

A Time for Salvation

Luke 2:11, Ephesians 2:8-10

Preface

This week we continue our sermon series - "What is Christmas?" If you missed last week's message - "A Time for Celebration", you can read it on our church website at www.BarnwellBaptist.org.

Today we continue our series with "A Time for Salvation."

Scripture

¹¹ Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. Luke 2:11 NIV

⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰ For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. Ephesians 2:8-10 NIV

Introduction

Last week we read the angel's announcement telling the people not to be afraid for he had good news of great joy for all the people. The first sermon emphasized that Christmas is a time for Celebration.

The very next statement by the angel brings us to this week's message; Christmas is a time for salvation- "a Savior is born."

Finding people who pray to God is not difficult. Finding people who worship God is a different story. Surveys indicate that over 90% of Americans say they pray to a God. People pray to God because they have a need for a higher being than themselves.

People are looking for God to help them through difficult times and problems. People want God to rescue them or save them from something they can't seem to solve on their own.

People need a Savior. Christmas is a time to celebrate God's salvation that only comes through Jesus Christ, the Savior.

God's salvation is three-dimensional. You are saved from something, you are saved for something, and you are saved by something. Let's look closely at these three aspects of salvation.

1. Jesus Came to Save You from Sin

In his book, "Doctrines of the Christian Religion", Dr. William Stevens refers to sin as "The fly in the ointment in man's relationship with God."

Paul says, "*There is none righteous, no not one...*" 1 John 1:8 says "*If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.*" NIV

We all have sin in our life and it stems from pride and self-centeredness. Sin is when we choose to ignore God's instruction and embark on our own desires. Sin is saying, "I want to be my own boss. I don't need God. My way is better."

Whether sin is lying, adultery, or stealing; it is always rooted in selfish desires for instant gratification. Sin is rebellion screaming "**I want to it when I want, how I want and where I want!**"

Isaiah 59:2 states, "*But your iniquities have built barriers between you and your God, and your sins have made Him hide [His] face from you so that He does not listen.* Is. 59:2 HCSB

Sin is when our desire for personal pleasure or instant gratification exceeds our respect for God. Therefore, sin separates us from God.

Sin causes us to become trapped inside the guilt and vicious cycle that sin produces. Sin causes us to become trapped outside of fellowship with God.

Illus: You've heard the commercial that says, "Give the gift that keeps on giving..." Sin is the hurt that keeps on hurting. Sin brings guilt, hurt and shame to all involved and those around.

Jesus came to set us free from the imprisonment of sin.

Christmas is a time of salvation through Jesus Christ; salvation from the entrapment of sin.

Paul writes in Romans 7, "*24 What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? 25 I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord! Romans 7:24-25 HCSB*

We all need a Savior from sin and Jesus Christ is the Savior. The answer to your sin is not a place, a program or a pill. The answer is not even jumping into another relationship. The answer to your problem with sin is Jesus Christ; the Savior.

Christmas is a Time of Salvation because Jesus came to save us from our sin.

2. Jesus Came to Save You for a Purpose

Never has a book swept the country like Rick Warrens, "The Purpose Driven Life." There have been over 30 million copies sold in English alone; with over 40,000 special camo copies distributed to the US military. Available in over 50 languages, it was the bestselling book for three consecutive years and it remains the best selling hardback book in American history.

Clearly, everyone is seeking to understand their purpose in life. Everyone desires to discover the deeper meaning behind life and our existence. The answer can only be found in Christmas.

God has a purpose and plan for each of our lives. He's had it all along and He knows what is best for you and me. God desires to make our lives fulfilling and meaningful. Real purpose and meaning in life is centered around Jesus Christ.

Illus: A girl who was a close friend in high school lost her 25 year old son this past week. Pam and I attended the visitation Wednesday evening. As I returned to my home town and saw many people I had not seen in many years, they all seemed to say the same thing to me; "You're getting old" or "You've aged."

