

Rev. Kurt Cockran, Risen Savior Lutheran Church (Basehor, KS), 3rd Sunday after Pentecost
(Proper 8), June 26th, 2022

He Came to Save

Luke 9:51-62 (Gal 5:1, 13-25)

In the name of Jesus, Amen.

Things can change rather quickly. The rollercoaster of life can go from down to up or up to down rather quickly. Thanks be to God that this week had its wonderful ups. And, you know, thanks be to God in the Christ who suffered for us, that He has also seen us through the sorrowful downs of this last week as well.

For in this rollercoaster world and life, there is one who doesn't change. God in Christ is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. And God is a God who seeks to save every...single...last...person. Body...and soul. God didn't just give His Son in love for those out of the womb, but for the whole world, both in and out of the womb. God didn't just give His Son for those who are pro-life, but for the whole world, of every political sway and spectrum. Every single person ever conceived in every single womb, everyone in whom the red blood of humanity flows or even beginning to form his first red blood cells...is one for whom Jesus died, by the shedding and pouring out of the blood of Christ. Whether you're walking in Basehor Park on a nice spring day and seeing a joyful healthy family picnicking, or... whether you were in any major metropolitan downtown two nights ago dodging Molotov cocktails, you can look at any person and truthfully say, "Jesus gave His life on the cross to save *that* person." In fact, no matter what they've done or continue to do, whether they've been rude, obnoxious, persecuted, or even committed the grave offense of holding a different opinion... no matter. Jesus died on the cross to save this person.

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Palestine – God, that is – had declared that the main show of salvation was to take place in Jerusalem. On the mount that Abraham nearly sacrificed Isaac. On the mount of David’s throne where the Son of David would have an everlasting throne. The city where David offered himself up as a sacrifice, if it only meant that the sword of the angel would stop punishing Israel for David’s sin. *That* city designated unique by *that* Divine Supreme Court decision...was rejected by the Samaritans. James and John with Jesus knew they were in the right. They had the latter prophets on their side. But these Samaritans with their mixed-up religion only accepted the first five books of Moses to be Scripture, and so wanted nothing to do with Jerusalem. As soon then as this particular village heard that Jesus was only passing through Samaria on His way to Jerusalem, they rejected Jesus. Denied them hospitality. Possibly even persecuted them... drew some rude memes in the sand against them, what have you.

And this made James and John angry, to put it the softest way. They knew that judgment *would* come for those who reject the Christ. They knew that even the Samaritans should know from Deuteronomy that when the New Prophet like Moses finally comes, the Messiah; that God himself would *require* **all** to listen to Him. No exception.

So why wait for that judgment? **“Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?”** Let’s bring it, Jesus. Judge them, Sodom and Gomorrah style. Rain down the divine Molotov cocktails on these good-for-nothing Samaritans who don’t regard the sanctity of eternal life. They don’t even ask Jesus for this power. They assume they have the right understanding and authority for the fire of heaven to obey their beck and call.

But Jesus turned and rebuked them. And there’s a very good chance we’re missing out in our translation on what Jesus actually said in his rebuke of them. Some valid manuscripts of the

NT (and reflected in the KJV and Luther's Bible); some manuscripts add that Jesus said, "You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. For the Son of Man came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them." Even if this saying of Jesus is not authentic to this moment, we do know Jesus did say something much the same as this in John 3 and 12. So what's going on here? Elijah was given permission to call on heavenly fire to rain down on King Ahaziah's servants. The time of judgment had come for them. They rejected Yahweh, and God knew they would never repent. For them, Elijah was not called by God to be their Savior, but their judge.

But for the Samaritans? Jesus came for one purpose and for one purpose only: to save. To save them, Judea, every person to every end of the earth. That's why He came. He was not sent to condemn the world, but to save it. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." John 3:16. And John 3:17 is just as important, "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him." He came to seek and save the lost. Period. The Holy Spirit's job shall be to convict and condemn with the Law of Moses, and impute the salvation of Christ to the repentant. But Christ? His job when He came was to save the world from sin and death. He cared only for consuming everyone He met with self-sacrifice, on the way to the ultimate sacrifice: Jerusalem.

So no... no fire from heaven. These Samaritans may still repent. For them, there's still time. Many, if not nearly all, would still be alive to hear the reports that Jesus has died and risen again, just as He said He would, thus fulfilling not just David and the prophets, but even the books of Moses: the promise of Abraham, the seed of Eve. Acts 8:25, in fact, tells us that Phillip, Peter, and John preached the Gospel to many villages of the Samaritans. The *same* Son-of-

Thunder John who previously wanted fire to rain down on these villages only a handful of years later was spreading the Gospel and planting churches in this *same* region.

Dear saints, there are plenty of people in this world to be angry at. There are plenty of people who have been angry at you. And you probably have your reasons. They probably have theirs. God-willing, you've done your measure of repenting that calmed their anger, and they've done their measure of repenting that calmed your anger. But repentance and faith is the only solution, the only godly and holy end to our excessive ungodly anger. For if you bite and devour one another, don't be surprised if you're not then consumed by one another. Mutual assured destruction. Even if your wrath burns hot, vengeance belongs to the Lord. Fire is for God's judgment.

And God determined to judge the world in His Son, to pour out His wrath against sin by felling the Lord's fire on He who has assumed all of the world's sin... all of your sin. To follow Jesus as His disciple means to be one who may have to warn and threaten of the wrath to come for those who don't repent. But you who are spiritual are to never restore someone out of wrath, but out of love. Restoration to God comes through gentleness, meekness, self-control – the Gospel saving truth given in love, not anger, lest you too be tempted.

There are plenty of evils in this world by which we can be *righteously* angry against. Your anger against sexual immorality is righteous. Your anger against impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, murder, all of it. That's a righteous anger. It's a righteous anger to even be angry at your own jealousies, your own envies, divisions, and things like these. But to be angry and not sin is to allow the anger of rightly ordered authorities do the punishing according to just laws, and to let your anger pour out on the temptation itself, on sexual immorality itself, and on the devil and his tempting ways. Restrain your wrath on the one caught up in the temptation.

They are trapped, as you yourselves may well have been at one point. They need utmost compassion, the most sincere love. A stern warning, perhaps. But keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. To have a seared calloused conscience is to be sick with sin. God-willing, they'll come to themselves and then join us in seeking the Great Physician for our sick sin-infected selves. God-willing, they'll seek the Medicine of Immortality, the flesh and blood of Christ, by which we eat and drink *in repentance*... and never die. God-willing, we keep hearing even for ourselves rebukes like James and John once received out of Christ's love, that we ourselves grow in the full joy of salvation.

So rejoice with those who rejoice, while blessing those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. For Jesus gave thought for you. He set His face to Jerusalem. He set His face to you. Amen.

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