

Celebrate Christ Our Savior! – Christmas Eve 2015

The Need for a Savior

Genesis 3:8-15 – “Why do I need a Savior? Do I really need saving? Most of the time I’m doing alright. I suppose if I were in trouble or was struggling or my health wasn’t so good, I suppose I could use some help, but a Savior? I don’t think I need one.” So says just about everyone who has a sinful nature inside of them.

Seeing your need for a Savior doesn’t come naturally. As long as life is going well, the need for a Savior gets pushed to the back burner or slides down near the bottom of your priority list. Then you read the heartbreaking account of Genesis 3—and you start to realize how desperate your need for a Savior really is. A perfect world, a perfect relationship between God and people, between husband and wife, between man and woman—all ruined when our first parents doubted God’s Word and gave into temptation. Soon doubt turned into desire which turned into outright disobedience which turned into shame and guilt and fear and blame and finally death. **“Cursed...Cursed...”** The consequences and condemnation come from the Lord’s lips and death comes to everyone, to every generation, even to you and me.

This morning as I was driving through my neighborhood and seeing our neighbors out enjoying the weather, I happened to hear the reading of Genesis 3 from the Service of Lessons and Carols at Cambridge University in England—and what took place in that Garden so long ago became so much more vivid. I was vividly reminded that every one of us is dying because every one of us sins and therefore every one of us needs a Savior. Thankfully, the Lord in his undeserved love for us took care of that too. A Savior would come to crush Satan’s power forever—even at the cost of his own life—and fill the desperate need of us all—the need for a Savior.

Hear now a lesson from Genesis 3

The Righteous Savior

Jeremiah 23:5-6 – The Savior whom God promised would have to be “righteous”—holy, perfect in every thought, word, and action. He had to be as holy as God himself, but the only way that was going to happen is if the Savior was God himself. Yet God would not come down in bare holiness bringing terrifying destruction for every sinner. No, he would come in human flesh descended from the line of ancient King David—a family line of Israelite royalty that was cut off when the prophet Jeremiah penned the prophecy before us. Yet the coming Savior would not be like his sinful ancestors. No, he would come to be **“The LORD Our Righteousness”**, our righteous Savior, who would clothe us with his own holiness to make us holy in God’s sight once again. ***Hear now a lesson from Jeremiah 23***

The Savior Brings Justice and Peace

Isaiah 9:2,6,7 – The coming Savior-King would be a savior and a king like no other. His coming into this sin-darkened world would be like the sun’s bright dawn after the longest, darkest night of winter. Suddenly the shadows of guilt and death would flee before his coming and in their place would come the light of forgiveness and life. Yet the Savior would not come into our world fully grown. No, he would come to put himself in our place as an infant, a child, a teen, an adult—and he would come to bring justice and peace. He would come to carry out God’s justice by being the holy sacrifice for the guilt of all our sins, and he would come to bring not world peace between nations and peoples, but peace between you and God. No wonder he’s described as **“Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace”** for this Savior comes to bless us! ***Hear now a lesson from Isaiah 9***

The Savior Brings Joy

Isaiah 61:1-3, 10-11 – It’s often assumed that once you become a Christian, your life will become easier and you will constantly have a smile on your face. Unfortunately, such a view of the Christian life forgets about the reality of sin and its consequences and effects. Sin leaves us poor, brokenhearted, enslaved to temptation, blinded with ignorance, and mourning the reality of death. It leaves us separated from our God and focused on praising ourselves. The reality of sin in the life of a Christian means that life may become even more difficult and Satan always threatens to rob you of your joy. Yet the Savior does bring joy—just as he promised—not a constant, forced smile, but joy because of what he came to do. His good news of forgiveness and mercy lifts you up from the dust. This Savior binds up your broken heart, breaks the shackles of your guilt, and shines the light of his grace into your sin-darkened life. He gives you life when you were dead and wipes away your tears

of sorrow with comfort. The Savior brings you true, lasting joy that you might rejoice in him in all things always. **Hear now a lesson from Isaiah 61**

