

A Saviour is Born

Luke 2:1-14

TITLE PAGE

I want to draw your attention to the message of the angel we had in our reading this morning. Here are the words again:

SCRIPTURE

This very day in David's town your Saviour was born--Christ the Lord! Your Saviour is born.

SAVIOUR

Saviour. That's a term used to describe Jesus heaps of times in the Bible as are the words "saved and "salvation". The message the angel brought to the shepherds was directly from God and what was it "your saviour is born". That's how God described Jesus – Saviour.

So what is Saviour, and who was Jesus coming to save? Let's start with the word. As you know, the Bible was written in Greek, so the Greek word for Saviour is soter.

SOTER

The important thing when translating a word is understanding that words rarely translate across simply from one language to another. We may translate "soter" as "saviour" but that word in Greek conveys a range of different breadth of meanings. So what in Greek does a soter – a saviour - embrace?

LIBERATOR A soter is a liberator, one who saves people from the bondage of an oppressor. Here's a liberator from modern times – MONTY. Monty led his 8th Army to liberate North Africa from German occupation and he and the 8th went on to play an important role in the liberation of France.

HERO A soter is a hero. Someone who comes help those in danger, showing exceptional courage.

SUPERMAN In fiction there's superman rescuing damsels in distress – although I don't think he needs much in the way of courage as he's got super powers.

In reality, we always call people heroes who put themselves out for and who even risk their lives for the benefit of others. Let's go back to the military picture. **SOLDIERS** How often have we heard the description of our soldiers in AFGHANISTAN as they have risked life and limb literally in the service of their country. And we call them heroes and admire them, and celebrate them as we hear of the courage they have shown for the benefit of others.

RESCUER On that theme a soter is also a rescuer – one who saves someone from something bad happening to them. **FIREMAN** There are so many who each day work hard to rescue those whose lives are in danger. They save lives, they are saviours. How many here have been rescued by a paramedic, or a fireman, or a policeman? A few of you probably.

G F WATTS I lived in London for over 20 years but until a couple of days ago had never heard of the Watt's Memorial in Postman's Park which is near the Barbican in London. A man called George Watts had heard of many stories of courage by unsung heroes who had saved lives but who had easily been forgotten once the newspapers had gone on to another story. He decided to erect a memorial to unsung heroes, so their names would not be forgotten. Unfortunately, his memorial was also forgotten about until recently.

ROBERT WRIGHT Here's the memorial for Robert Wright who at great risk went into a burning house to save a woman in 1893

DEATH

All of Watts' memorials celebrate people who are dead saviours. They all risked their lives, rescued people at the expense of their own lives. That's why he felt it important that their names should be remembered – people who had lost their own lives whilst saving others.

SPOCK

I'm a Star Trek fan as some of you know and I can't tell you the number of times that I've seen the film Star Trek II – the Wrath of Kahn. At the end of the film Spock rescues the Enterprise from destruction but receives a fatal dose of radiation and dies. This picture is from the death scene as he says goodbye to Kirk and he utters what

has become a famous phrase *“The needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few .. or of the one.”* It’s one of those phrases that actually originated in film but the sentiment but not the exact words are actually from the Bible when Caiaphas the High Priest prophesied, that Jesus must be killed saying : *Don’t you realize that it is better for you to have one man die for the people, instead of having the whole nation destroyed? (John 11:50)* He didn’t realise how true that was. You can probably see where we are going here particularly as I talked about life jackets earlier.

JESUS IS OUR SAVIOUR

Actually His name in Hebrew is Joshua or Yesh’ua which means “Yahweh is the Saviour.” Jesus is the Saviour – His name actually says it. That’s why Saviour is such an important descriptor and title for Jesus. He is Saviour. If you are a Christian this morning then you have been saved because Jesus has saved you and it cost Him His life to do so..

SLIDE 2

And if you’re not a Christian yet, then Jesus can save you? “But I don’t need saving. I’m safe and happy where I am”

SLIDE 3

We need to be saved because we are separated from God. Actually, to most people that’s self evident. If you don’t know God, then you don’t know God. There’s a verse in the Bible that says the obvious and why *Romans 3:23*. Sin is doing something that offends God and separates us from Him. I guess most people also understand that. If we ignore God most of the time then that in itself is an insult. I know lots of people who say they couldn’t possibly be a Christian because they think they are too bad to ever be of any interest to God.

In fact, some people can carry around the burden of guilt for something they did wrong for years. People can carry around resentment against others and against God for decades. People can suffer the pain of life and blame God for it all. After all, what does He know about it? So God is ignored, resented or even rejected. That’s what sin is all about And sin is something that separates us eternally from God – the Bible describes it as death – eternal death. You’ve already read Romans 5:23 because it’s on the screen *Romans 5:23 The wages of sin is death BUT the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ.*

Yes God saved the day providing a means of rescue – Jesus. Because God loves each of us, He wanted to rescue us so that we could know Him and be with Him for eternity. It wasn’t a Superman rescue. It was a costly rescue that involved God entering the world as a baby. To experience life in it’s completeness. He knew the blessings and he also knew the pain of life. And then He was accused by false witnesses, given a trial by an unjust judge, beaten by sadistic men and then given one of the worst executions that anybody had thought of and died. Never say God doesn’t understand – He’s been there, done it and got the wounds to show for it!

And Jesus suffered in His death for the whole human race to open a way by which they could know God in a personal way. He suffered for our sins so that we could be rescued. In His death He became the Saviour. And a Saviour in all the ways I mentioned earlier. So for example Jesus is a Saviour because He’s a rescuer.

RESCUER

Romans 5:6 You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. 7 Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die.

SLIDE

8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him!

We didn’t deserve it but Jesus died for each of us. He’s also our liberator

LIBERATOR

Jesus is also our liberator because sin is like a chain that keeps us away from God – we are tied up, chained up by our sin so we can’t get to Him. Here’s what the angel said to Joseph when he was worrying about whether he should marry Mary or not: *Matthew 1: 21 She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.* Yesh’ua the Saviour. That’s Jesus. he’s saved the people from their sins. Saved from their sins? He saves us from our sin tying us down and keeping us from God. He frees us. He’s our liberator.

HERO What about Jesus as hero. A hero can only be a hero if people make him a hero (or heroine for that

matter). If you are a Christian this morning then Jesus is your hero – or should be. Remember the life jacket? It's only any good if you are actually wearing it. If I don't put it on and fall in the water and can't swim I'll drown. It's like that with Jesus. He died to be our Saviour, but He only gets to be Saviour if we accept His offer of forgiveness of sin, freedom from it, the offer of rescue, the offer of eternal life. We've got to do something.

Challenge – have you accepted Jesus yet? Is He your hero? Is He your Saviour?

Prayer.

Thorns in the Straw

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