

Salvation Belongs to Our God

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Date: 24 April 2022

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[0 : 00] Let me ask you and invite you to turn to God's Word again, so to chapter 7 of the Book of Revelation, and we're going to be thinking about the goal of God's mission.

And as we turn there, let me pray, because at the end of the day you're not here to listen to a man's voice, you're here to hear from God. So let me do that. Father, in these moments, we desperately need your Spirit to speak with authority, to make the Word alive, clear, so that it would puncture our lives, reorientate our perspectives, change our patterns, so that we would be more conformed to the image of Christ, and so that our lives would be lived out in accordance to your purposes for your glory.

Even this evening, Father, my prayer is that you in your mercy would do that miracle of changing people's hearts, even this evening, to recognize that call of the gospel in Christ, to take that to the ends of the earth is what you are laying on their hearts.

And that as a result of being here this evening, their lives will never be the same again, and they will follow the Savior, their Master, their Lord, their King, in suffering and in glory to be witnesses to the gospel for the praise of your name amongst the nations.

So do that, I pray, and help us, I ask, in Jesus' name, amen. Now, I don't really know Corey very well, but one of the things that we've chatted about at ETS is the game of golf.

[1 : 44] I know that he enjoys playing that. I know that I try to hack a ball around, okay? That's what I do. But to play golf well, one of the big things you need to do is picture where the shot is going to end up, okay?

You need to align yourself properly. You need to visualize where the ball is going, and in doing that, you should align your body properly. You should be able to accelerate through the ball well.

And I don't know Corey, is that your experience? Maybe others here are involved in playing golf. It's the same with other sports. Being able to picture where it is that you want the thing to end up can be very helpful for us to execute the shot that we want my wife's long-suffering wife, and she gets the joy of watching the golf.

And that is something you hear them speaking to their caddy about. Visualize it, picture where it is. Is that TV tower in the distance? Yeah, that's the number. That's the TV tower. That's where we're going, bang, and the ball more often than not ends up in exactly where they want it to go.

What we have in front of us is something similar, but it is far, far grander than picturing where you want your golf ball to go. It is a door into heaven that has been opened up by God for John.

[2 : 57] Chapter four verse one tells us this, that there is a door opened up into heaven. And what we are shown is a stunning reality where peoples from every part of the world are gathered before the throne of God in worship and adoration of the God who has given himself for them.

You see this vision that we have read already lays out for us the goal of God's mission, that all peoples everywhere throughout God's world will have the opportunity to receive salvation in Jesus Christ.

Not only that, it meets with us right here in a tiny little city in a part of the world that many people don't even know exists. It meets with us right now inviting us to assess and also to reassess what it means for us to declare that salvation belongs to our God and for the nations to hear and experience the goodness of God in Christ Jesus.

That's what this is about this evening. It is serious, it is heavy, it is joyful. So let's journey into it. If you like notes, if you like herrings, here are your three herrings.

We see that people need salvation in verse 10. We see that people need Jesus in verses 9 to 10, and we also then see in verse 9 that people are still waiting.

[4 : 22] So people need salvation. Although it's not always something that's popular to hear in our culture, the Bible is explicit, the Bible is very clear that people need salvation.

It is central to this song in chapter 7 verse 10, central to this song, and it's also central to the storyline of Scripture. From Genesis to Revelation, people need to be saved.

But what does that mean? What does that mean? Well, on the one hand, it's quite simple. People need to be saved from their sin. They are not right with God no matter where they come from, no matter their background, their economic status, their social profile, they need to be saved.

On the other hand, it's also complex and intricate, isn't it, because the consequences and the effects of sin are so deeply rooted and intertwined with people and structures and nations, it's all such a mess, such a confusion, such a chaos.

That's what we're talking about with the little ones, isn't it? Putting creation before the Creator. Look at the messes that we all end up in. Look at the messes that our nations end up in.

[5 : 35] Look at the messes that our families and our communities end up in. What God designed and created to be good for human flourishing in every area of life is now something, they are now things which are corrupted and they just don't work the way that they should.

In many ways, you don't actually need me to tell you that. Your life's experience tells you that. When you engage and interact in the world that you're placed in, you know that things just don't work.

So that should make you ask the question of, well, what's going on out there? This is going to change, because it definitely shouldn't be like this.

And you see, this is most clearly seen in the distorted and broken relationship that people have with the God who made them. The God who owns them. The God who gives them the breath that they use to say, you don't exist, and I want nothing to do with you.

They deny His existence. They worship idols and false gods. What I want you to see is that people need salvation. That is not something that we should be ashamed of as the people of God, because it is the beautiful and wonderful reality that the Bible communicates for us.

