

Hope for the Holidays Part 2

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[0 : 00] Morning everyone, good to have you with us and it's a beautiful day and it's good to be together and open God's Word and get hope from it.

Don't you hate it when things don't go according to plan? And even worse when you don't know what the problem is. It's just so frustrating. You're driving down the road in your car, the little light goes on, that little warning light that's orange.

And you just know, oh no, there's something wrong. But you don't know, it just says there's a problem with the engine. You stop, you open the hood, the bonnet, you look inside, and you see a mechanic, it's very difficult to see what the problem is.

Or maybe you've got a backache and you woke up, you went to sleep fine and you woke up, you can't quite move right, there's a problem, what's the issue? And what you need is someone who knows what the problem is and then can tell you what needs to be done to fix it.

And so, you know, the worst thing you can do is self-diagnose your own medical problems. I've done that in the past. I had backache, leg ache actually, and I thought it was a muscle problem.

[1 : 07] Stretch it out, stretch it out. Eventually I couldn't climb a flight of stairs. So, Norman, what's going on? Go on to Google, painful leg problem. You've got deep vein thrombosis, you're going to die in three days.

Okay. Okay. So, then I call my dad at the time. He's a doctor. He says, just sit down, stretch your leg out. Oh, no, you've got sciatica. Take three pills, you'll be fine.

And so, when we don't know what the problem, we know that there's a problem, but we don't know what it is. We don't know how to fix it. We come up with our own remedies and normally it's a disaster.

So, if you've got a problem with something, the key to getting it fixed is to go to someone who knows what he's talking about. And so, that's why we turn to the Bible and to God because he tells us, hey, there's a problem in the world.

Just so, by the way, you're part of it, but we'll get to that. And I know what the problem is and I've got the solution for you. You know, it's easy to become hopeless when we know there's a problem and we don't know how to fix it.

[2 : 07] You know, nothing worse than trying to fix something on the wall at your house and then after two hours of trying or however long, it's just you can't get it and it's so frustrating and you just give up hope.

Well, you need to have hope because today we're going to hear clearly what the problem in the world is and what God has done to fix it. And that gives us hope for change and for reality.

Now, so if you've got your Bibles, stay with me in Matthew chapter 1 and you'll see it really is all about hope and about what God has done to fix the problems in the world.

Joseph is going along. We just introduced him out of the blue. Joseph and Mary, she's found to be with child.

It wasn't by Joseph. Joseph is kind of perplexed. He's not quite sure what's going on. Verse 19, Joseph's husband was a righteous man, so he's a good guy. And he didn't want to expose her to public disgrace.

[3 : 08] He had in mind to divorce her quietly. You know, you can just see there's a problem here. I'm not quite sure how to. What's going on? Now, God then enlightens him as to the reality of the situation. Let me tell you what's going on, Joseph.

You're the son of David. Now, remember last week we heard all about who Jesus is. And that genealogy in chapter 1 teaches us all about who Jesus is, that he's from the line of the Messiah, of David.

The angel appears to him, Joseph, son of David. Don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because what's conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. And then the important part we're going to focus on today.

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. And in case you don't know, you'll see the little footnote in your Bibles. At the bottom it says, Jesus is the Greek form of Joshua. Which means, the Lord saves. So you've got, in Hebrew it would sound something like Yeshua.

[4 : 06] You've got that He, which is Yahweh. And the saves part is the Shua. Shua. It's a Hebrew word. In Greek, the Greek word is Sotzo. I've always remembered it from my Greek days at college, because it sounds like soap suds.

And the soap suds clean you. And so salvation kind of cleans you. So that may or may not be helpful. But we need to remember that Jesus' name actually means something.

And God gave him that name on purpose, because Jesus has a specific mission in mind. To save his people. Now, if I asked you what it means that Jesus saves us, most of us will say he saves us from our sins.

It kind of has religious overtones. Both salvation, the word salvation, and the word sin, it kind of has religious Christian overtones. But the word salvation or save is more comprehensive than just saving from sin.

It covers nearly anything that can bring harm, negativity, or pain into a person's life. The main idea behind the biblical word for salvation is rescue.

[5 : 16] We need to be rescued from people that want to do us harm, or for something that wants to do us harm. And the reason we need rescue is we're not able to save ourselves. When you're needing rescue, it's because you're in a situation where you need help.

It's kind of obvious, but it's worth reminding ourselves. You need someone or something from outside your ability to come and do the rescuing. At summertime, we're going to go swimming. You get caught in a rip current. You can't get back to land by yourself. You're in deep trouble very quickly. You can't save yourself. You're floundering. Your energy is out.

