

January 15, 2012
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Brentview Baptist Church
'An Offer You Shouldn't Refuse'
Vision Renewal

In this year of Impact we wanted to stop for 4 weeks and review again the vision from which everything in this church needs to flow. Remember our Mission statement is 'To Know Jesus and Touch the World'. That vision needs to start with the foundation that our God is not only powerful but loving. Last week we looked at 2 marvelous passages in Exodus, which gave us a glimpse of the size, magnitude and power of God and it also showed us how personal and caring God is. (Exodus 19) God calls Moses up onto the mountain to receive the Ten Commandments. As Moses begins to climb the Mountain smoke begins to envelop the landscape. Then as God touches the mountain, fire explodes upon the mountain, thunder and lightning fill the sky and there is this loud blasting of a trumpet. That is when the voice of God echoes across the plain and we see a picture of how powerful and beyond us God is. We are given another glimpse of God in (Exodus 33) as Moses has the gall to ask to see God's glory. And there is the wonderful picture of this same God placing Moses in the cleft of a Rock, drawing him close to his heart and then covering him with his hand. And so, we begin by laying an important foundation from which all things need to flow as a church. We need to grasp the truth that we serve a powerful God whose thoughts and powers are beyond ours, for He has the power to heal, to direct, to do things through this church which are world impacting and life changing. And from these scriptures we also know that God desires to hold us close to his heart and cover us with his hands in the storms of life. What a great place to begin.

But, remember what our mission statement is 'To Know Jesus and Touch the World'. So let me take you to another passage of scripture. It is a passage which I am sure is pretty fresh in your mind. (Matthew 1:18-22) As our devotional guide said last week, God does not desire to remain at an arms length from us or relate to us through the lenses of a far off telescope, He came in the form of a baby that first Christmas. But look again at (vs. 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'. The name Jesus means Savior; Redeemer; Deliver. As we talked about last month, Christmas is the celebration of the coming of a Savior. But don't miss that the coming of a Savior assumes that we all need saving.

I. Who needs a Savior?

That means that 2000 years before you and I were born. Before we had a chance to get it right, to even mess up for the 1st time, God decided that our only hope was that he would need to send a Savior our way. That it wouldn't be enough to send us more information, better teachers or ever more wonderful preachers, he knew we would need a Savior.

You see Christianity is completely unique in this area. For No other Religion has a Savior. While every religion has its own book, laws and rules, Ethics and teachings, no other religion has a Savior. Have you ever thought about this? In no other religion did one person show up and claim to have the ability to save all of mankind. In no other religion system has anyone come along and said 'I am personally going to take responsibility for your sin'. No other person said the he could fix what was wrong between God and the world. And yet Jesus said "I am the way and the truth, I will be your way of getting to know God'. No one has ever made that claim before or since.

Now, people have come along and given us suggestions about what to do about our sin. People have come along and said there is no such thing as sin. People have come along and told us how we could 'appease or placate' an angry god, but no one has showed up and said I will personally take responsibility for your sin. I know some people are here who are putting your toe in the water to see what Christianity is all about. Think about it, in every other religious system people are taught what to do to try and make a god or the gods happy. In other words, people are basically taught that you (by your actions) need to save yourself. For in all the other religions there is no Individual or personal savior that one can put their trust in who will make sure that your eternity is secure. And yet the focus of the Christmas story is that Jesus (this one individual) has come 'to save his people from their sins'.

This makes Jesus Christ completely unique. And that means that we can't logically or in good conscious place him in the same category with other religious leaders because he came with a unique claim, saying that he came to be our personal savior. He didn't come to be a political savior or military savior or to bring some new philosophy to mankind. He came to be our personal savior. And that means that if you or I come to a place where we feel that our own self restraint or personal discipline won't save us, the good news is that there is a Savior who (as we said last week) knows you by name and came knowing that you have a need for a savior. 'There is no other name under heaven, given among men where by you may be saved' (Acts 4:12).