[6 : 56] Here the first believers who received this vision, as they gather together in their church communities, where Roman rule made following Jesus very difficult, where increased persecution is clearly on the horizon when you look at chapters two to three, where it looks like there was going to be people losing their jobs, possibly losing members of their family, certainly losing their livelihoods and the normality and the normal rhythms to their lives.

I think what they must have heard when they see this vision, when they are given this vision and they hear this song, when costly following of Jesus is their normal everyday life, they hear the song, salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb.

Imagine the transformation that comes in their lives as a result of knowing Jesus is the King, He is the Savior. And so I can go on because salvation is possible.

Now drop this into our own generation, where brothers and sisters in some parts of the world, the majority world face physical and economic oppression as those who follow Jesus Christ.

Couple that with government corruption and also the possibility of familial rejection and it must be an exceptionally difficult road to walk down.

[8 : 15] And yet they hear that song and they say, my Jesus is worth it all. He is the God who saves, now and forever.

You see, it's very easy for us to become one-dimensional believers, to become caught up in our worlds that are put in front of us. In some ways there's nothing wrong with that because we have been tasked to get on with normal everyday activities, but in another way we need to be shaken, woken up because our one-dimensional attitude which can lead us to ticking boxes of orthodoxy, yet forgetting the wide-ranging implications and scope of God's salvation because we live comfortable lives in a comfortable environment cannot stand.

God's Word comes to us and says, you're my people. What are you all about? I'm all about salvation.

So let's move on because if I'm you, I'm sitting there going, that's great mate, but what do you mean by that? What's salvation? What's that thing?

Because in some ways salvation isn't an altogether abstract thing in our culture. It might not always be popular, people might not want to talk about it, but it's not a completely abstract thing in our culture.

[9 : 41] Here is my culturally sensitive football analogy for people in the East Coast. Stephen Kingsley saved hearts from going out of the Cup semi-final. How many people enjoy Heart of Midlodian here?

There we go. Good man. You're about to get beat by the best team in Scotland anyway, so it's all good. It's me giving away my allegiances because people would use those words, wouldn't they? They would say that this man, Kingsley saved us from going out of the Cup just last night. Any other parents with young children will understand this.

I really wanted to go and see the film June. It's taken all the time to get on to streaming services by the time I've been able to get to see it because trying to find people to do babysitting for three kids is a bit of a challenge sometimes, and making sure that they're all settled and going to bed is sometimes not very easy.

Watching that film last night, what is one of the big and dominant themes coming out of that film? That there needs to be salvation. There needs to be somebody as a Messiah who comes along and fixes everything and deals with the difficulties.

[10 : 50] So here's the question in a world with so many voices saying, salvation found here, in this shop, in this window, come in, this is where you'll find it, where is salvation to be found?

Well, the song tells us, doesn't it? It says it's to be found with the owner. Salvation is not something we make up. Salvation is the possession of someone.

Salvation belongs to our God. Salvation is something which God alone owns. And what we can see so clearly in that song is that salvation is owned by God and is accomplished by Jesus Christ.

And so therefore, people need Jesus. They need to know Him. It is only by His blood, it is only by that blood being poured out at the cross, dealing with sin, shame and rebellion against God that it is possible to know and experience the saving and loving kindness of God.

You see, that is about the most controversial thing you can say no matter where you find yourself in the world. It's really controversial. People just don't like it.

[12 : 03] If you walk down the street of Edinburgh to say that there is no other name under heaven that anyone can be saved, you are an intolerant bigot and it would be better off without you walking the streets.

Thank you very much. You're the reason our society is a mess. Give this into the Muslim world. And that statement is just absolutely ludicrous, unorthodox, completely misrepresenting the will of God. You're saying that this dead prophet is a son of God? That God would come to the earth? No, we can't have that.

That's nonsense. Go away. We're talking about the Buddhist context where the thought that the thought of a God at all is strange and completely odd because that's not something that's part of the worldview.

But to say that our salvation comes through a suffering Messiah is nonsense because the whole goal of Buddhism is to escape suffering.

[13 : 13] So to say that a suffering Savior is the one that you follow is mental. Put it into communism, into the context that we will be going into, which is a wonderful amalgamation of Buddhist thought and communism that's seditious.

To say that anyone has authority and power over those who have human authority and power. This Jesus guy does stuff and he brings people out and their communities get strong and they grow and they multiply and they change and the people are different and they do things and we just need to stop this now.

I want this to hit you and realize this is a challenge. This is the world that we live in. We're in the Western world and it's secularism.

In the Muslim world with complete allegiance to Islam, within the Buddhist context where it is just completely incomprehensible or within the communist or political regimes which would reject Christ, it becomes very dangerous.

