

“Team 9-1-1”
2 Corinthians 5:17-20

4/11/10

9 & 10:45 am

Series: *Rescue*

INTRODUCTION

“In the early 1800s, a frontier couple, Zeb and Martha, settled down on their new land. They built a cabin, a barn and a corral for their livestock. Then Zeb hung a big bell in a tree and explained, ‘There are outlaws around here, Martha. If you need me, ring the bell — *but only in an emergency.*’

“Days later, as Zeb was riding out to the fields to cut wood, he heard the bell ring. He headed home at full gallop, and shouted, ‘What’s wrong?’ ‘I just thought maybe you’d like some fresh coffee,’ Martha said. ‘Tarnation, woman, I said the bell was for emergencies. Half the day’s gone, and I still have chores to do.’

“Once more he rode out. Just as he picked up the ax, he heard the bell. Again he raced home. ‘The washtub’s leaking!’ reported Martha. ‘That ain’t no blasted emergency! Winter’s comin’! I gotta cut the wood!’

Two hours later Zeb was chopping down a tree and the bell rang. He charged home to find the cabin in flames, the barn burned to the ground and his cattle stampeding away. Then he saw Martha, slumped near the bell, with blood running from her head. He ran to her and took her in his arms and said, ‘Martha, *this* is more like it!’”

For the past few weeks we’ve been looking at the theme of “Rescue.” God is all about rescuing people from sin and death and bringing them into a relationship with Himself in this life and the next.

At the end of the Easter services last weekend, we asked whoever would like to write on a card how God *had* rescued them or *was* rescuing them and to hold the card up to God. The response was amazing.

Many of the cards were left in the seats, so we put together a list of what we found.

The big three were *Fear, loneliness and anger.*

Some of the others were: drugs, bitterness, living for self, hopelessness, doubt, deception, worry, bad friends ...

... rescued from dying in the streets, gambling addictions, violence, hate, rage, pride, selfishness, torment, wounds caused by sin, greed, guilt, physical pain, bad relationships, destruction, and more!

Isn't God great?!

This morning as we look at *rescue*, we're going to see that God designed it to be a team effort; us joining Him and us joining with one another to carry out the most important mission in the world: the rescue of people who are far from God.

Key Idea: *Rescue is teamwork*

OPEN to 2 Corinthians 5:17 (**PAGE** 1799)

READ 2 Corinthians 5:17-20

Rescue is teamwork ...

I. God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit Work as a Team to Rescue People

(2 Corinthians 5:17-18a)

2 Corinthians 5:17-18a **“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!**

18a **“All this is from God, Who reconciled us to Himself through Christ...”**

God is the Great Initiator of saving people through Christ! And Father, Son and Holy Spirit all work together in this grand mission!

A. The Holy Spirit is convicting people

John 16:8 **“When He [the Holy Spirit] comes, He will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment.”**

The Holy Spirit works in people to reveal to them how self-centered and far from God they are in attitudes, actions, thoughts, words. Guilt, appropriate guilt, is experienced for what they have done and what they have failed to do.

This is a good thing for a person's soul! Otherwise, we could continue living in a broken relationship with God and people. And never even care.

B. The Father is drawing people to Jesus

John 6:44a **“No one can come to Me unless the Father Who sent Me draws him.”**

Part of what this means is that people, left to themselves, would never seek God. Our human hearts are so self-centered, we would never look outside ourselves for anything more if God the Father didn't work within us and outside us to point us to Jesus.

See Romans 3:10-18

C. Jesus is bringing people into a relationship with His Father

John 14:6 **“Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’”**

We see the three persons of the Trinity, the Godhead, working in unity, to rescue people from sin. They each are doing different parts of the process, but working as a team to accomplish the goal.

Rescue is teamwork ...

II. God Has Called Us to Join His Rescue Team (2 Corinthians 5:18b-20)

READ 2 Corinthians 5:18-20

“All this is from God, Who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation:

19 that God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And He has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

20 We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God.”

We have been made ambassadors of Jesus Christ in this world, representing Him and carrying His message wherever we go.

Jesus said, **“As the Father has sent Me, I am sending you.”**
(John 20:21b)

Acts 1:8 **“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the Earth.”**

Now, sometimes when we hear that we are Christ’s ambassadors, carrying His message, being His witnesses ...

... it can start to feel like the whole responsibility or burden has just been shifted to us, and we're on our own trying to bring people to Christ.

But this is *not true!*

Remember: God is already at work and we are joining Him as He is drawing, convicting and revealing Jesus to them. We witness, we reveal Jesus, and they choose whether to believe or not.

I want to show you a news report in just a minute that helps make this point. As you listen, you will hear very clearly how God has taken the initiative, and then Christian people join Him in what He is doing.

This takes place among what may be the toughest audience in the world for the Message about Jesus: Muslims in the Middle East.

