

And so here we are on Easter weekend once again. It is the culmination of all things Christian and the holiest time of the year.

We have looked at two pictures of Jesus in the last couple of weeks. We looked at Jesus the Suffering Servant and Jesus the Great Shepherd.

Isaiah saw Him down through the ages of history and described Jesus in these words:

Jesus the Suffering Servant:

Yet it was our weaknesses He carried; it was our sorrows that weighed Him down. And we thought His troubles were a punishment from God, a punishment for His own sins!

⁵ *But He was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins.*

He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed. All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God's paths to follow our own. Yet the LORD laid on Him the sins of us all. Isaiah 53:4-6 NLT

Jesus described Himself this way:

Jesus the Great Shepherd:

*"I am the good shepherd; I know My own sheep, and they know Me, ¹⁵ just as My Father knows Me and I know the Father. **So I sacrifice My life for the sheep.** . . . John 10:14-15 NLT*

And now today we will view Him in His most important role of all. Simply put, He is the Savior of the world. Amazingly enough in this crazy out of control politically correct world we live in there are people even within the church that have a problem with Jesus being the Savior of the world.

Terry Bowland in his book *Make Disciples – Reaching The Postmodern World for Christ*, writes this: "Many today balk at the teaching of the church. 'Do you mean to say,'" they ask, 'that all those outside the church have no hope whatsoever? What about all the sincere folks who never come to Christ? What of the billions in the worlds of Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism? What of those who have never heard? What of my neighbors and friends who are good-hearted people, but who have never made Christ their Lord and Savior? Are you saying that they are lost? Why, if that's true, then this 'gospel' has made you Christians the most narrow-minded, bigoted people on the face of the earth."

He continues, "Perhaps, we should reply by saying, that far from being narrow-minded and bigoted, Christian are, in fact, the most loving people in the world."

"Suppose you are a doctor and an individual comes to you one day and describes his symptoms. After taking a blood test you realize that this fellow has acute diabetes. You prescribe insulin injections. 'Insulin!' he cries. 'I don't want to take insulin.' You assure him that he must take insulin. 'But, I don't want to take insulin,' he complains. 'Can't I take some other drug. How about penicillin? How about a double dose of Tylenol? Won't those do?' Again you reaffirm that without the insulin, he will die.

Then he exclaims, ‘Why doctor, I believe you are the most narrow, closed-minded, bigoted physician I have ever met.’ Now, here’s the question: Is the doctor narrow and bigoted or is the doctor loving, because he is telling the man the truth – the only truth which will give him life!”

Jesus the Savior of the World:

¹⁴ *Furthermore, we have seen with our own eyes and now testify that the Father sent His Son to be the Savior of the world.* 1 John 4:14 NLT

Most people will underappreciate the need – forgiveness of sins – that all of us have. Most people don’t think they have a problem but all of us need the same thing. We need a Savior to save us from our sins.

Let’s look at four portraits or pictures of Jesus the Savior.

All of these people have one thing in common and that is that Jesus Christ crossed their path and that encounter with the Savior of the world was life-changing and transforming.

1. Flawed at relationships: Woman at the well She was messed up

Jesus met her at a well. She was a Samaritan and He was a Jew. He was the Son of God and she was a woman looking for some water. She wasn’t just any woman. She was well known. She had a reputation and it wasn’t necessarily a good one. It didn’t take long for Jesus to get to the heart of her need.

She was no good at relationships and in fact she had been married 5 times and now she was living with a guy and Jesus called her out. He didn’t mince words and He didn’t avoid the subject He just said it but followed it up with something even more impressive than knowing her secrets.

“If you only knew the gift God has for you and who you are speaking to, you would ask Me, and I would give you living water.”

¹¹ *“But sir, you don’t have a rope or a bucket,” she said, “and this well is very deep. Where would you get this living water . . .*

¹³ *Jesus replied, “Anyone who drinks this water will soon become thirsty again. ¹⁴ But those who drink the water I give will never be thirsty again. It becomes a fresh, bubbling spring within them, giving them eternal life.” ¹⁵ “Please, sir,” the woman said, “give me this water! Then I’ll never be thirsty again, and I won’t have to come here to get water.”* John 4:10-11, 13-15 NLT

You may be bad at relationships. You may have looked in all the wrong places for love but nothing you have done is too hard for the Savior of the world to overcome. Like this woman you may have messed up but Jesus Christ specializes in cleaning up messes.

Remember He’s the Great Shepherd who’s out looking for the lost sheep. He’s looking for you!

2. A fruitless reject:

Zacchaeus

He was mixed up

The Bible says that this man named Zacchaeus was not very well-liked. He was a Jew but he was collecting taxes for the Romans and taking bribes on the side. He was not practicing the principles of Judaism and he was taking advantage of others. People couldn't stand him but Jesus crossed his path and his life was changed forever!