This is a challenge and yet here is the thing, the gospel is true. Just because something's a challenge doesn't mean that it changes what is true.

[14 : 34] There is no other way. It is in Christ and it is in Christ alone that salvation comes to any person because if God has done what God has done, then we can do nothing else but announce all that He has done for His people in Christ Jesus and offer that message of saving hope to a dying world.

You see every aspect of this good news is good news because of what Jesus has accomplished in coming, in living, in dying and in rising and we cannot lose sight of that.

As soon as that goes, you might as well close up the doors because we've lost the plot and we've got nothing to offer. The gospel of Jesus and Jesus Himself, we cannot lose sight of this, we cannot outgrow this and we cannot stop proclaiming this amazing Savior to the ends of the earth.

That's why we're here. That's why you were saved. I want to encourage you brothers and sisters to keep this at the very core of your mission and of your cross-cultural engagement in this city that God has placed you in and in the raising up of others to be sent out as ambassadors of King Jesus to the ends of the earth because people need Jesus, the spotless one.

They need the righteous Son, the heir of the kingdom, the crucified Messiah, the risen King. That's who they need. Not our nice inventions and our slick talk, they need Jesus, just like we do.

[16:11] It's not always easy to communicate but we do not do this in our own strength. Thankfully God is far more committed to fulfilling His mission than we are to take part in it.

That we can live and speak the story of Christ, of His uniqueness and of the power of His cross.

Here's a practical application for you. Those who you've sent out as a church or have received to be cross-cultural workers in this context here, how do you pray for them?

How much time do you commit during your week to pray for them? To pause and to say, God, thank you so much for sending X person to Y location. For bringing A person to B location here in Edinburgh to be involved in that ministry.

I thank you God because you're the one who achieves these things. Take time and commit time to praying very specifically for that.

I can't actually go further without saying this because you might not actually believe in Jesus here. You hear me talking about Jesus, you hear me talking about all these other parts of the world, but actually you don't know Jesus.

[17:23] You need Jesus. We need Jesus. So my invitation to you tonight is come and meet Jesus. Come to meet the Savior.

Come to meet the One who sits on the throne, who loves you and who gave Himself for you. Lead in Him the Savior that your heart is longing for, and believe me, He will give you rest for your soul.

Finally, people are still waiting. Come back to the golf course for a moment because if we are to visualize the shot so that it gets to the intended target, how much more does this vision compel us to get on board with God's kingdom project?

If getting the shot to that location and we're to visualize where that's going is how we do the golf stuff, how much more is that to be the case for us as believers seeking to be involved in what God is doing in time and space for His glory?

You see in verse 9, there is an innumerable multitude that no one could number from every nation, tribe, people, and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb in white robes.

[18:36] They are saved people from absolutely everywhere. And this scene is wonderful because it illuminates the goal of the mission of God, God's global glorification amongst all of the peoples of the world.

But here's the big thing, that time is not yet. This is a vision into the future to help the people of God in that point in time in the first century and also for us today in the 21st century to visualize where it's all going.

This is not the time where we sit back, relax, and enjoy the flight. And one day we're just going to end up up in the clouds and mean Jesus is going to be absolutely fine, okay, nothing to bother, no. That's not the time that we live in right now. The time that we live in right now is after the cross and the coming of the Spirit before the return of the King.

And we have been called by God to participate with Him in seeing the peoples of the world come to treasure Christ as the greatest, the greatest treasure that this world has.

[19:43] One of the things that I often hear is this, well, Martin, I really enjoyed your talk this evening, it was really great. But one thing that I would really ask is, how can we make this more practical?

Very often my response is, dear friend, can I be really blunt? It is nothing more practical than taking the message of Jesus and getting on there, using your life and your lips, and communicating Him with those who are in front of you.

I genuinely can't make it any more practical than that. I mean, what do you want me to do? Give you a special dance that you can do in front of people and they think you're weird and it gives you an opportunity to know.

It's as practical as that. You know the message. You know the end goal. And so under the Spirit of God's guidance, leadership, get on with the work.

When we begin to see the goal of God's mission, the contentment that we once had in being saved, satisfied, and secured disappears, just like during the morning, it just fades away. Because we begin to see that there are millions and millions and millions of people who don't yet have access to a church, to a Bible, or to any believer who will turn around and say, here he is.

[21 : 02] Here's a few ways that I'll illustrate that and then we'll finish up. This should lead us to an urgency. We had the chance a few years ago to spend time in East Malaysia.

