and praise God for what he has done for us in Jesus.

Hear now a lesson from Luke 2.

A Savior of Hope

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 – So where do we go from here? The Child came to save and that’s what he accomplished, but that’s not the end of the story. The Christ Child who was born to save us from our sins and from death on that Christmas night will come again—not in lowliness and weakness, not in humility and poverty, but in glory and power. He will come again to judge the living and the dead in holiness, yet for those who believe in him, that Last Day will be the greatest day of all. For on that day, the Lord of glory and of grace will bring us body and soul to be with him in the glories of heaven forever. In the darkness of the days to come, that good news gives us hope, because we will be forever with the Lord. Come and save us, Lord Jesus. Come quickly, O Savior. Amen.

Hear now a lesson from 1 Thessalonians 4.