Jesus entered Jericho and made His way through the town. ² There was a man there named Zacchaeus. He was the chief tax collector in the region, and he had become very rich. ³ He tried to get a look at Jesus, but he was too short to see over the crowd. ⁴ So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree beside the road, for Jesus was going to pass that way.

⁵ When Jesus came by, He looked up at Zacchaeus and called him by name. "Zacchaeus!" He said. "Quick, come down! I must be a guest in your home today."

⁶ Zacchaeus quickly climbed down and took Jesus to his house in great excitement and joy. ⁷ But the people were displeased. "He has gone to be the guest of a notorious sinner," they grumbled.

⁸ Meanwhile, Zacchaeus stood before the Lord and said, "I will give half my wealth to the poor, Lord, and if I have cheated people on their taxes, I will give them back four times as much!"

⁹ Jesus responded, "Salvation has come to this home today, for this man has shown himself to be a true son of Abraham. ¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost." Luke 19:1-10 NLT

He was rich, he was the head tax collector. He was at the top of his game but the problem was his game wasn't working out so well for him. His life was fruitless in the area of things that matter the most. If you think wealth satisfies the longing that is inside of us then start paying attention to the people who can never get enough. Many times it is the rich and famous that take themselves out of this world by suicide so it can't be wealth that satisfies the longing of our hearts.

He wanted desperately to see Jesus. He was short and so to overcome this liability he climbed up a tall tree. Notice a couple of things: Jesus knew right where he was and stopped at the base of the tree and called him by name. Jesus Christ knows where you are and He knows your name. He also invited Himself into Zacchaeus home!

He's standing today outside your heart and He longs to come in. It's the whole reason He came to this earth. He's not going to reject you.

3. A foolish rebel:

The thief on the cross

He'd been marred up

Jesus was about to die and yet He couldn't help but be the Savior of a marred and foolish thief hanging beside Him on his own cross. We don't know all that the man had done but he was expendable and despicable. He had made foolish choices and rebel against society and landed in prison. Finally he had done enough and society had had enough and he was sentenced to die.

The most fortunate day of his life was dying beside Jesus Christ.

One of the criminals hanging beside him scoffed, “So you’re the Messiah, are you? Prove it by saving yourself—and us, too, while you’re at it!”

⁴⁰ *But the other criminal protested, “Don’t you fear God even when you have been sentenced to die? ⁴¹ We deserve to die for our crimes, but this man hasn’t done anything wrong.” ⁴² Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom.”*

⁴³ *And Jesus replied, “I assure you, today you will be with Me in paradise.”* Luke 23:39-43 NLT

A life of sin and sinful choices will leave you marred and scarred. Someone once said, “Sin will take you farther than you want to go, keep you longer than you want to stay and cost you more than you want to pay.” This common thief had let sin take him to being executed for his crimes but Jesus crossed his path and he made a wise choice. He chose Jesus and His way of salvation.

You can play around with sin but in the end you are going to destroy yourself from the inside out. Don’t be a rebel any longer. Don’t let sin keep dragging you around and down. Find within yourself the strength to reach out to Jesus and let Him save you from your sin. Was this man marred? Absolutely but in those seconds of encounter with Jesus the marring effects of sin were taken away.

Isaiah saw the potential for this many years before Jesus actually came and wrote these words:

“Come now, and let us reason together,” Says the LORD, “Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool. ¹⁹ If you are willing and obedient, You shall eat the good of the land; ²⁰ But if you refuse and rebel, You shall be devoured by the sword”; For the mouth of the LORD has spoken. Isaiah 1:18-20 NKJV

4. A failed rock:

The apostle Peter

He was marked up

He was known as the impulsive but loyal disciple. In fact Jesus once questioned him about who he thought Jesus was and in that moment he was called a rock.

Then He asked them, “But who do you say I am?” ¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”

¹⁷ *Jesus replied, “You are blessed, Simon son of John, because My Father in heaven has revealed this to you. You did not learn this from any human being. ¹⁸ Now I say to you that you are Peter (which means ‘rock’), and upon this rock I will build my church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it. ¹⁹ And I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven.* Matthew 16:15-19 NLT

Peter was told by Jesus shortly before the crucifixion that he was going to deny that he even knew the Lord. Peter couldn’t imagine it; not in a million years. But when it came down to it he

denied that he was a follower of Christ. It was too much for him to handle at that moment. The Bible says he went out and wept bitterly. He figured he was washed up and any chance of being “the rock” was over. Three years of loyalty was wasted in a moment of denial. But then Jesus came to where Peter was. Peter went back to his former vocation. He went fishing and Jesus met him on the sea shore. When it was all over Peter was restored back to faith and went on to help turn the world upside down with the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

That was the beginning of Jesus being the Savior but from that day till this day He has never stopped. He has never given up on you. He has never quit looking for lost people. He knows where you are today. He knows exactly what you are feeling and thinking. He knows the brokenness that can envelop our lives. He knows just how flawed we can be and how bad we can mess up.