It's in the island of Borneo, beautiful, absolutely stunning, food is fantastic, well worth a visit, okay? That's my tourist guide spot done, well worth a visit. I had the chance to go down to a city called Meery and met a brother there whose people group hadn't heard that Jesus existed until 1998. That's the last time Scotland qualified for the World Cup, guys. And so when we were celebrating, just only getting beaten 2-1 by Brazil, there were people in that part of East Malaysia who still didn't know that Jesus Christ had come.

Why are we okay with that? Why will we go back to our house tonight and put our head in the pillow and go, oh yes, it's great? Or the fact that throughout the world there is an increasingly vast population growth.

It's expected in the next 30 years there's going to be another 2.9 billion people who live in God's world, all people made in the image of God, all people who are eternal beings.

[22 : 23] More and more people means more and more opportunity, more and more chance throughout all of the world to proclaim the praise of Jesus and invite people to know Him.

That's a challenge for us, both in the cities here and in the places of Scotland and also throughout the world. But here's the last way that we can think about this as a challenge.

There is massive inaccessibility to some of the people who are the least engaged with the gospel. Honestly, you can just put it on a map and you can look across and you basically look and go, yet politically hard to get into, politically hard to get into, politically hard to get into, politically hard to get into, politically hard to get into.

Oh yeah, there's a reason why it's taken a long, long time for the message of Christ to get to these peoples because it is very difficult. A number of years back I had the chance to go to China and spend time in a Tibetan Buddhist area of China.

The team who have been working there is led by someone who's been involved in ministry in that region for 20 years, and his best estimate is that there's something like 100 believers within a group of 5 million people.

[23 : 31] That means that you guys are the mission team to the Amdo Tibetan people. Think about that, like this is maybe about 100 people, something like that, maybe just a bit less.

Estimated roughly about 100 amongst 5 million. You're the mission team to Scotland. Let's go. Straightforward and simple, isn't it?

You don't need to go to Tibetan Buddhist areas of China, you can just walk down any main street or town or city in Scotland and what do you see? You see people everywhere, people who don't understand why they're here, people who bluntly don't want to understand why they're here, people caught up in consumerism and addictions, people struggling with depression and loneliness, people who are living rough on the street, people who look good on the outside but inside they are dying and they have no one that they can turn to to say that.

When was the last time you walked out these doors and you just stopped and you saw all the people? You saw the people and you wept.

And then multiply that in cities like Beijing, 20 million people, Chongqing, 35 million people, Hanoi, 10 million people, Tokyo, about 25 million people.

[24 : 55] Now, you're not supposed to get up from here and beat yourself over the head, that's not the point and the purpose of this. It's simply to say this is the reality. This is where we find ourselves in God's world today.

I want to encourage you not to be those who become overwhelmed by the mission that is put in front of us by God, but actually to be overwhelmed by the God whose mission it is.

He is invested in His mission. He has said that He will build His church, not the gates of hell will prevail against it, and not our disobedience will prevail against it. First will be exalted amongst the nations.

That is His inheritance. That is one of the chief reasons that He came and gave Himself to get a people for Himself. He will prevail.

You see, you and I exist to see the goal of God's mission become an ever-increasing reality in the day that we find ourselves living. There was a great guy called C.T.

[25 : 55] Stud who was exceptionally well off, very clever, very capable guy, super cricketer, had it all. He gave it all up, gave all of his money away, dedicated himself to taking Christ to China, to India, and to Central Africa.

And here's something that he had to say which really penetrates my heart. Let us not glide through this world and then slip quietly into heaven without having blown the trumpet loud and long for our redeemer Jesus Christ.

Let us see to it that the devil will hold a thanksgiving service in hell when he gets the news of our departure from the field of battle. So the question is an obvious and clear one, isn't it, by the time we get to the end?

How will God use you with the short amount of breath that He's given you in His world to declare His glory amongst the peoples who have yet to hear of His name and come to repentance and obedience that comes through faith in His Son Jesus Christ?

How will He use you? I can't answer that question for you, but I want you to take it seriously. Take the time this evening. Do business with God during this week.

[27 : 09] How will He use me, where He's placed me, and where He would place me for His glory? A time is coming when this wonderful picture will be the reality, and we will sing, salvation belongs to our God.

That's what you're heading, guys. That's your encouragement. Make that a motivation. That's where we're going. May we, the people of God, be those who sing this song in every area of our lives now so that more will join with us singing this together before the throne eternally.

Let me pray, and then we'll sing. Father, thank You that You're kind and that You're gracious, that You have loved us and given Your Son for us.

Thank You that You are building Your kingdom, and thank You that there is nothing which will come, which will derail Your purposes, where we are cold and hard, melt us and break us so that Your greater glory would be our highest aim and end in life, so that in the years to come, when we pass from this world, we can join in that song with many others from all over the world praising the Savior who loves us.

Hear us we pray in His name. Amen. Amen.