You can barely keep your head above water. And so what you need is a rescuer. You need the lifeguard to come and get you out of that situation. That's what rescue...

When the Bible uses the word salvation, it's kind of linked to the word rescue, or deliverance. It's kind of a Christian, you know, religious word, but rescue. And the reason you need rescuing is that you're in trouble, and you can't get out of that situation yourself.

[6 : 20] The big picture in the Old Testament where this word originates is from the book of Exodus. We won't have time to look at that in detail, but we all know what happened in Exodus with Moses.

God rescues his people from... Do you remember where? Obviously. Egypt. And who were the Israelites at that stage? Well, they were slaves. And a slave can't rescue himself.

They need help to come out of that situation. That's where the word comes from. God is our rescuer. He's our savior, meaning he's coming to get us out of a situation we can't get out of ourselves. You know, for some reason, it's one of the hardest things for humans to do is to admit that they're in trouble and that they need help.

You know, I worked at U-Turn, which helped alcohol and drug addicts. And that's the first step. Hey, I'm in trouble. I need help. Wives, you'll know this about your husbands when you're going somewhere and you can't find your way.

Just go and ask that person. No, no, no, no, no. I know where I'm going. You know, I've never been lost in my entire life. Really. I always know exactly where I am.

[7 : 27] I'm just not sure where I'm supposed to be. So, you know, I'm not lost. It's just my destination is out there somewhere. I'm not sure where it is. But it's very hard for us to admit that we've got a problem and that we need help. In order to do that, you need to own up to the fact that there is a problem.

We've got something wrong. And so let's take a look at what went wrong. Why do we need salvation? What do we need salvation from? What do we need to be saved from? It's spelled out in Matthew 1.

You must give him the name Jesus because he will save his people from their sins. This is something very specific that Jesus is going to save us from. Now, that word sin is an interesting

word.

It means to miss the mark. You could use it. In fact, it is used in artery. In fact, in the Old Testament, do you remember that the Israelites had a specialized troop of people who could sling stones with their left hand?

And they could hit a hair on the person's head at, I'm going to make this up now, I don't know, 500 yards. And it says they didn't sin. In other words, they didn't miss.

[8 : 38] It's the same root word. So it's interesting. So it's used from, you're aiming at something, the word sin is you're aiming at something, and it's just, you've just missed.

You failed to succeed. You've missed your goal. There's a fatal flaw or a weakness. Something has gone wrong. Something isn't quite right.

It's not straight. It's a little bit crooked. We've taken a kind of a shot left somewhere in our lives. We can only understand how sin has impacted the world if we understand the story of how the world was made.

We need to understand the big picture of how God originally designed the world to be, and who we are supposed to be. We are supposed to be as image bearers, to faithfully represent Him as our Lord and Creator to the rest of the world.

When God first made the world, His verdict was that it was good. Now the word there, good, means it's working according to purpose. It wasn't full of sin. It wasn't aiming at something and missing.

[9 : 38] When God made it, it aimed it and hit it in the target. The meaning of good in the book of Genesis means it's doing what it was meant to do. It's working according to the design specifications.

When you have this system working, everything in it is, you've got peace. When everything is working according to plan, you've got peace and harmony. Everyone's happy. You just ask yourselves, is our world today filled with peace and harmony?

Is it going according to plan? Are you going according to plan in your life? Or has something gone wrong? When something's not working properly, especially when we're thinking of systems we've built, it's broken.

We just say it's broken. It's not working properly. It's like a car that doesn't fire on all our cylinders. Or if there's a flat tire, it goes, but it's not really going.

And the Bible tells us that we all fit into this category of broken. Something's gone wrong. We don't do what we're supposed to do. We don't do what we're supposed to.

[10 : 41] We're kind of emotionally crippled. Instead of spreading peace and harmony, we're filled with petty little jealousies, lots of pain, and often little hatreds.

Little thorns that push up and stop us from having good relationships with our friends and family, especially our family sometimes. Sin, then, is a failure to live up to who we were meant to be. It's allowing something, some force, some outside something, a feeling, our thoughts, get the better of us and steer us down a wrong path.

Here's a quote from a good resource called The Bible Project that looks at things biblically. It looked at the word sin. And it says this, Sin is a failure that's deeply embedded in us.

It operates at the level of our desires and urges that compel or force or steer us to act for our own benefit first, to put ourselves first at the expense of others.

