

Jesus is Savior

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7.1.2012

When you become a parent, there are all sorts of tasks ahead of you. You've got to prepare the house, clear time for all sorts of doctor's appointments, and buy all sorts of things: a crib, clothes, bottles, and on and on and on. However, one of the biggest items on the "to do" list and probably the most commonly asked question after, "Is it a boy or a girl?" is, "Have you figured out a name yet?"

Names...A lot of pressure there. I remember when Kendra and I went into the hospital we had a printout in our packed items of all the names we had narrowed it down to...about 25 between the 2 babies coming into the world. We wanted to wait to actually see them to see if one of the names stuck out to us as befitting those babies. Now that we have Noah and Arabella, my only regret is that Noah is becoming far more common than I realized, and that some classmates of Arabella's will think we named her after the girl in the Twilight Book series...

In truth, we loved the name Arabella because it means, "An answered prayer" and for Kendra and I who struggled to conceive kids for awhile, she certainly was an answered prayer.

You see names are so crucially important because they are our identities. They are **who we are at our core**. That's why people fuss so much about titles. There was an online discussion some of us were having as to whether or not Deacon's should be called "Pastor..." After all, pastor refers to the shepherding role of clergy, and Deacons are not lead pastors of churches. Personally, I don't put much stock in being particular about titles. I figure people are going to call you by what you've earned because our titles or identities are reflective of who we are at our core.

Think about how many times people were given new names in Scripture to reflect a new thing. In the Old Testament, God changes Abrams name to **Abraham** to reflect God's promise to him as a "**Father of Multitude**." Abraham's grandson, Jacob, was also renamed after wrestling with God to **Israel**, meaning, "**He struggles with God**." Isn't this an apt name for the country formed from Jacob throughout the remainder of the Old Testament? In the New Testament, Jesus named **Peter** when He said, "Upon this ROCK, I will build my Church." Peter comes from Petros in Greek, meaning "**stone**" or **Cephas** in Aramaic, which also means "stone."

Naming is so crucially important, and as we read in **Matthew 1**, even God ensured his son would be named appropriately, "An angel of the Lord appeared to [Joseph] in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 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," (Matthew 1:20b-21). **Jesus** in Greek,

Joshua in Hebrew, means “**the LORD saves.**” That was Jesus’ core identity from the beginning: Savior. **Jesus is Savior.**

Paul delves further into this idea in **2 Timothy, chapter 1, starting in verse 6.** Turn there with me now. What we find in 2 Timothy is a great letter of Paul’s. He knows the end is coming soon, and so he gives Timothy some final instructions on what it means to be a man of God, a pastor, and leader. He writes, “⁶ For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. ⁷ For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline. ⁸ So do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner. Rather, join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God. ⁹ He has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, ¹⁰ but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. ¹¹ And of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher. ¹² That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet this is no cause for shame, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until that day. ¹³ What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. ¹⁴ Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.”

Jesus: God saves, but from what? Our own death and destruction. From whom? Ourselves. It is the part of the story of salvation we don’t like to hear about, but it is undeniable that evil exists in this world. We tend to attribute it to larger, impersonal aspects of society and existence. Things like governments or forces, etc. Wall Street, banks, big business, politicians, dictatorships, and on and on. How evil, we say, those things are! Yet, we gloss over the evil that exists right within our own hearts.

We use euphemisms, “We all make mistakes,” to rationalize or excuse the fact that there is evil within our hearts. However, there is evil within us. We each are capable of doing some very wrong things. We lose our tempers. We fail to check our egos at the door. We say things that scar others and cut deep. Yes, we are capable of evil.

Paul puts it in a real personal way in **Romans 7**, “I realize that I don’t have what it takes. I can will it, but I can’t do it. I decide to do good, but I don’t really do it; I decide not to do bad, but then I do it anyway. My decisions, such as they are, don’t result in actions. Something has gone wrong deep within me and gets the better of me every time,” (Romans 7:18-20, The Message). Paul, who many claim to be a arrogant and judgmental, proceeds to judge himself quite harshly. He confesses quite clearly, “I don’t have what it takes.” He confesses his

struggle to do the good he ought to do at times and avoid the bad he shouldn't be doing at others. He confesses that he needs help.

Prior to this confession, Paul even writes how this was exactly the point of the Law, to show humanity that they cannot do it alone. That they cannot save themselves. To keep the Law is impossible, and this was exactly God's point: Humanity needs a Savior! And we have One! That's the Good News! That's the Gospel.

You see, God didn't wait till we deserved it to send us a Savior. The amazing **thing is this**, ⁶ You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. ⁸ But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:6-7).

Jesus rescued us from sin and DEATH for something far greater. Jesus took on all that was meant for us. This is exactly what was prophesied about in **Isaiah 53**, "

⁴ Surely He has borne our griefs
And carried our sorrows;
Yet we esteemed Him stricken,
Smitten by God, and afflicted.

⁵ But He was wounded for our transgressions,
He was bruised for our iniquities;
The chastisement for our peace was upon Him,
And by His stripes we are healed.

⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray;
We have turned, every one, to his own way;
And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

⁷ He was oppressed and He was afflicted,
Yet He opened not His mouth;
He was led as a lamb to the slaughter,
And as a sheep before its shearers is silent,
So He opened not His mouth.

⁸ He was taken from prison and from judgment,
And who will declare His generation?
For He was cut off from the land of the living;
For the transgressions of My people He was stricken.

⁹ And they^[a] made His grave with the wicked—
But with the rich at His death,
Because He had done no violence,
Nor *was any* deceit in His mouth.

¹⁰ Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him;
He has put *Him* to grief.
When You make His soul an offering for sin,
He shall see *His* seed, He shall prolong *His* days,
And the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand.
¹¹ He shall see the labor of His soul,^[b] *and* be satisfied.
By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many,
For He shall bear their iniquities.

You see in this summer movie season of superheroes, the greatest hero of all is a nonfiction story that has already come and will come again. Jesus, OUR Savior. And so, it comes time for us to respond to this hero, our Savior, Jesus. You see God didn't send Jesus to save hopeless causes. God sees within us great potential for good! It's just incredibly hard and difficult if not impossible to do all the good we are capable of apart from God, without His Holy Spirit. The tools are there, we just need the master carpenter to help us craft a new life, a new way of doing things.

And so the question for us is, "**Will we follow?**" Will we follow the greatest hero in the history of this planet? For the past few weeks, we've had our LifeCamp here at the church. Each day the kids sang this song, "God is My Hero." The chorus says this, "Heroes bring help when you don't see help comin'. A hero steps up and points the way. Heroes are humble and trust the Lord in faith. Heroes stand for truth and save the day." Jesus, our Hero, has come and saved the day for us. That's happened. The question for us is whether we'll respond to that saving act. Will we follow our hero? Will we follow Jesus the Savior?