**How to be RESCUED**

**By Jeff McDowell**

3-9-25

First UMC Horseheads

## **Sermon Theme:** When we are in serious trouble, we count on our *First Responders* to come and rescue us. In the Bible, the same word for saving (σῴζω) is curing, healing, preserving from being lost or harmed, delivering from, setting free from and rescuing. What is this serious trouble we are in? Look at Jesus, tempted by the devil in the desert. He is tempted with food while he has been fasting for 40 days. He is tempted with power when he is weak, feeling alone and powerless. He is tempted to challenge God by being reckless with his own safety. Jesus demonstrates two things: 1. How to overcome temptation to sin; 2. How to be rescued when we simply trust Him.

**Romans 10:8b-13** [salvation]

‘The word is near you,  
    on your lips and in your heart’ (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); **9**because if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, ***you will be saved.*10**For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth ***and so is saved.*** **11**The scripture says, *‘No one who believes in him will be put to shame.’* **12**For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him. **13**For, *‘Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord* ***shall be saved.’***

**Luke 4:1-13** [temptation]

**4**Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, **2**where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. **3**The devil said to him, *‘If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread.’* **4**Jesus answered him, **‘It is written,** *“One does not live by bread alone.”’* **5**Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. **6**And the devil said to him, *‘To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please.****7****If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.’* **8**Jesus answered him, **‘It is written,** *“Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.”’* **9**Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, *‘If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, 10for it is written, “He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you”,* ***11****and “On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.”’*

**12**Jesus answered him, ***‘It is said, “****Do not put the Lord your God to the test.”’* **13**When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.

**SERMON START**

**HOW TO BE RESCUED**

**Lent.** This is a new season in the life of the church. Literally Lent comes from the Latin word for “Lengthen” because every day now, the hours of daylight are lengthening. More daylight equals more chance to get your vitamin D by direct sunlight on your skin. Lent as a season begins in darkness of distance from God, a need for hope and the journey of using our spiritual resources to be in the presence of the Divine One who said, *“I am the light of the world.”*

You can use this time to get some Vitamin G = God more in your life!

Lent began last Wed. (our Ash Wed. service in the chapel was beautiful) and goes for 40 days not counting Sundays. It has been used for centuries as a time of self-reflection, repentance from our sins, learning and studying the Word of God, and using all the means of grace available to us, so that when we come upon Easter Morning, we are spiritually ready to celebrate the main event of Christian faith: He (Jesus) Is Risen (from the dead)!

John Wesley outlined these actions as the Means of Grace:

As we look at the **means of grace** today, they can be divided into **works** of piety (cultivate your faith) and the **works** of mercy (act out of your faith).

**Works of Piety**

**Individual Practices** – reading, meditating and studying the scriptures, prayer, fasting, regularly attending worship, healthy living, and sharing our faith with others

**Communal Practices** – regularly share in the sacraments, Christian conferencing (accountability to one another), and Bible study

**Works of Mercy**

**Individual Practices** - doing good works, visiting the sick, visiting those in prison, feeding the hungry, and giving generously to the needs of others

**Communal Practices** – seeking justice, ending oppression and discrimination (for instance Wesley challenged Methodists to end slavery), and addressing the needs of the poor

These are our goals for this Lent; pick up and do the means of grace, and you will find grace also for yourself.

Today I want to play with the themes of hurt, healing and hope in the midst of a *frightful season in history.*

What do you do when you come upon a situation, or a time in your life, when . . . It’s a matter of life and death?

Many people have been there at one time or another. I tell stories in hopes you can relate to something of real life, to draw us closer to Christ.

Jesus said to his disciples, ***“A little while and you will see me no more, and again a little while you will see me.”*** (John 16:16)

When I was about 10 or 11 years old, my brother Brian was hit by a car. We were riding our bikes to summer swimming lessons on Cazenovia Lake as we did a few times a week. The shortest way was the same way we went to school, down a hill and past an Agway store on the corner of a 2 - lane highway. On the way back, if we had any change in our pockets, we would stop in Agway and buy a bottle of ice-cold orange crush soda out of their machine!

But that one day, a van was going quite fast, and that corner was somewhat blind; it was hard to see around the Agway store. We would stop at that intersection, then cross over and ride on the right side into the village. But that morning, I watched as Brian looked around the store, started riding across and was hit head-first, just like that! Some store workers saw it and came to help him; I rode my bike right up the hill as fast as I could and told my mother, “Brian was hit by a car!”

It was the scariest moment of my life. Brian lived through this terrible accident, had a head injury but no brain damage, and we have God to thank, working through those Agway workers and the first responders who came to save him. The driver of the van helped, the workers helped, the RESCUE workers helped, the doctors helped, and the Lord helped, all together.