[11 : 47] And, of course, this leads to a chain reaction of relational breakdown. And that's where we see it most in our lives. We see sin most in our lives as we deal with our friends and with our family.

Think of sin, then, as a failure, a systems failure. And who of us have not failed at something or lots of things in our lives? There's none of us who have lived a completely successful life.

We've all broken down at some point. Now, of course, none of us enjoy feeling like a failure. And so what we do is we find a remedy, a cure. And we look for it and we scramble around for it.

And the problem is we grab almost the first cure that we can find. We try and self-medicate our sin away, our problems away, our failures away. We often start with denial.

I'm not the problem. You're the problem. Meanwhile, no, no, you're part of the problem. It's never just quite black and white like that. Maybe we project our problems. Well, we project who the problem is.

[12 : 47] If only my parents had done X, Y, Z, loved me more, given me more, provided a better home, then it's etc. And then sometimes we take literal medication.

Alcohol is a way of solving our problems. Are there legal substances? Sometimes legal substances. And so there's big problems in the medical world with people who have legally prescribed medication and then they take it too much because they think it's helping them cope.

And the problem with these therapies that we ingest or put our bodies through is they can never really save us. They can't really help. They help a little bit. And they break down because you're using the wrong thing to fix the problem.

And so then the Bible tells us clearly what our problem is. We were made to do a certain thing and we were made to represent God and to be good and love Him and love our neighbors.

And we just don't do that well. The history of humanity has shown that we just don't do that well.

Okay, so that's the problem. That's what that word sin means. So what about salvation?

[13:57] How do we fix this problem? What's the fix? What does the world need? If sin is the problem, what is the will? What therapy? What is the thing that's going to fix it? Well, the biblical answer is it needs saving.

That's the word for it. And what it needs is a savior. Or a rescuer. Someone who's going to come in from the outside and fix the problems that the world is facing.

We can't fix it. We are part of the problem. Jesus is the only true solution to the brokenness and sin of the world. And the good news, I guess, is the great news, especially at Christmastime.

Is it part of that? Is it God doesn't expect us to fix it? He will do the fixing through his savior, Jesus Christ. God doesn't save people who are healthy.

He saves people who are sick. Jesus, in the book of Matthew, goes on to say, well, there's a little story of him visiting some friends. In Matthew chapter 9, it says this, While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and sinners, failures, came and ate with him and his disciples.

[15:05] When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, Oh, why does your teacher eat with these tax collectors and sinners? In hearing this, Jesus says, It's not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick.

Go and learn what this means. I desire mercy, not sacrifice. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners. And so that's the start of our journey of salvation, to health.

It's only those who think they are sick who will look to get help from a doctor. So, I mentioned, I had Saitika once. A friend of mine talked about it as well. Must be that kind of age.

And in typical guy fashion, no, there's no problems. I'm fine. I'm fine. Until one night when he needed to go to the bathroom, he couldn't walk upright. And so he would find himself literally crawling on the floor to go to the toilet.

And his wife woke up and looked down and saw this guy crawling. You know, what are you doing?

He says, no, I'm just going to the bathroom. I'll be fine. No, no, there's obviously a problem. You need to go see a doctor.

[16:11] And so only when we realize we've got the problem do we start looking for the remedy. And the answer to our problem, the pill, the cure, is Jesus himself. Jesus is the one who can deal decisively with our sins, with our brokenness, with our past, with our minds, where most of the problems are, and our hearts, our feelings.

He is the one who can deal decisively also with our future actions and thoughts and words as well.

He is the one who clears out the past, but also builds for our future.

Think of salvation like this. We don't often use the word in our daily lives, but one place you do use it is in the computer world. So when you've created your document, what do you do with it? Yeah, you save it.

What does that mean? Different to the Bible, but similar. Well, you're keeping it safe so you can use it again. If you don't save it, it's going to be lost.

You can't use it. It's worse when you've got your file, and then somehow it gets corrupted. You open your Word document, and then Microsoft tells you, either it's lost, I can't find it, or it just gets all funny on your screen.

[17:25] A corrupted file is one that has got something wrong with it. The code doesn't compute. The document or the file doesn't work. It becomes of no value, because you can't use it. So the worst, and so if it gets a virus, yeah, so it gets corrupted, and then if it gets a virus, it actually wants to damage your information.

To be saved here, I guess in computer terms, is to become uncorrupted or virus-free, safe and ready to be used. Salvation in the Bible is similar. We need to be uncorrupted and free of the virus of sin.

