

The Gift of Salvation (Ephesians 2:1-9)

10:00am Holy Communion – 1st March 2026 (Lent 2)

John 6:35-40

Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. ³⁶ But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. ³⁷ Everything that the Father gives me will come to me, and anyone who comes to me I will never drive away; ³⁸ for I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. ³⁹ And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. ⁴⁰ This is indeed the will of my Father, that all who see the Son and believe in him may have eternal life; and I will raise them up on the last day.’

<Prayer>

We have become so used to assessing every according to its value. You have to know it, so you can make sure you get it – no one would want to have less when they could have more. **But not so with Almighty God.**

Over these next four weeks the two set readings for each Sunday are lined up with the Lent course, which Justin and I are currently running. The broad themes which we have set for the journey of Lent all fall under the title: *‘The Gifts of Christ’*. **That is: salvation, the Kingdom of God, discipleship, and the perpetual presence of God’s Holy Spirit for us.**

The first thing to say is that Christ has so many more gifts than these to offer us. For example, we are not even mentioning the Church as a gift, or the promise of Heaven, or the ways in which Jesus seemed to bring a radical inclusion of all people.

The second thing to say is that all the wonderful offerings of Christ are a matter of *grace*, that is, **gifts that we do not deserve but are still given because of God's great love for us**. Here are things of great value, but we have *not* had to pay the price.

However, it would not be quite right to say that such gifts are *freely given*. **From us something is required**, and this is where the **balance point comes in**. The Christian faith holds (almost literally) the need for us to recognise **our separation and distance from God** the Father because of something we have called *sin*. We all know basically what that means. But this sin should be taken in its widest understanding – **we are sinful by nature and sinful by our actions**. The words we often confess are by *thought, word and deed*. **Being sinful is what we do and what we are**. So, in order to accept God's wonderful, graceful gifts, we must recognise such separation from God in ourselves and **repent of our fallen nature**. **We shall need the faith to do that, and the commitment** to live in a new way that **continually overcomes** our old nature, with the beautiful promises of God's wide love for us.

Now a moment ago I did say *balance point*, but please don't think of our sinful offerings to God and his graceful response to us as equal measures. God does not give us only just enough to overcome our sin and nothing more, rather he pours in loads of extra. **The God of the Universe is incredibly generous. We bring him a dull stone; he gives us mountains of pure gold**. That is what we mean by grace.

The economy of God's love is nothing like the idea of value we have come to know in this monetarised world. So, throw out the human limitations of value, fairness, price and worth. These are the visceral words of trading – give and take, supply and demand. There is no such economy for God, he gives freely to those who **can and want** to receive from Him. I have so often found that where a person cannot accept Christ, cannot believe in what he has done, **it's because they try to equate divine grace with our natural (and sinful) instinct to bring a measurable cost and value to everything, even God.**

Now let's think about the Gift of Salvation, perhaps the most glorious gift of Christ.

The word salvation is found across scripture. That tells us that it is a work in Creation – a work of God. In fact, the whole Bible seems to be concerned with salvation. The story of the Bible is sometimes summarised under the title of *salvation history*, **something which God has been doing toward us since the beginning.**

God's word tells of His continual attempts to find ways to re-establish the relationship he wants to have with us. This is often understood as a series of covenants – divine promises – that God sets before his people. The word *testament*, as in New Testament, means the same thing. **In the New Testament we understand the coming of Christ as the final and still active covenant, setting out what God has done and how we should respond.** He has been working in us and around us, to save us from the consequences of what otherwise awaits us – **a hopeless final death.** Not much fun, that one.

That word ‘save is important here. I’m sure you know that title we sometimes hear of Christ, that **he is our Saviour?** Remember back to Christmas, when the angels appeared to the shepherds. As Luke tells us: ‘I bring you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, He is Christ the Lord.’ The Latin word for salvation gives us a clue – it’s the word *salva*, sounding like a soothing ointment – to heal, to deliver, to save.

I picked out these two readings for today because they draw out so well this graceful idea of God’s gift of salvation. I’m going to work through the first of those readings with you, from Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians chapter 2, so do have your notice sheet in hand, with the words of the reading.

From Ephesians 2

v1 ,2– ‘You were dead, following the course of this world, the disobedient.’

That’s everyone, all humanity. No one can say they are not in this. We are all in this world, *of this world* and disobedient to God. And just the same, we shall all die for it. Stiff words!

v3 – ‘All of us naturally live by the senses, by our desires, we are born that way, as children of wrath.’

And we do, and that is how we treat each other too - satisfying ourselves against the other. Personally, we try not to, but as humanity *together* that is the pattern we see and know. In his almighty power God reserves his wrath for us. It’s frightening stuff!

v4,5 – ‘By the richness of God, his grace – we are saved from death to life.’

And yet he holds before us in wonderful generous measure *a total solution of change*, to be saved from our fallen nature, saved from wrath and saved from a hopeless death because of it all. That is the offer of salvation in Christ Jesus – the Good News.

v6 – ‘We shall be raised with Him, and this does not expire for us. It is a matter for the whole of our lives and the ages to come. The church shall never fail.’

What is promised carries the highest guarantee, literally God’s covenant to us. It shall not wither and die with us but is *available to us continuously because we fall and fail continuously*.

v9 (is where it all happens)– ‘For by *grace* you have been saved *through faith*, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God - not the result of works, so that no one may boast.’

This is God’s incredible gift to us. We give only our failings and brokenness to Him, but we receive the generous gifts beyond measure. That is grace, and we do not deserve it, yet Christ died for our sins, and we faithful shall receive immeasurable salvation. **But heed this – it is a matter of faith, and only faith.**

I think the reason I became a Christian, and will remain so until my final day, is that as a young man I could quickly see the limits of the world in which we live. **I was not fooled by its temptations and its illusions.** You can have all the riches, power and influence of the world, and it will probably corrupt you (and haven’t we seen all that in our news so much recently).

What seemed to break out of that dread, had to be beyond us mere earthlings. **Indeed, there is no earthly equivalent to salvation, it's only in God our Heavenly Father and it's only by faith.**

So, it's worth believing for. A wonderful picture, priceless, not fake - a fortune is offered to us. **Just don't get stuck on thinking it makes no sense when compared to the value systems we are forced to live in.** The graceful gift of God in salvation is immeasurable. All we have to do bring is bring our true repentance, **the filth of our fallen lives, and our faith,** and then we shall be gifted so much more.

Praise and thanks be to God.

Amen