I felt that they were being awfully rude. In fact I wanted to tell some of them to look in the mirror. But I realized that they were speaking out of natural reaction since they last saw me and remember me as a skinny cotton top teenager.

Needless to say, I left the funeral home soberly thinking about my life and how the years have flown by. Like everyone else, I have aged and many years have whisked by unnoticed. I began to ask questions like; "What have I done with the years? Have I discovered God's purpose? Have I lived according to my calling?" These are questions we should all be asking ourselves.

Jesus came to save us from our sin but he also saves us for a purpose and real peace is found when we start living in that purpose. We never discover lasting satisfaction until we find out God's purpose in our life and begin experiencing it.

Many people are living life at the *survival level*. Some people live life at the *success level*. But real happiness is found when we live life at the *significance level*. Jesus calls us to significance by knowing Him and making Him Lord of our life.

Christmas is a Time of Salvation because Jesus came to save you for a purpose.

3. Jesus Came to Save You by His Grace

In order to understand salvation, one must have some understanding of grace. Grace is undeserved mercy. Grace is when we get what we desire rather than what we deserve.

Grace is when God says, "I'm going to take your problem and make it my problem." He does this through His son Jesus Christ. Sin withers in the presence of Grace.

When sin meets squarely with grace, grace always wins. The encounter is a humbling experience but it offers a wonderful life as a result of grace.

Jesus doesn't come to pass judgment though He has every right to do so. Instead, He dispenses God's grace through forgiveness and making us whole again. Jesus restores our dignity and calls us to follow Him as disciples.

When the Pharisees brought the woman found in adultery before Jesus, they asked, "*Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. ⁵The Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?*" *John 8:4-5 NIV*

If He said let her go, He would be in conflict with the Law of Moses. On the other hand, if He said stone her, His reputation as "friend of sinners" would be harmed. The common people would have turned against Him. They thought they had Jesus trapped. But they never anticipated GRACE! Jesus said, "*If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.*"

Grace is freedom from the guilt and judgment of sin. Grace is life changing. You cannot experience grace and not be forever changed. Grace is like that first breath of air when you have been holding your breath as long as you possibly could; it's exuberating and tremendous relief.

Christmas is so much more than the celebration of the birth of Baby Jesus. Christmas is experiencing a Savior through grace.

Jesus came to save you from sin and all of the hurt and guilt.

Jesus came to save you for the purpose of significant living.

Jesus came to save you by His Grace.

Conclusion

What is Christmas? Christmas is a Time for Salvation.

Illus: This week I was at the court house trying to get a tag for my cool new grill trailer me and some other guys built. I have always wanted to build a trailer from scratch and I have always wanted to build a BBQ grill from scratch. So just in time for trunk and treat we finished the grill trailer (show picture).

Getting a VIN number for a homemade trailer has turned out to be a little involved. You have to go to the court house to get a form and send it to Montgomery where they issue a VIN number. You then have to go back to the court house for further processing, payment and to get a tag and title.

Anyway, this week I was at the court house and as I was leaving, something took place that happens daily in my life and yours. I passed a man outside and we looked at one another, nodded our heads and both said in unison; "How are you doing?" That was all that was said and neither one of us ever broke our stride.

As I walked away, I thought about that moment. Why did we ask one another a question but neither bothered to answer? Why ask how someone is doing and never even slow down to hear their answer? Why did neither of us slow down to hear and answer?

The answer to these questions was clear to me. Neither of us meant the question. He didn't really want to know how I was doing and I didn't really want to know how he was doing. There was no sincerity in the exchange. It was just a way of acknowledging one another and granting temporary permission to pass through our space.

For many people, Christmas is the same. Christmas comes and goes and the real meaning of Christmas is missed. They see and participate in all the surface stuff that goes along with the celebration, but they miss the real essence of Christmas - Salvation.

Have you missed the real meaning of Christmas? Do you know the Savior personally?

To you personally, is Christmas about the birth of a baby or the birth of a Savior?

Is Christmas about garland or grace?