We've got some faulty code in us. Somewhere we've got programmed at birth, to be honest. It's why you don't need to teach your kids to be defiant, or how to get angry. You don't have to teach them to get angry.

They just do it by themselves, or to be selfish or rude. Just so, by the way, children, adults, not too different there. They know how to do these things automatically. Part of the idea of salvation in the Bible is God saving us from those tendencies, from this automatic shift to the left.

He wants to fix our broken code. We need to be reprogrammed to be good, and therefore to be useful to our families, to our workplace, to our friends, and to society at large.

[18:42] Now, the way that Jesus does this is by paying the ultimate sacrifice. Kind of, He swaps His perfect code, His life, if you will, for our defective code, our broken lives.

And this is why Jesus came. We need to have our sins taken care of. We need them paid for, wiped out, or wiped away. Something must happen to them. Jesus, later on in the book of Matthew, says this, then He took a cup at His last supper, at the last supper in Matthew chapter 26.

Jesus took a cup, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

And this is where our hope lies for change. It's not just a clearing away, but also a planting of something new. The New Testament uses various picture languages to tell us what happens when we get saved.

One of them is being born again, which tells us we can make a new start. We can make a new beginning. We can change. Our faults and flaws can be ironed out, or banged out, if you're a mechanic in a car.

[19:50] We can be molded. We can be shined up. Our little cracks, our creases, our aches and our pains, our sorrows can all be ironed away.

I'm not saying it will all go away completely. I'm not talking about sinless perfection. I'm talking about healing and wholeness, substantial and real and significant.

Freedom from our past, freedom from our hurts and pains, freedom from our mistakes, freedom from repeating them again, healing from pain, help for doing something better in the future.

Noticeable, real and substantial. Now maybe we just have a quick look at our Old Testament passage. So if you've got your Bibles, flip over to Isaiah 43. You should see a few things there that helps us understand how salvation works.

First thing to note is that God is the one who does the saving. He says in verse 1, but now this is what the Lord says.

[20:55] I mean, Isaiah chapter 43. He who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel, fear not, for I have redeemed you. So God is the one that takes an active hand in salvation.

It's not a potential salvation. It's an actual salvation. He doesn't say, I've potentially saved you, now you've got to go and do a few other things. No, I have redeemed you. I've done the work of freeing you. Secondly, God knows us, each by name.

We belong to Him. Do not fear, for I have redeemed you. I have summoned you by name. You are mine. It's like the lifeguard jumping into the water. I've got you.

I've got you. It's okay. I've got you. You're going to be okay. You're going to be safe. You just need that. And you hold on to Him even tighter because now you know where your salvation lies. Third point, when we go through hardships, God Himself will be with us.

And so, I just want to pick up on that note of God will be with us. Have a look at verse 2. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you. God Himself will make sure that He goes with us through the hardships and that He don't overcome us.

[22:01] Why does God do this? Well, because He likes us. We're precious to Him. And He's decided that He's going to love us. Have a look at verse 4.

Since you are precious. I'm doing all of this. I'm the Lord your God. Verse 3. I'm the Holy One. I'm your Savior. Verse 4. Since you are precious and honored in my sight and because I love you.

So, God does these things because there's something special about us that He wants to hold on to. Notice verse 5. Do not be afraid for I am with you.

Because twice God tells them in Isaiah 43. I'm with you. I'm going to be with you. And then when I'm with you, you know that I'm going to save you. I'm going to act in your salvation. And there's no other Savior to be had.

Verse 11. I, even I am the Lord and apart from me there is no Savior. I'm the one that will do the saving. You can't do it and the things in this world can't do the saving.

[23 : 04] I know what the problem is and only I've got the expertise to fix it. Nothing else has. Give up, in other words, your attempts at self-medication, at saving yourself and let me do the work for you because I know what I'm doing.

Says God. Not me. And lastly, just note that His salvation is a show of His power and strength.

Verse 13.

Yes, and from ancient days I am He, I am the Lord. No one can deliver out of my hand when I act who can reverse it. And so all of these things help us to understand a big picture of what God is doing in Jesus Christ.

So two things to think about there. Firstly, God is the one that does the saving. That takes the pressure off us. We don't have to save ourselves and we can't save ourselves, let alone try and save the world around us.

We don't need to fix things. Only God can fix things. What are you going to let Him do is start fixing us. Yes, that will help us then fix our relationships and then fix the world. But you've got to start with letting God fix you on the inside first.