**All is fine in life, until it is not!** We go along as though nothing bad will happen, and then it does. Whether it is a traffic accident in our family, a crime in our community, another shooting in our nation or simply the fear that comes from knowing that bombs are dropping on men, women and children out of greed over land, selfishness about resources, and hatred of people in Ukraine, we are in some kind of trouble! **All was fine until it was not!**

**This Lenten season,** we are hurting, some as families, some as towns, some as citizens, some as nations, and some as people struggling to know when it will get better.

**But God is behind our great Rescue Story**. In this story, found so frequently in the Bible, Old and New Testaments, God rescues people from harm in this world (sometimes) but once and for all eternity through the Savior Jesus Christ. Listen to the words of a popular Christian song by Zach Williams:

*You were the voice in the desert*

*Calling me out in the dead of night*

*Fighting my battles for me*

*You are my rescue story*

*Lifted me up from the ashes*

*Carried my soul from death to life*

*Bringing me from glory to glory*

*You are my rescue story.*

Friends, if this were not true, I would not be preaching it to you.

In the Bible, the same word for saving (σῴζω) is curing, healing, preserving from being lost or harmed, delivering from, setting free from and rescuing. But what would we actually need to be rescued from? What is this serious trouble we are in? Look at Jesus, tempted by the devil in the desert.

Peter writes in I Pe. 5:8 *“Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.* ***Resist him****, standing firm in the faith, because you know the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of suffering.”*

Please open your Bible to Luke 4; this story tells of Jesus in the wilderness. He is led there by the Holy Spirit! He is led there right after being baptized by John, and he is there 40 days; same as Moses on Mount Sinai was there 40 days. Jesus was fasting and praying to God, but the devil came to him. He was met with three main temptations:

He is tempted with **food** while he has been fasting for 40 days. He is tempted with **power** when he is weak, feeling alone and powerless. He is tempted to **challenge God** by being reckless with his own safety.

Look at this dialogue between Jesus (suffering Savior) and the devil:

**3**The devil said to him, *‘If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread.’* **4**Jesus answered him, **‘It is written,** *“One does not live by bread alone.”’*

FLESHLY SATISFACTION, APART FROM GOD’S PROVISION. SEE MANNA FROM HEAVEN IN THE MOSES STORY! SEE PS. 37:25, *“I HAVE NEVER SEEN THE RIGHTEOUS FORSAKEN, NOR HIS CHILDREN BEGGIN FOR BREAD.”*

**5**Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. **6**And the devil said to him, *‘To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please.****7****If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.’* **8**Jesus answered him, **‘It is written,** *“Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.”’*

PERSONAL GLORY (OTHERS BOWING DOWN TO YOU) AND AUTHORITY (MAKING DECISIONS FOR OTHERS) INSTEAD OF UNDER GOD! SEE 2 Cor. 10:17-18, *“THE BIBLE SAYS, IF YOU WANT TO BOAST, BOAST ONLY ABOUT THE LORD. WHEN PEOPLE COMMEND THEMSELVES, IT DOESN’T COUNT FOR MUCH. THE IMPORTANT THINS IS FOR THE LORD TO COMMEND THEM.”*

**9**Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, *‘If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, 10for it is written, “He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you”,* ***11****and “On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.”’*

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TEMPTATION: TO THINK YOU ARE INVINCIBLE AND NO ONE CAN HARM YOU. SEE *“PRIDE GOES BEFORE A FALL.”* (PROVERBS 16:18)

Hey! The devil can quote the bible! So what? He twists it, not knowing what it means. The devil has ulterior motives, which eventually come clear! The devil promises things he cannot deliver, because He is not God.

*“THE LORD IS KING, LET THE NATIONS TREMBLE; HE SITS ENTRHONED BETWEEN THE CHERUBIM, LET THE EARTH SHAKE.”* (PS. 99:1)

## Jesus demonstrates two things:

## 1. How to overcome temptation to sin;

## 2. How to be rescued when we simply trust Him.

In the Bible, the same word for saving (σῴζω) is ***curing, healing, preserving from being lost or harmed, delivering from, setting free from and rescuing.*** When we are in serious trouble, we count on our *First Responders* to come and rescue us.

**Turn with me to Romans 10:8b-13** [salvation]

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    on your lips and in your heart’ (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); **9**because if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, ***you will be saved (rescued).*10**For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth ***and so is saved.*** **11**The scripture says, *‘No one who believes in him will be put to shame.’* **12**For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him. **13**For, *‘Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord* ***shall be saved.’***

Do you need rescue from the wages of your own sin? Have you followed all the ten commandments all your life?

Do we need rescue from the wages of sin in our land?

We can be saved. We can be rescued. We must trust in God, know His heart through His word, and demonstrate our faith through our actions.