

RESCUES: THE FINAL RESCUE

Stonebrook Sunday AM, 1/3/2021, Matt Heerema

INTRO

This Sunday is the second Christmas Sunday! We have four days left! Hooray! :) Christmas is the time of year when we, in a special way, remember and celebrate the birth of Christ, and the beginning of his rescue mission to find and save God's lost sheep.

We carried our Advent series topic, Rescues, on into Christmas as well, because what bigger Rescue is there than Christ's rescue of us? Last week we talked about Christ's rescue mission in offering us a new beginning: salvation. The Great Exchange: our sin, for his righteousness, and the joy and hope that brings to us!

I'm continuing that thread today and talking about the rescue Christ will bring at his Second Coming: the restoration of all things. This is a huge topic, so I need to narrow the lens a bit, and to do that, we're going to look at Colossians chapter 1. So turn there with me. Let's read about this Jesus whose birth we celebrate this time of year.

Colossians 1:13-23 (CSB)

He has rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son he loves. In him we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

For everything was created by him, in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities— all things have been created through him and for him.

He is before all things, and by him all things hold together.

He is also the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything.

For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile everything to himself, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

Once you were alienated and hostile in your minds as expressed in your evil actions. But now he has reconciled you by his physical body through his death, to present you holy, faultless, and blameless before him— if indeed you remain grounded and steadfast in the faith and are not shifted

away from the hope of the gospel that you heard. This gospel has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and I, Paul, have become a servant of it.

OBSERVATIONS:

Christ has rescued us

- He rescued us from the domain of darkness (redeemed us by forgiving our sins. This is Brad's message from last week.)
- He created everything (which is why he has the authority to forgive)
- He holds everything together.
- He shows us who the invisible God is, clearly. We can know God when we know Jesus.
- He is the leader of the church.
- He is reconciling everything (balancing the accounts, correcting wrongs) by means of this forgiveness and redemption. This is big.
 - No offense will go unpunished.
 - No debt will go unpaid.
 - No good deed will be unrewarded.
 - Everyone will be repaid according to what they are owed - and on that day of reconciliation will all say, either: "Ah yes, they got what they deserved...", or "praise God who is merciful...", and those who love and trust God will all come away fully satisfied with the outcome.
 - Those who do not love and trust their merciful creator, will never be satisfied with any outcome. And will suffer the eternal consequence of their pride and arrogance.
- He will present those who continue in trusting him as holy, faultless, and blameless before God.

Revel in the Rescue

The final rescue: that day
when justice finally comes for every wrong ever done,
when healing finally comes for every disease,
when restoration finally comes for every loss ever experienced,
when life finally comes in place of death,
when every tear is finally wiped away,
when reconciliation comes for every broken relationship...

It's this last piece, reconciliation, that I want to focus on most today.

ILLUSTRATION:

Interstellar

A few years ago, I finally got around to watching the movie *Interstellar*. It was a hit movie in 2014, so I don't mind spoiling the plot just a little bit. It was a big deal sci-fi movie so of course all my fellow geek friends said I had to see it. I don't watch a ton of movies, so I have to focus my movie watching, but eventually a free night came around, and because it was a Christopher Nolan film, it won an Emmy, and my geek friends liked it, I thought I'd give it a go. It was a fun movie, if you are in to spending three hours on an emotional roller coaster with mind bending theoretical physics.

The basic plot goes something like this:

