

The Christmas Story: Salvation
December 4 & 11, 2016
Lynn Haven UMC

Introduction

“And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” (Luke 2:8-12 NIV)

This is the promise of a Perfect Savior. This is THE Christmas story that solidifies the foundation for our faith in a risen Savior, born in a manger over 2,000 years ago. This week as we are reminded of the many reasons we NEED a Savior, let's celebrate the joy of Christmas, eagerly anticipating His return and resting in the peace of knowing that our Savior lives!

Digging Deeper

A Little Savior is a person or even things that help us through a tough circumstance.

- What kinds of things come to mind when you hear that term “little savior”? Perhaps it could mean a doctor who performs life-saving surgery. Or a bonus check that helps pay an overdue bill. Maybe even an act of kindness from a stranger. Have you ever been the beneficiary of a “little savior”? Was the certainty of God's Hand in the situation recognizable to you? Or conversely, can you share a story of how you were obedient to His calling to be that “little savior” for someone else?
- People who have a genuine relationship with God tend to notice providential coincidences happening all around them. But these people know the truth, these aren't coincidences at all. When you look for God's hand in all situations the craziest thing happens, He is found! How can being in a close relationship with God enhance your ability to find Him in even the most random of circumstances?

Jesus Christ is our Perfect Savior

- “Darkness cannot drive out darkness, only light can do that.” (Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.) Jesus Christ, the Light of the World, is needed to come in and purify the darkness that exists in our hearts. We cannot find redemption outside of Jesus. Talk about how developing a personal relationship with Jesus has helped you to begin the life-long process of eradicating your internal blemishes.

Why do we need a Perfect Savior?

- “The more keenly we feel our need for a Savior, the more precious will be the coming of the Savior.” (John Piper) We need a Perfect Savior to save us from ourselves. Talk about how different your life might be if you had never accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior. If you just

recently came to Christ, share how doing so has changed your heart for others and for the things of this world.

- Read 1 Peter 3:15 (NIV). God, in His infinite wisdom, knew that while “little saviors” might help us in earthly ways, we would need Jesus, the Perfect Savior, to cure the much larger sickness that dwells within our fragile hearts. Once you understand the reason you need a Perfect Savior, you can’t keep it a secret. After all, the greatest Gift of all time should make us want to shout His good news from every rooftop! And Christmas is the perfect season to start building up your evangelistic prowess. Take a few minutes to consider how you might explain the reasons you have for your faith to a non-believer. Read 1 Peter 3:15 again (NIV). Are you prepared to put these words into action?

Conclusion

In the movie “A Christmas Story”, Ralphie Parker’s decision to call out his friend Schwartz as the source of his exposure to profanity places Schwartz (albeit unwillingly) into the role of “little savior”. Ralphie’s deception delivered him from a punishment far worse than the taste of Life Buoy soap, but placed his friend in a really bad situation. This is just a silly Hollywood example of a kid shifting blame to get himself out of trouble. But it is an accurate reflection of our natural instinct towards self-preservation at any cost. It is also further justification for the immeasurable need we have for a Savior to deliver us from the evil that resides, by human nature, in every last one of us. Without Him, we are dead in sin. With Him, we are a new creation in Christ! (2 Corinthians 5:17 NIV; paraphrased)

“So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.” (Luke 2:16-20 NIV)

Rejoice in the good news of great joy that is for all people, a Savior has been born, He is Christ the Lord! (Luke 2:10-11 paraphrased)