

**What is Salvation?**  
**Sermon 1- The healing of our eyes**

Passages: Psalm 145  
Romans 7:15-25  
Matthew 11:16-30

The Bible talks a lot about salvation. In fact, it tells us that we all need to be 'saved'. And it tells us that there is only one name given under heaven by which we can be saved...the name of Jesus. He is 'our Saviour'!

But what does He save us from? What is the object of His salvation?

Well, as evangelicals, our minds most immediately conclude that He saves us from hell; from God's wrath and judgment. In other words, our primary focus is on the future. Jesus' salvation is what gets us into heaven when we die.

Now, I'm not disputing that truth! But I think there's a lot more to Jesus' salvation than securing our future destination. This idea is so important-- You see, throughout the Bible, salvation (more often than not) is a present reality... something that we experience in the 'here and now'. Indeed, this is borne out by the fact that the Greek word for salvation (*sozo*) is the exact same word used for healing! In the ancient mind, *salvation and healing were strongly connected to each other*. And so, the early church was aware that, one day, Jesus would perfectly heal them from the brokenness of sin, when they were finally with Him in heaven. But they also knew that, even now, Christ's salvation was working in them, healing them from the brokenness of their present life.

That's why I want to start a new series of sermons today...a series entitled, **"What is salvation?"** In this series, we'll be looking at all aspects of healing that Jesus offers to us in the present. Of course, I'm not promising that Jesus will perfectly heal us in the present, but I want to insist that we have the choice, in the present, to cooperate with His salvation and grow in it. As St. Paul put it in his letter to the Philippians, we are called to ***"work out your own salvation with fear and trembling"***. I take that to mean that we are not meant to sit around and wait for Jesus' return before we can

experience His salvation. No, his salvation...His healing...is meant to begin now! The question is, therefore: Will we 'work it out' with Him in fear and trembling? Will we cooperate with the Lord's salvation now, even as we journey towards our final salvation?

Let's pray.

In what ways does Jesus 'save' us in the present? In what ways are we meant to cooperate with him today and 'work out' our salvation through His ongoing presence?

Well, one of the first things that the Scriptures tell us is that **Jesus came to heal us from our blindness**. He came to heal our eyesight. This is an obvious focus throughout the Gospel of Matthew! In Matthew 6, Jesus tells His followers that ***"if your eyes are good, your whole body will be filled with light, but if your eyes are bad your whole body will be filled with darkness."*** In Matthew 7, He goes on to instruct people to get the log out of their own eye before they attempt to remove the speck in someone else's eye. But, of course, there's more to it than mere physical healing. Matthew's Gospel is especially keen to point out that Jesus comes to heal our **spiritual eyesight**. Indeed, throughout Matthew's Gospel, the Pharisees are known as 'blind guides' who lead people astray and cloud their vision of the Kingdom. But Jesus comes to guide us back to a vision of the Father and his Kingdom. ***"No one knows the Father but the Son and all to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him."***

As if to accentuate this truth, three times in this Gospel Jesus deliberately heals blind people. Healing of the eyes is a sign that Jesus is the Messiah. He fulfils the prophecy of Isaiah as the One who "gives sight to the blind and freedom for the captives". ***"Those who walk in darkness have seen a great light!"*** This is the work of Jesus, the healer of our eyes.

Of course, until Jesus heals our eyesight, we are blind to the loving, gracious ways of God. Like Paul, we 'kick against the goads'; we struggle to make sense of life and thus our plans often conflict with God's plans. Because we are blind, we call 'evil' what is good and 'good' what is evil.

That's why Jesus makes this critical remark in Matthew 11- ***Mt 11:16-19 "To what can I compare this generation? They are like children sitting in the***

***marketplaces and calling out to others: “ ‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.’ For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon.’ The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and “sinners.” ’***

When we are spiritually blind, we cannot see what God is up to! We cannot understand His plans of love and grace. We cannot believe that He’s come to heal us and to fix this fallen world in which we live. When we are blind, we refuse to cooperate with Jesus’ salvation. In fact, we stand in His way, accusing Him of evil. How blind we can be!

But Jesus knows we are blind. And that’s why He keeps coming after us, even when we oppose Him. He comes to heal our eyesight in order that we might cooperate with Him in His universal project of salvation. Hence, Jesus can say, *“Come to me and I will give you rest. Come to me and I will heal your eyes. Come to me and I will open your eyes to the love of the Father, through the enlightenment of the Spirit.”*

There’s a new movie out starring Brad Pitt. It’s called ‘The Tree of Life’, and it’s about a cruel and embittered father who, although not a bad man, doesn’t know how to love his wife and children...or anyone else for that matter! His wife, on the other hand, is a Christian...a woman who embodies God’s grace and unconditional love. The contrast between them is extremely sharp: Here is a very sad man who feels as if life is against him. He’s angry with a poisoned view of the world. **His eyesight is contaminated by the pain of his past**, and so he tries to control life by oppressing his wife and kids. The tragedy is that everyone else knows he is blind...particularly his wife, who has eyesight that sees the spiritual world and the battles that go on inside her husband. She is like Jesus, for she suffers on her husband’s behalf as she longs for the healing of his eyes.

That’s our story, isn’t it? When we’re blind, we cannot even see the struggle that we are in. Indeed, we suffer because of our blindness, and so do the people who love us! (Most critically, Jesus suffers because we are blind. He even goes to the cross because we are blind.) But if we allow the Spirit of God to begin to open our eyes, and if we allow Him to show us our faults and blind spots, we can begin to see ourselves for what we really

are and, for the first time in our lives, humbly admit how deeply we are flawed! Only then will we ask for God's help!

In Romans 7, the Apostle Paul talks about how we have all been sold into the slavery of sin. That's our story! And that's why we do things that we don't want to do, and find it hard to do the things we know we should do. ***"What a wretched man I am!"***, cries Paul. ***"Who will rescue me from this body of death?"*** That's a good place to be. For there's only one solution to our blindness. ***"Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!"***

This is the first step to our salvation! Salvation starts with a glimmer of new eyesight, as we begin to acknowledge the mess we're in and our need for 'a higher power', as they say in AA. That's why Jesus told Nicodemus that He needed to be born again- born of the Spirit. Our blindness means that we cannot see the kingdom of God, but when we allow the Spirit to come in, our eyes begin to open. Salvation has begun!

Of course, as I've said, this is only the beginning of our salvation. The initial healing of our eyes sets us off on a life-long journey of increasing eyesight, fuelled by a desire to see the world and ourselves more clearly than we did the day before. And as we learn to see more, we pray, *"Lord, show me more of your salvation!"*

God's response is so beautiful! (Psalm 145:17-19.) ***"The LORD is righteous in all his ways and loving toward all he has made. The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth. He fulfills the desires of those who fear him; he hears their cry and saves them."***

Are you continually crying out to God for the healing of your eyes? Do you long to *work out your salvation with fear and trembling* by asking the Lord to help you see those areas of sin in your life to which you are presently blind? I hope so. **Salvation is not only about a place in heaven when you die. Salvation is the work of the Triune God in your life right now, to heal you and transform you and restore you into the image of God, as you were created to be!**

So, give in to His hand of healing...let Him open your eyes. Let us no longer be like the children in the marketplace who, in their blindness, refuse

to accept the Love of Christ to change us and perfect us. Instead, let us continually call upon Him: ***“Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”***

Let’s pray.