A while ago Andy Stanley was trying to explain why we need a Savior. And he remembered something that happened to him. He had just bought a beautiful black and green Infinity car. You now the kind that you want to just put in your garage and tell everyone that they can only just look at it and don't touch it. Then one day as he walked into his garage, and was about to drive away, he noticed that someone had scratched 3 triangular A's on the hood of his car. And because he assumed it must have been one of his kids he marched them out into the garaged and asked them one at a time if they had done this. When he got to his second son (Garrett) he said "I didn't do it daddy, but Ali did'. And so he turn to his 3 year old daughter and said "Ali did you do it?" and she looked up at him and replied "I did it daddy". (Later they found out that she had just learned that her name began with an A and so she was practicing her 'A' letter on the hood of the car). Then Andy said the struggle began, He knew it was just a car and she was just a little girl but it was a beautiful car. And then he began to think about how he would explain to his daughter the significance of what she had done.

How it meant going to the body shop for estimate, booking it in, taking it in, renting a rental car, having them phone and not have it done because it will take longer to match the color and the cost of over a \$1000 dollars. Then he thought 'there is no point of even trying to explain this to his 3 year old daughter for she could never fully understand what she had done.' Why even bring up the cost for no matter how long she spent in her room she had no ability to pay for what she had done. So what do you do? You kneel down and ask her to not do it again, and you hug your little girl, and you take your money and you pay for the damage she has done. That is what Matthew is talking about. That is what it is like for your Heavenly Father when he tries to explain to you and me the significance of what happens when we sin. In our world all we try to do was 'make it better' (try something new) and yet from the standpoint of heaven we have wracked up a debt that we can't personally pay. To try and explain to finite humanity the significance of what sin does to a relationship with a holy God or what the heavenly ramifications or cost of Jesus coming to die for our sins goes beyond what God could explain. And there is not one way we could pay him back for we can't work it off and have no currency which will work in order to pay our debt. You see, we need a Savior.

And that is why (Luke 2:8-11) says "I bring good news of great joy, which shall be to all people for a Savior has been born for you". The passage doesn't say that he was introducing a new ruler, a new teacher or a new set of rules and regulations. It was announcing that when you are standing in a place like Ali in those moments when 'you have stepped in it again' that God won't make you grovel or pay, for He sent you and me a Savior. And that is why it is such good news.

1. Some dismiss Jesus because they think he is just one of many religious leaders they can follow. If you are a person like so many in Calgary who believe there are lots of religious leaders who will get you to god. You need to understand first, that Jesus is the only one who said he came to be our Savior, second he was the only one who gave his life to prove his love for you. Thirdly, if you treat him like he is just one of many you aren't turning your heart enough toward him to hear him whisper that he wants to place you in the palm of his hands and pull you close to his heart. For to dismiss Jesus is to dismiss your hope of having a Savior.

2. Some dismiss Jesus because they feel they don't need a Savior. You say I am a nice person and by the way I know you are a nice person. But can I pick on you a little bit? If you feel you don't need a Savior I wonder what would happen if I asked your wife, husband and kids if there are times when you need a Savior. If you talk to my wife or Mark it wouldn't take them long to say "Yah, Dave needs a Savior". And if they would say that about how we live in this world, what chance do we have to be good enough to be able to live in the next world where God and all that is around him are perfect. It would be like walking across a newly washed floor after working in the garden during a rain storm. It wouldn't take long until we or God saw our muddy foot prints across heaven's floors.

To be honest some of you need to be saved from your Anger. For while you try to control it, you have thought about it, read books about it and when things get tough you explode and those around you go running for cover as your tongue slices and dices those around you. Or maybe it is lust that has a hold on you. For all you think about is sex and you feel so guilty and it has taken you to place you can't believe you have gone.

And you know those things are wrong but you just can't stop it. Or your jealousy keeps you driven to compete with the Jones or you struggle with Alcohol or prescription drugs or you work too much and are letting your family down. And you know you drink too much, shop too much, can't stop lying or can't find a balance in your life. And although you laugh about it some times, if only you could push a magic button and somehow be different in that area. You would push that button in an instant. Why? Because in that area of your life you can't save yourself, you need a Savior.