Mary's Son, Mary's Savior

Luke 1:26-35, 37-38 – Try to imagine what went through Mary's mind when she heard that she was going to be the mother of the Son of God. It was shocking enough that an actual angel appeared in her home, but then to find out that she was going to be the mother of a child who would also be the Son of God? You would expect her to be stunned into silence. Surely her mind raced with unanswered questions, some fear of the unknown, and lots of eager, excited hope, but she humbly trusted the angel's message. ***"I am the Lord's servant, May it be to me as you have said."*** In fact, she glorified her Lord, humbly confessing her need for the Savior, while joyfully praising her Lord for his glorious and undeserved grace in sending that Savior. This Child who would be her Son would also be her Savior from sin. ***"My spirit rejoices in God my Savior!"*** **Let us read responsively a lesson from Luke 1**

The Name—Savior

Matthew 1:18-25 – What's in a name? When a child receives his or her name at their birth, it's usually a name that the parents like or it flows well with the middle name or it's popular or unique. Rarely is it ever meant to describe that child just born, but back in Bible times, names had significance whether that was passing down a time-honored family name or making a statement about the child's future. The name Jesus was a rather common name, but it was also a special name. Moms and dads named their little boys Yeshua (Jesus) or Yoshua (Joshua) to remind their sons of the coming Savior, that is, until the Savior came. When that Savior came, the man whom God had chosen to serve as the earthly father for his Son, a man named Joseph was given a difficult task. He would have to take care of Mary, the Savior's mother, and her child, the Son of God. It wouldn't be easy because Mary had become pregnant outside of marriage and would basically be disgraced in the public eye. Joseph himself was skeptical until the Lord made it clear what was happening—and then gave Joseph a special task. ***"You are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."*** What a privilege to bestow that saving name on the Savior of the world! **Hear now a lesson from Matthew 1**

The Savior Is Born

Luke 2:1-7 – There is so much about that first Christmas that seems so ordinary. Poor parents make a long, difficult journey across the country for taxation purposes. The only available place to stay is basically a cave filled with livestock. The pregnant mother gives birth, but there's no midwife, no doctor, no nurses, only Joseph, a carpenter. There's no crib, only a dirty feedbox filled with hay.

Did the Lord fail to come through with after all those centuries of promise? At first glance, we might think so. Yet follow the hand of God as he guides the events of human history to bring his promise of a Savior to fulfillment. See him line up the right family, the right location, the right time for the baby to be born, and hear the sweet song of salvation. See that the Christ Child is more than just the poor baby of poor parents. See in that child the greatness of God's pure and holy love for you. See the Prince of Peace, whom Adam and Isaiah longed to see, cradled in the loving arms of his mother Mary and hear the sweet lullaby of your salvation. **Hear now a lesson from Luke 2**

The Savior We Need

John 1:1-14 – Peer into the manger filled with hay and see the face of Christ your Savior. Yes, you see a child newly born and wrapped in cloths like so many others, but take a closer look at his hands—hands that formed the heavens. Take a closer listen to his cries and hear the voice that brought this universe into being. See your Savior—the eternal God in human weakness. See your Savior—the Word made flesh to dwell among us, both true God and true human just as we need. See that the 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. See Christ your Savior in the flesh and celebrate! **Hear now a lesson from John 1**

The Good News of the Savior

Luke 2:8-20 – You may not have come this evening thinking that 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, normal people doing their job. Listen to that good news of the Savior 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 on him. He comes to take your punishment and suffer your death to give you eternal life with him in the glories of heaven. There is no greater news than the good news of the Savior who came to save you. So then sing with the angels and run with the shepherds to glorify and praise God for what he has done for you in Christ Jesus your Savior! ***Hear now a lesson from Luke 2***

The Savior Will Come Again

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 – So where do we go from here? The Christ Child came to save you and that’s what he accomplished, but that’s not the end of the story. Christ our Savior from sin and death on that first Christmas 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—Christ our Savior—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 our Savior. Come and save us, Lord Jesus. Amen. ***Hear now a lesson from 1 Thessalonians 4***