SHOW VIDEO of Muslim having dreams that bring them to Jesus. (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IoyayndwXQ4&feature=related>)

God is always working to bring people to Himself. In our day-to-day lives, it may not be as dramatic as what we just saw but, none-the-less, God is working, and when, in faith, we join Him, people entrust their lives to Him and grow as His followers.

ILLUSTRATION

Terry Lane was a successful cabinet maker who needed more space. He found an ideal location in northwest Jacksonville and in 1985 built a 25,000 square foot state-of-the-art plant that was soon humming with activity. Life was good. But according to Terry, his peace and comfort were short lived. He shared this story:

“Almost immediately, problems erupted. Every night the burglar alarm sounded, and I was summoned to the plant by police officers. Broken windows, shots fired, bullet holes in the walls, stolen equipment, vandalism — even cars set on fire in the parking lot.

“One night an officer asked me, ‘What possessed you to build a plant this close to “The Rock”?’

‘What do you mean, “The Rock”?’ I asked.

‘The Cleveland Arms apartments,’ he responded. ‘More crack cocaine is sold here than anywhere in Jacksonville, so we call it “The Rock.”’ And he proceeded to enlighten me about my new neighborhood. The 200-unit subsidized housing complex was occupied by

drug dealers, prostitutes, and felons, a place considered so dangerous police were hesitant to go there.

“As I sat mulling over the situation, from out of nowhere came a thought so clear it was almost audible: ‘If you’ll love those who despitely use you, I’ll take care of it.’ Stunned and shaken by God’s admonition, I wondered how I’d obey this gentle command. Then I sensed him say, ‘Forget about all the shooting and all the garbage. Look at the children.’

“Days went by as I prayed for my neighbors and tried to figure out how to connect with this community. I bought several basketballs, wrote ‘Jesus loves you’ and ‘Mr. Lane loves you’ on them, and threw them over the fence into the complex. There was no immediate reaction, but at least they didn’t throw them back.

Then one Saturday while working alone, I stepped outside for a break. I heard the noise of children playing beneath a tractor trailer parked on the property. When they saw me, one said, ‘There’s the man,’ and they started running.

‘Wait,’ I called. ‘Would you like something cold to drink?’ Four or five little kids followed me into the plant where I opened the soft drink machine and gave them a cold soda pop. They went home, and I thought no more about it until Monday afternoon when I heard a commotion in the lobby and the receptionist ask, ‘Can I help you?’

“As I walked down the hallway, I heard one little kid ask, ‘Where’s the big man with the beard?’ Turning the corner, I saw 16 kids in the lobby looking for me — well, for the man with the key to the drink machine.

That was the beginning. Suddenly, 35 children adopted me, coming to my office every afternoon after school instead of going home. There was nothing for them to go home to. Day after day, while I worked at my drafting table, I was surrounded by kids on the floor busily coloring or doing other crafts I had brought.

Thus began the journey that would change my world and that of many kids whose addicted parents left them to fend for themselves. Often hungry, unkempt, undisciplined, with no structure in their lives or motivation to attend school or church, these children would be the next lost generation. I felt compelled to do what I could. Years flew by, and the kids I mentored became a part of my life.”

Eventually Terry Lane established a community center called Metro Kids Konnection. It grew to the point where the staff of this ministry feeds over 145 children physically, academically, and spiritually. And this is now Terry’s full-time work.

“He says, ‘Nothing can replace the joy of having a little child crawl into my lap with a hug for “Pastor Terry,” or for a young man who has been rescued from a potential life of dealing drugs, to look me in the eye, shake my hand with a firm grip, and say, ‘Thanks, P.T.’

“That’s my reward for ‘looking at the children.’”

Lives rescued, now and for eternity because Terry listened to the voice of God and joined Him in what He was doing.

APPLICATION IDEAS

How do I join God and others in rescuing people?

- Fully cooperate with God’s work in you to make you more and more like Jesus.

When you do this, you will become more like Jesus and His life, words, character, heart, will flow through you.

- Pray for people in your circle of influence who don’t know Jesus. Where possible, pray with other believers for your common circles of influence, or for one another’s circles. Ask God to lead you in what steps to take ... possibly together.

Some of you worked as teams in collecting food and inviting people to come on Easter Sunday. Husbands and wives, dads, moms and children, neighbors (I heard of one situation where church families share a common backyard fence. One said to the other, I’m taking care of our street. Are you getting yours?” They worked together!)

- build relationships with those who need the Lord

- share your story of how you met Jesus

- Join a ministry team on Sundays or in the middle of the week. There are people here every Sunday and at all kinds of ministries through the week who haven’t yet chosen to surrender their lives to Jesus.

When you serve them, love them, they see Jesus!

greeting, hospitality, helping with children,
being alert to people you don’t know, greeting,
offering to help, etc.

1 Corinthians 3:5-6 **“What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe - as the Lord has assigned to each his task.”**

6 I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow.”

“Father in Heaven, thank You for drawing me to Jesus! Please help me to see and respond as You work to make me more like Him. Help me to be an effective ambassador for You! In Jesus’ name, Amen.”