- 50 years in the future, the world is beset with all kinds of environmental problems, making the world basically uninhabitable.
- The main character, played by a sullen Matthew McConaughey is a NASA pilot, is tasked with traveling through space in an experimental craft, following the instructions of an alien intelligence, in order to find a habitable planet for the population to re-settle, assuming they can invent the escape-transport starship in time.
- And of course he has to leave his 10 year old daughter behind, who doesn't understand why her daddy has to leave her, and "who cares about the rest of the humans, I want my daddy! Daddy stay! Daddy don't leave!" And so of course I was a puddle of tears within the first 15 minutes of the movie.
- Well, the rest of the movie happens, including two very key mistakes made by the McConaughey which fast-forward him in time 84 years because quantum-physics-fake-science-blah-blah-blah-handwaving. And eventually he makes it back home.
- All this time, the 10 year old daughter grows up mad at her daddy for leaving her, not understanding why, but eventually she starts to understand what he was up to via an explanation that takes 2 hours so I'll spare you the details. But daddy doesn't know she gets it, so he's sick with grief that his daughter despises him.
- Daddy eventually makes it back to a now-94-year old daughter who is on her death bed. They have a tearful reunion, he finally knows she has forgiven him, they reconcile, have about 20 minutes together, annnnd, then she dies. Which in the worldview of the writers, is The End. No afterlife.

It is supposed to be this super-emotional, satisfying, bittersweet ending. But the only thing I can think of is how deeply *unsatisfying* such an ending is! Spending an entire lifetime estranged from someone, only to finally reunite at the end, and then - that's it - the end!

What a stark contrast to reality.

The very antithesis of the hope we have as those who know the truth of God.

Interstellar's award-winning story touches on this idea of reconciliation, something we all feel the need for, something we all long for, something most of us recognize: the pain of estrangement from those we love, the pain of unresolved anger and conflict with those we should be close to, and the joy of finally reuniting.

But it misses the satisfying reality that God reveals to us here in the scripture. We have the opportunity for reconciliation with God, and with one another, and more: to experience that restored relationship, never-again-to-be-broken, for the rest of eternity!

This is what Jesus's mission was here on Earth: to reconcile us to God, and show us how to reconcile with one another, and to show us what life looks like when we live as reconciled brothers and sisters of our father God.

APPLICATION:

Paul gives us the application for today in Colossians

1. Be reconciled to God

Paul writes this letter to "the saints and faithful brothers-and-sisters in Christ at Colossae" - to believers, those who have been reconciled to God. But he does so in a way that shows the way of reconciliation: believe! And change your life to line up with the reality of who Christ is: this merciful, just, loving, reconciler.

And the first application point is for those of you who are not reconciled to God today. It's all true. Believe! Turn from your life of fear, passivity, and ignoring Christ. Turn from your life of chasing happiness and peace any where else. You won't find the happiness, the peace, the meaning in life that you are looking for anywhere but in knowing your creator and savior: Jesus. Chase him. Get to know him, and get to know his people in the church. Hang with them.

2. Remember your reconciliation

Paul urges believers to remember their reconciliation and live in a way that is fitting.

Colossians 3:1-4 (CSB)

1 So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. 3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

3. Go and reconcile

And finally, one of the specifics about how to live in a way that is fitting, when you are “setting your mind on things above” - is reconciliation - and he beautifully describes what that should look like for us.

Colossians 3:12-14 (CSB)

12 Therefore, as God’s chosen ones, holy and dearly loved, put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, 13 bearing with one another and forgiving one another if anyone has a grievance against another. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you are also to forgive. 14 Above all, put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.

And I think we could do worse than to make that a main focus, perhaps a resolution in 2021: reconciling relationships we have broken.

I want to leave you with a final question, one last super-practical point today. It’s something that occurred to me as I was writing this, and its been bugging me, because I feel like I have a ways to grow here.

If Jesus said that we should not even come and worship without being reconciled, that we should stop at the door and immediately go get things right (Matthew 5:23); if he says that we should pause our prayers until we have forgiven someone we have something against (Mark 11:25), and that we should ask to be forgiven as we forgive others (Matthew 6:12) - how much more should we drop our political and philosophical and theological debates until we have been reconciled?

What would happen if we only discussed politics, philosophy, theology, (and epidemiology?) *after* we have affirmed our love for the person we’re discussing with? *After* we have made them (and ourselves) confident that we have each others best interests at heart?

Perhaps the tone of our conversations and relationships would change. Perhaps the face of the church would change, and this would have a radical impact on our neighbors, family, friends, coworkers, and classmates.

Maybe something to pray about.

Let’s pray!