# Congregational-Presbyterian Church

 **“He Saved Us”**

**Titus 3:4-7**

 **May 22, 2022**

This morning we return to Paul’s letter to Titus where we will read four verses from the third chapter. Paul calls these verses a “trustworthy saying” by which he means a saying that summarizes the truth of God’s Good News, a saying worthy of our trust because by trusting its message we will be saved. I invite you to turn to Titus 3:4-7

When God our Savior revealed his kindness and love, he saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit. He generously poured out the Spirit upon us through Jesus Christ our Savior. Because of his grace he made us right in his sight and gave us confidence that we will inherit eternal life.

Captain Ernest Gordon was a Scottish soldier who served in World War II. Following the fall of Singapore, he was one of the prisoners of war whom the Japanese put to work on a jungle railway and bridge over the Kwai river. In his book “Miracle on the River Kwai” Ernest tells the remarkable story of how one day the officer in charge began shouting that one of the shovels was missing. The soldier demanded to know which prisoner had stolen or hidden the shovel. Gordon writes:

He began to rant and rave, working himself up into a paranoid fury and ordered whoever was guilty to step forward. No one moved. “All die! All die!” he shrieked, cocking and aiming his rifle at the prisoners. At that moment one man stepped forward, and the guard clubbed him to death with his rifle while he stood silently to attention. When they returned to camp, the tools were counted again, and no shovel was missing.

Every prisoner of war in that camp knew that if not for the selfless action of that soldier, they too would have died. They had been saved by the sacrifice of another. While analogies break down when taken too far, this true story is a helpful illustration of what Jesus Christ has done for us. In him we recognize that another has died in our place. While none of the soldiers were guilty, we are all guilty. We deserve death as the consequence for our sin, but Jesus died in our place.

 Paul’s trustworthy saying can be condensed into three words: “He saved us.” The word “saved” is one we use frequently and easily as Christians, but have you ever been asked, “What do you Christians mean when you say you’ve been saved?” Let’s look at four things that these verses tell us that we mean when we use the word “saved.”

First, it is God who saved us. This may seem pretty basic but it is actually very important that we begin here. God saved us, which leads to the second thing we need to emphasize about salvation and that is that we cannot save ourselves. There is no righteous thing that we can do to be saved. We need to be saved, but we can’t save ourselves, so we need God to save us. So far, then, we can say that to be saved means that God saved us because we couldn’t save ourselves.

 Thirdly, when God saves us he brings about a radical change in who we are. Paul mentions three things that happen to us. First, he gives us new birth. Second, he gives us new life. Third, he makes us right in his sight. Born as a human being, we lived our old life, and because of our sin we were not right in his sight. Now, given a new spiritual birth, we receive a new life to live, and our sin has been washed away. Like Paul said in his letter to the Corinthians, “I am a new creation.” Salvation changes who I am.

 And, fourthly, salvation changes where I go after I die because I will inherit eternal life. You can only inherit what someone owns. So when we say that salvation means we will inherit eternal life it means that God’s life becomes our life, and that includes eternal life with him in heaven. Further, Paul says that salvation means we have confidence that this eternal life really is ours. Many when asked, “When you die will you go to heaven?” will respond with, “I hope so.” That is not the response of the person who has been saved. He or she can say with confidence, “Because God saved me, I am confident that when I die I will go to heaven.” Yesterday we had a wonderful celebration of the life of Jim Solem. We didn’t sit around and say, “I sure hope ol’ Jim made it to heaven.” No! We said, “I am confident that Jim is in heaven.”

 Salvation means that God has done it all. He saved us because we couldn’t save ourselves. He has given us new birth, new life, and made us right in his sight. And he has given us the confidence that we will inherit eternal life. So, what do you and I do? We said it last week and I’ll say it again this week – believe it and receive it. There is no behavior you need to change, no amount of good deeds that you need to accumulate, no Christian doctrine that you need to understand in order for God to save you. You will never be more acceptable to God than you are right now this morning. “Just as I am - I come, I come.” That’s what it means to be saved.