And what makes this even stranger is that many of the rules that we have trouble keeping are rules that we made up ourselves. What most of us have done is take six or seven of the 10 commandments (we didn't want them all) and then add to them a few My momma told me so's and then throw in a few 'wise sayings' that we think are biblical. Like God helps those who help themselves, Cleanliness is next to Godliness, Spare the rod and spoil the child. And we come up with a standard of how good people and good citizens are supposed to live. And then we find as we are at work, at home or with our kids at the Friday night party or even away on a business trip. That we end up not living up to our own standard of conduct. And we find we can't even be consistent with living up to the rules or system we created ourselves. It is pretty bad when we get F's and D- on the test where we made up all the rules. And that is when we need to ask 'if we can't even keep the rules we make up for ourselves why would we ever think we don't need outside help? Just maybe we need a Savior.

It isn't that we need more ideas or a better teacher to learn from. For we already know more than we are presently putting into practice in our lives. We need a Savior. It isn't that we haven't tried hard to get it right. It isn't that we haven't had 2nd chances to do it right. And it isn't that our heart hasn't, somehow deep down inside we felt pulled toward God. But here is the problem, if we can't get it right in the here and now, imagine if we were held up against the back drip of the powerful, holy, perfect and pure God of the Universe who we talked about last week. If we can't get it right in our little world, imagine what it must be like when God holds us up against his perfection. There is no hope for us unless a Savior showed up.

So, that first Christmas morning something happened that had been promised for 1000's of years. And God showed up in the form of Jesus and said I know you have been trying hard, even making up your own religious systems to try and help you get past your inability to get things right. I will send a savior. And here is the 'great news' the angel spoke about. Today that Savior is waiting to say 'it has broken my heart to see you doing life alone, trying to figure out on your own how to fix those things which you have scratched the paint off of, and you know you can't fix without outside help. It breaks my heart that you are afraid that because of how you have lived that you feel you would leave muddy footprints all over heaven and wouldn't be allowed to stay there. So I want to be your Savior.

If you will let me into your life I will give you a new heart, help you restore and repair what is deeply scared and broken in your life and then one day I present you to my father in heaven, washed clean by what I did on the cross and you will feel at home in heaven for ever, if you will agree to let me be your Savior. That can happen here today. So don't put it off. But can I also let you know that this isn't a limited time off. If you walk out of here today and spend the next months or years dismissing Jesus.

The good news is when that day comes and you look into the mirror and finally grasp the 'I need a Savior' the good news is the invitation to have Jesus as your Savior never expires or goes away in your life time. Why you would want to not take advantage of such good news is a mystery to me. But the scriptures simply say 'For unto you are born this day in the city of David a savior who is Christ the Lord'. And the wonderful news is for we who need a savior, a savior has been sent.

If you are following in your notes you will see that I put a heading which is 'Where do you need a Savior?' I have been talking about how the great God of the Universe, the one who shook the mountains in Moses' time and said he knows us by name, and wants to hold us safely in the palm of his hand, close to his heart. The one who lived out the passion as Jesus for he knew we would need a Savior to forgive us our sins, to wash away our actions and the guilt around those actions. So we could begin to live again and be allowed to join him in heaven when we die. If you have asked Jesus into your life 'Are you allowing him to be your Savior? Are there areas of your life where you are living below where you want to live? Are there areas in your life that still need a Savior's touch?

(John 10:10) says 'I have come so that you might have life and have it abundantly' and (Acts 1:8) says "and you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you'. Yes, that power is given so we can witness, but it is also given so that those things that I mentioned earlier on, like anger, like a bitter tongue, like alcoholism or like lying would not have victory in your life because you have a Savior who has saved you from those things. Isn't it about time you claimed God's power over some of those things and ask that he would be Savior in all of your life? I have seen God take away addictions and wrong patterns at times with one prayer. For others we have had to keep soaking that issue with prayer and putting in place systems that help as Jesus' saves us an inch at a time in those areas where we struggle. But I have seen and bear witness and know from personal experience He can be the Savior over those areas we struggle. For He is the God who knows our name, is the God of power, the God who loves to hold us in his hands and is our Savior.