[24 : 09] And that's not just a once of I'm fixed and you're done. There's a daily fixing that has to happen over the course of our lifetime. And secondly, God saves us in spite of our history, of our past, of who we are.

You know, the story of God's dealings with Israel can give us hope here. God never gave up on His people. He'd been dealing with a sin for almost, well, 1500 years by the time He sent this message to Isaiah.

That's 1500 years of God being patient with people that continually broke His laws and fought Him. God is amazingly patient. That means that when you look at the Old Testament, you can get hope from, even just from knowing that Isaiah was written 500 or 600 years before Christ came.

God has got a settled plan, a purpose to continue to save, but He's not going to let people sin. He's let alone His own people get in the way of Him saving us. He never gave up on loving them and He never gives up on saving them.

This should really make us feel special and give us hope that God will always do what He says. He's been doing it for over thousands, the whole history of humankind. How will He not do it for us in my life when I need it?

[25 : 28] Does that make sense? Now just to pick up that note of God being with us, back in Matthew now, He's going to be called Jesus because He's going to save people from their sins.

That's a fulfillment according to Matthew. All this had taken place to fulfill what the Lord had said to the prophet, the virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son and they will call Him Emmanuel, which means God with us.

This note of God being with His people is the key note to remember, especially at Christmas time. God has come to His people and when He says that, what He means is I've come to save, I've come to rescue, to make sure you're not stuck in sin your whole life.

Jesus Himself has brought the Creator Lord of the universe down to earth and that makes all the difference in the world. God reaches down to where we are.

The whole point of the incarnation is of Jesus as the Savior is of God reaching down to us down here into the muck and the dirt of our daily lives. The pain and the confusion, the ignorance, the stupidity, the shame and He changes things down here.

[26 : 40] He wants a people for Himself but He doesn't say come up to me and then I'll accept you. He knows we can't. He knows we need a rescue. Okay then, I'm going to come down there and I'm going to help you.

He's going to change things down here and God is willing to do what it takes. In the person of Christ, He's going to pay the price. He's going to shed His blood so that broken and lost people can enjoy His salvation, His rescue, His arm of protection.

Jesus is with us in the trenches of daily life meaning He is here with us and working in our brokenness and pain to bring about healing and hope. Salvation is not always taking our pain away

but helping us not just to bear up under it but to redeem it so that our pain, in our pain, we can testify to the goodness of God.

We can hold on to hope that God will see us through because Jesus is with us. He's God with us and He's been there since the time of Isaiah.

He arrived on earth 2,000 years ago and He's still with His people today. If you've never come to Christ to receive help and healing and salvation then come to Him.

[27 : 53] Now is the time to come to Christ. If you do have Christ as your Savior, make sure you're relying on Him to help you with the chaos and the pain and confusion of ordinary everyday life.

Let Him be Emmanuel. Let Him be God with you in the brokenness of your own life and you'll see that He's able to start changing things. This passage in Matthew is teaching us that the promises of God needs both a Messiah, Jesus as son of David, in the line of David a person and a person born from God Himself.

Someone from the line of God if you will, born of the Holy Spirit. When you have these two combinations in one person you will have the Savior that God has always promised.

One who can truly save His people and one who will truly be God with us. Jesus our Savior. Jesus our Emmanuel and this gives us hope for our lives and for the future.

So the thing to do then is to make sure you come to Him and to cling onto Him and make sure that He's God to you and helps you, saves you in the problems of your daily life and that will make all the difference at this Christmas time and going into the future no matter what, we don't know what next year will hold.

[29 : 12] Who knew what 2020 was going to hold? But we need God with us and that's where our hope lies. Let's pray to Jesus now and ask Him to be with us. Dear Lord Jesus, what a state the world is in.

Full of brokenness and strife, disunity and not a lot of harmony and love. But Lord, we need these things and we want them desperately in our lives.

You've promised in Your Word. You've told us who You are. You are the Lord who saves. You are the Lord who saves us from our sins. You are the Lord who is with us, our Emmanuel.

Lord Jesus, be with us in everyday situations where we need You, where we run out of patience, especially at Christmas time when it gets busy. But in the big things, Lord, when we get sick, might lose our jobs, and all the hardships of life, no matter how up and down we have, Lord Jesus, be with us, save us, help us to stay with You, give us Your Spirit, change us and clean us so that we can be fixed and better and live a good life and do what You've told us to do, to love You and to put others first.

I pray this in Your name. Amen.