

Hebrews Series

Sunday, October 7, 2012

Hebrews 1:1-4; 2:5-12

Introduction: Salvation Comes Through Jesus

Bad things happen even for God. But God's action, God's response in the midst of the bad that God encounters gives hope, gives life to us who are overpowered by that which steals life from us.

This is what the writer of Hebrews is pointing out when we read: "it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through what he suffered."

Salvation is a word that carries a lot of baggage for a lot of people and it images God for many as One who would kill his own Son to set us free.

But that is to read into the text, rather than to read what is in the text. The text says something very different, which is what we want to explore over these next few weeks as we make our way through Hebrews.

The other idea we struggle with is the idea of "sin"

Giving allegiance to the non-reign of God is what sin entails – not breaking of rules, etc – those are mere consequences of where our refusing to be aligned with God.

The letter to the Hebrews makes much use of this word: *save* and the idea of *salvation*, being set free from the power of sin and death

= I think we will discover a fresh way, a new way of thinking about *salvation*
– it is a life-embracing, life-giving, inclusive, liberative word.

The letter to the Hebrews articulates what God has done and is doing for human beings in Jesus.

It is about Jesus – but not as we might think or have been taught.

– rather than Jesus being the One who appeases the anger of God through his death on the cross
– we see God responding to the death that Jesus suffered as he confronted the powers of death, with life so that all humanity might be set free.

We have a very different picture of God as One who pursues us
– in order to restore our relationship with God.

And so, I invite you onto this journey of rediscovering what *salvation* is.

Salvation is translated the Greek word σωζω (sodzo).

Literally it means, what we think it means: *save, keep from harm, preserve, rescue.*

It has the sense of a lifeguard rescuing or saving a drowning swimmer;

It has the sense of saving or freeing someone from disease, for someone to be restored to health, to be made whole;

It also means to be saved or preserved from eternal death – i.e., being overcome by all that is in opposition to God.

Save, salvation are words which embrace *shalom* and *peace* – God’s action in the world!

And so *salvation* is a creative word, a creative act!

Note the connection with creation: “it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through what he suffered.”

Whenever Scripture introduces something new, something that is ground-breaking, paradigm shifting – we usually hear language of creation – new creation.

Genesis 1:1 – In the beginning God created . . .

John 1:1 – In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was God in the beginning. Through him all things were made, without him nothing was made that has been made.

1 Corinthians 8:6 – Yet, for us there is but one God, the Father from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.

Colossians 1:16-17 – For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

Likewise here in Hebrews 1: 2-3a – In these last days God has spoken to us by God’s Son, whom God appointed heir of all things, and through whom also God made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of God’s being.

Creation is all about life, not death.

So, how does death enter into the story of God’s re-creation – that *Jesus should become the pioneer of our salvation*?

**The whole story begins with Jesus.
The whole story is rooted in Jesus.**

Jesus did not merely proclaim God’s reign, Jesus embodied God’s reign.

In seeing Jesus (v.9) we see God and all who God is!

Jesus is the core, the foundation of a whole new creation, a whole new reality

This is why Jesus came = to reveal the life of God; to invite us into this life!

Jesus came to live, not to die.

But what happens when the life of God encounters the principalities and powers of this world which sow and reap death?

Death seeks to overpower life.
Death seeks to keep its power at all costs.
Death seeks to stop life.

Which brings us to the power encounter between the life of God and power of sin and death – resulting in the cross and death of Jesus.

“he suffered death so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone”

What does this mean exactly because here is where we stumble in our misunderstanding of salvation language?

Tasting death for everyone is not a statement that Jesus came to die – it is clear from the Gospels that Jesus came to bring life, abundant life (John 10:10)

Tasting death for everyone is a statement about Jesus continuing the mission of God that would reconcile and restore all humanity, even through death.

God’s love for all humanity even faces death in order to confront the power of sin and death.

This is what Jesus specifically struggled with in Gethsamene . . .

Jesus came to reveal God’s love for everyone, for us to see that God is pursuing us, to re-create us in life

That is what God’s mercy and grace are about.

God’s desire, passion to be reconciled to each person and each person to be reconciled to God.

Tasting death was the inevitable result of Jesus living out the reality of God’s reign amidst the kingdoms of this world.

Jesus by his life and ministry exposed the dark deeds, the evil purposes of the kingdoms of this world.
And in tasting death: Life barreled into death

Yet, the cross and death of Jesus was not the end of the story; was not the end of the bad thing that happened to God.

God raised Jesus from the dead, conquering sin and death and with that re-creative act – all that binds human beings.

Jesus was raised from the dead – and as a result became *the pioneer of our salvation* – so that sin and death might no longer have a hold on us, but we are set free with the gift of life that overcomes death when we embrace Jesus.

Jesus is the atonement of God, not the cross and death of Jesus!

That is what the writer of Hebrews is expressing in exalting Jesus:

“In the past, God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets in many ways and at many times. But now, in these last days, in our days, God has spoken to us by his Son, through his Son – by God’s Son God created the world in the beginning and it will all belong to God’s Son at the end.

This Son is the radiance of God’s glory, this Son perfectly mirrors God, this Son is the exact representation of God’s nature, God’s being and he holds everything together by what he says” (My paraphrase – compilation of TNIV and The Message).

Jesus is salvation!

Salvation is not just the cross – salvation comes through the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

Salvation is Jesus – which is what Jesus’ name means: “the one who saves.”

This is salvation – it is not about God demanding payment for sin, nor paying a ransom to the devil;

It is God embracing our humanity in Jesus, God’s Son, so that in our being embraced, we might be set free.

Salvation is the embodied act of God loving us in Jesus, by becoming one of us

And because Jesus took on our humanity,

We can never be the same again!

In Jesus, we are a new creation!