

## **“Salvation Comes By Grace Through Faith”**

**“He cried out, ‘Lord save me!’ Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying, ‘You of little faith, why did you doubt?’” Matthew 14:30-31.**

**One of the themes of the lessons for today is about salvation. Joseph plays a unique role in the salvation of his tribe during a time of famine. Paul reminds Jews that salvation is by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. And, Peter and the disciples worshiped Jesus as they witness his powers of salvation.**

**The year was 1956. Some college friends and I went to Fox Lake, Wisconsin to work for the Green Giant Pea Company. One Monday while we were off, some of us decided to go swimming near a foot bridge above the dam. I let myself off from the foot bridge and panicked when I could not reach back up and grab a hold of the bridge. So I went down to the bottom of the lake and pushed myself up to try to reach the boards of the foot bridge. Of course I was not successful. I tried again a second and in desperation a third time. The rest of the story later.**

### **I. Salvation of A Nation-Gen.37:1-4,12-28**

**Recently, in a lessons from Romans, Paul said that all thing work together for good for those who love God. When Joseph’s brothers out of jealousy sold him to a Midianites caravan, they did not know what God had in mind for them years later. Years later, it worked out for the better!**

**At the age of seventeen, Joseph was assigned as a shepherd apprentice to Gad, Asher, Dan and Naphtali. Joseph was precocious and could not keep his mouth shut. He was also a favorite of his father Jacob being the second youngest son of Jacob and the older son of Rachel, the favorite wife of Jacob. Jacob also made Joseph a beautiful coat of many colors, which he would wear while bragging about his dreams of having all of his brothers do obeisance to him. All of his older brothers hated him because of this attitude and their father’s preference.**

**One day while the brothers were pasturing the sheep near Shechem, Jacob sent Joseph out to check on his older brothers and to assist them. Of course, Joseph the favorite of his father had slept in that morning and his brothers in the field were delighted that he was not with them. Well, when he arrived at Shechem, he did not see his brothers and was told by a man that the young men had left their sheep and gone off to Dothan.**

**From Dothan upon looking in the distance, who do you suppose the sons of Jacob saw? You guessed it, that arrogant, loose mouth young Joseph in his coat of many colors. They said, “*Here comes this dreamer.*” Now is our chance to rid ourselves of him forever. “*Let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits.*” Genesis 37:19,20. We will tell our father that he was killed by a wild beast. Reuben, the eldest brother, refused to go along with the plan, convincing them to put him into a large pit from which he planned to rescue him later.**

**Presently, a caravan of Ishmaelites and Midianites was seen in the distance and so Judah suggested that they should sell Joseph to the caravan and they did. The Midianites carried Joseph to Egypt and sold him into slavery there. Thus began the saga of Joseph the dreamer and savior of Israel. Years later, the brothers will stand trembling in front of**

Joseph who will be the most powerful person in Egypt next to Pharaoh. Seeing fear in the eyes of his brothers Joseph will say, *“Fear not, am I in the place of God? As for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive.”* Gen. 50:19-21. We do not always know what is best for us or what God has in store for us in the future, nevertheless, with God’s help, it can be for the better.

## II. The Word of God and Our Response to it-Romans 10:5-15

In Romans 10, Paul continues his conversation on salvation by law vs. salvation by faith by refuting the arrogance of the Jews. One cannot bring Christ down from heaven or pull him up from the abyss. Christ the Word of God is and always has been near to you. One may verbalize about it with one’s lips and know it in one’s heart, but the Word of God that Paul proclaimed is simple. All one has to do is: 1. Believe with the heart that Jesus was raised from the dead and one is justified or put into a right relationship with God, and 2. Confess the credo that *“Jesus is Lord”* with the lips and one has access to salvation or to abundance of life on earth and eternal life in the Life of the Ages.

You can be assured of this, if you believe, you will not be disappointed or put to shame whether one is a Jew or gentile. *“Everybody who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”* There is one more thing. A path to this justification and salvation comes through a minister of God who proclaims the message of salvation after having been designated, called and equipped by God for that special purpose. For Isaiah 57:7 says *“How beautiful are the feet on those who bring good news.”* This short lesson this morning emphasizes the importance of the called and anointed person of God in bearing the Good News of Jesus Christ. May your search for the next rector of St. Barnabas Church bring you the special one for this time.

## III. Jesus Saved Peter and the Disciples from Fear and the Wind-Matt. 14:22-33

How many times have you watched toddlers while making their first steps fall when you take notice of the fact that they are walking. Fear and excitement cause many a misstep. In today’s Gospel lesson, Jesus had dismissed the crowd and was in prayer upon a mountain again. The disciples were crossing the lake in a boat when a wind storm arose and their boat was battered about by the storm. In the dim light of the clouds and storm, the disciples saw what looked like the figure of a man walking toward them on the turbulent sea. Thinking that it was a ghost, they were terrified. Who would not be? Immediately, Jesus told them, *“Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid!”* Matthew 14:27. The re-assuring voice of a parent or guardian has given much encouragement to a person learning to do something for the first time. Peter realized that it was Jesus, ask to be commanded to come to Jesus, started to sink and was saved by the Lord.

In this story, the power of the kingdom is demonstrated by sea walking, calming of the disciples’ fears, the saving of Peter from sinking and the worship of the disciples. Some commentaries would contend that Jesus’ walking on the sea is Matthew’s way of linking Jesus to the creative Spirit in Genesis. They would go further to say that Peter’s walking on water has baptismal significance. It is through the waters of baptism that we have access to salvation in Christ. But the most powerful message and take home moral is that the power

**of faith as a response to God and the success of courage in doing the impossible are demonstrated. As a congregation or as individuals let us be assured that we can do all things through Christ who strengthens you.**

**Now back to Fox Lake, Wisconsin and 1956. I could barely swim but was not afraid of water. I knew how to float on my back and could dog paddle safely for short distances. However, the physicists among you would know that I was attempting an impossible task of trying to reach the boards of that foot bridge from the water's vantage point. Exhausted, I reached for the foot bridge a third time and last time. Then as if by a miracle, one of my classmates grabbed a hold of my arm and pulled me up to safety. The irony of it all was that I could have saved myself by paddling about six feet to the side of the banks of that lake, but I panicked. I lost courage.**

**The lessons for today tell about salvation. Joseph is saved from death at his brothers' hands, given to a traveling caravan, sold into slavery to the Egyptians and many years later becomes the means of salvation from famine for his clansmen. Paul tells us that spiritual salvation comes through professing Jesus as Lord and the belief that Jesus was raised from the dead through an inspired person of God. And Jesus demonstrated to his disciples not only that he was Lord over the elements but that faith will enable us to walk upon and through the waters of salvation. Faith in the Christ of God casts out fear and enables men and women, boys and girls to do extraordinary things in their lives and witness. We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us.**

**Let us pray. O God whose Son Jesus Christ is your divine presence upon the earth, who directs your chosen to be in places where they can provide security to others; who calls men and women to be true proclaimers of your saving word and who demonstrated that power through control of the winds and storms of life: embolden our faith that we may walk without sinking upon the stormy waters of life now and always. We pray this in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.**