Today, in April of 2014, Jesus Christ is still in the saving business. He has never stopped. He is still the Savior of the world.

Did He die on a cross? Yes. Did He have to die for our sins? Yes. What’s the big deal about Christ’s blood shed for our sins? Blood sacrifices are as old as the Old Testament. It was the shedding of the blood of the best most perfect lamb that allowed people’s sins to be forgiven prior to Christ’s coming. The Bible says that Jesus is the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world. His blood washes away our sin and allows us to conquer it by the power of His grace and mercy.

The old system under the law of Moses was only a shadow, a dim preview of the good things to come, not the good things themselves. The sacrifices under that system were repeated again and again, year after year, but they were never able to provide perfect cleansing for those who came to worship. ² If they could have provided perfect cleansing, the sacrifices would have stopped, for the worshipers would have been purified once for all time, and their feelings of guilt would have disappeared.

³ But instead, those sacrifices actually reminded them of their sins year after year. ⁴ For it is not possible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. ⁵ That is why, when Christ came into the world, He said to God,

“You did not want animal sacrifices or sin offerings.

But you have given Me a body to offer. Hebrews 10:1-5 NLT

Several years ago in Oshawa, Ontario, Canada, George and Vera Bajenksi’s lives were changed forever. February 16, 1989. A very normal Thursday morning. The phone rang at 9:15 a.m. "There’s been an accident..." It involved their son Ben.

As they approached the intersection of Adelaide and Simcoe Streets near the high school, they could see the flashing lights of the police cars and ambulance units. Vera noticed a photographer and followed the direction of his camera lens to the largest pool of blood she had ever seen. All she could say was, "George, Ben went home--home to be with his Heavenly Father!" Her first reaction was to jump out of the car, somehow collect the blood and put it back into her son.

"That blood, for me, at that moment, became the most precious thing in the world because it was life. It was life-giving blood and it belonged in my son, my only son, the one I loved so much."

The road was dirty and the blood just didn't belong there. George noticed that cars were driving right through the intersection--right through the blood. His heart was smitten. He wanted to cover the blood with his coat and cry, "You will not drive over the blood of my son!"

Then Vera understood for the first time in her life, one of God's greatest and most beautiful truths...why blood? Because it was the strongest language God could have used. It was the most precious thing He could give-- the highest price He could pay. Through God's amazing love we were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ

¹⁸ For you know that God paid a ransom to save you from the empty life you inherited from your ancestors. And the ransom He paid was not mere gold or silver. ¹⁹ It was the precious blood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God. ²⁰ God chose Him as your ransom long before the world began, but He has now revealed Him to you in these last days. 1 Peter 1:18-19.

This caused Charles Wesley to write these words in 1738:

And can it be that I should gain an interest in the Savior's blood?
Died He for me, who caused His pain—For me, who Him to death pursued?
Amazing love! How can it be, That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

He did die for you and me so that we might have life. That is the hope of the resurrection. That is the hope of today and the Easter message. Do you have that hope in you today? Are you living for Christ or for yourself? He is on your side but you have to decide to be on His.

Let Christ cross your path and life today? He is waiting for you today. He is the Savior of the world.

The invitation:

I'm not a fan of mass weddings or mass conversions and so today I'm going to ask you to do something that is just between you and God. I would certainly encourage you to come forward and pray as an act showing how serious you are about accepting Jesus Christ. There should be no shame when you accept Jesus. In fact, most of us that became Christians did it out of desperation and need and when you are in need you will do anything to fix it.

It may be that you can't do that today but you are hungry for God and you know you need Him. You were handed a card today and I'm going to ask you to pray with me in a few moments. If you pray and really mean it, I would like to know about it so if you will fill out the card and someone will have a conversation with you this week about this life-changing decision.

Prayer: Dear God, I come to you in the name of Jesus. I acknowledge to You that I am a sinner, and I am sorry for my sins and the life that I have lived; I need your forgiveness.

I believe that Your only Son Jesus Christ shed His precious blood on the cross at Calvary and died for my sins, and I am now willing to turn from my sin.

You said in Your Holy Word, that if we confess the Lord our God and believe in our hearts that God raised Jesus from the dead, we will be saved.

Right now I confess Jesus as the Lord of my soul. With my heart, I believe that God raised Jesus from the dead. This very moment I accept Jesus Christ as my own personal Savior and according to His Word, right now I am saved. Lord Jesus transform my life so that I may bring honor to you alone and not to myself. Thank you Jesus for dying for me and giving me eternal life. Amen.

Send out:

And God has given us His Spirit as proof that we live in Him and He in us. ¹⁴ Furthermore, we have seen with our own eyes and now testify that the Father sent His Son to be the Savior of the world. ¹⁵ All who confess that Jesus is the Son of God have God living in them, and they live in God. ¹⁶ We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in His love. 1 John 4:13-16 NLT