

**Introduction:**

- In my lifetime there have been a number of famous rescues:
  - Jessica McClure an 18 month old in a well,
  - An American cargo ship Maersk-Somalia- Captain Phillips,
  - Apollo 13 "Houston, we have a problem."; In each of these cases one or more persons were in danger and waiting for rescue!
- What makes a rescue a rescue? Very simple: "If help does not come, "We die." That is what makes a rescue so vital.
- This is what Christmas is really all about. God rescuing us! IE. Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol* is all about Scrooge a man who is in eternal danger yet does not know it. Three Christmas spirits come to visit him. Past, Present and Future. Scrooge comes to his senses, realizes his need of rescue, and experiences a great change of heart.
- Rescue: *"To free or deliver from any confinement, violence, danger or evil; to liberate from actual restraint, or to remove or withdraw from a state of exposure to evil."* 1828 Webster

**I. Waiting for Rescue** Luke 2:25; Lk 2:38

- A. In Luke's Christmas story we find two people excited about their rescue, Simeon and Anna. *"At that time there was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon. He was righteous and devout and was eagerly **waiting for the Messiah to come and rescue Israel. The Holy Spirit was upon him**"* (Luke 2:25 NLT) *"She came along just as Simeon was talking with Mary and Joseph, and she began praising God. She talked about the child to **everyone who had been waiting expectantly for God to rescue Jerusalem.**"* (Luke 2:38, NLT)
- B. When are you in need of rescuing? When you realize you are in danger, in harms way, are being held captive and you can do nothing about it. That is when you need rescuing!
1. Simeon realized the captivity to sin that Israel was being held in. He himself was an old man, a righteousness man, very devoted to God. And the Bible says he was eagerly waiting rescue by Messiah. He wanted badly to see Messiah come and Messiah rescue His people as promised in His word.
  2. This rescue would bring consolation to Israel. Consolation comes from the Greek word - παρακαλεω - meaning to set free, liberate, to comfort by bringing peace and freedom. The Holy Spirit is called the paraklete/comforter. Rescue naturally brings a sense of peace, relief and freedom.
- C. What is worse than realizing you are in need of rescue? Being in danger of death and not even realizing it!
1. Please note: just because you cannot see that you need rescuing, doesn't mean you do not need rescued!
  2. What this means, is you are blind to the danger! You are not aware. You are drifting into life threatening danger. IE. Did you know that 20-30 people die each year going over Niagara falls. Some of those are intentional, most were not. They were just people who did not realize the danger the water presented.

3. How about you? What is the condition of your soul? Are you in eminent danger? or... Is this the first time you have heard a warning? If it is your first time hearing a warning, please listen closely...

## II. Rescuers Live To Save!

- A. A first responder is just that. He is a rescuer whose job it is to save! One whose job it is to respond first to people in harm, danger or trouble. They live to do their job of saving. God is a first responder. He was first to respond to Adam and Eve after they sinned. Why? He loves more than any of us could ever imagine!
- B. The heart of God is to save His people. Which people? All people:
  1. *"The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent."* (2 Peter 3:9, NLT)
  2. Simeon, the old man in the passage, was excited to see Messiah! Because he knew the heart of God towards humanity particularly the nation of Israel. Look at what he says:
    - a) You prepared your salvation for all people. To the Jews Lk 2:30
    - b) He is a light to reveal God to the nations. To the Gentiles Luke 2:31
- C. To save His people implies that His creation is in trouble, terrible danger, they will die without His intervention. This is the heart of God for all humanity, that they live! ALL humanity!
  1. His loving heart moves Him to action. He is the God who gave...He sent... what was most precious to Him...His SON! Jesus, the Son of God, became our RESCUER!!!
  2. *"This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life."* (John 3:16, The Message)
  3. *"God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him."* (John 3:17, NLT)
- D. I am using the word 'rescuer' but look at the synonyms for the word 'rescuer', they are: Deliverer, Redeemer, Savior. And when you read the Christmas story you hear:
  1. Words like **"save**...from sin (Mt 1:21; Lk 1:70-71)" implies need of rescue
  2. Words like, "He will be **Messiah/Anointed one/Deliverer**' A first responder, a person who rescues captives. Implies need of rescue.
  3. Words like, "We have been rescued/and will no longer be afraid" Lk 1:74 Zechariah's song.
  4. Christmas is about God sending His Son as our rescuer, so that we may live and not die. God gave His one and only son. His Son is not just a first responder but a Gift given, that we might live.

## III. The Conundrum/Problem Of The Rescuer

- A. In the heart of the rescuer is the desire to save everyone. When a paramedic, a police officer, a first responder goes out on call and arrives on scene, they want to save everyone who is in danger or trouble.

1. They find great joy in saving a heart attack victim. They find great joy in rescuing a person from a mangled wreck. When a person is saved from tragedy there is joy in their heart, there is gratitude in the heart of the rescuer. And in the heart of the first responder a sense of accomplishment of mission...a life has been saved.
  2. The pain/conundrum in the heart of the rescuer is knowing that you cant save everyone.
  3. Jesus came to us knowing the heart of the Father, 2 Peter 3:9 *that all would be saved*. But realizing not all would want to be saved.
    - a) Jn 11:35, shortest verse in the Bible says, "Jesus wept." He wept over those not 'getting it'.
    - b) "*But as he came closer to Jerusalem and saw the city ahead, he began to weep.*" (Luke 19:41, NLT) He wept because she was missing her Salvation.
- B. Simeon is prophesying to Joseph and Mary. We hear his words and in it we hear Gods heart. We see from God's perspective, two things about His Son. vs 34. "...*This child is destined to cause many in Israel to fall, and many others to rise. He has been sent as a sign from God, but many will oppose him.*" (Luke 2:34, NLT) Many will be lost and many will be rescued.
1. He will cause many to fall and many to oppose Him.
    - a) Many will fall. To fall - Gr. pipto - The basic meaning of *píptō* is "to fall (down)," "to plunge down." From this develop such senses as "to throw oneself down," "to fall (in battle)," "to perish," "to be lost," "to collapse," "to pass away." Kittel, G., Friedrich, G., & Bromiley, G. W. (1985). TDNT (p. 846). Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans.
    - b) Jesus because of who He is and what He says will cause many to fall. It is not His intention that we perish. In fact, it is the opposite.
      - (1) While He brings goodness and light. He brings it into a world infected by sin and imprisoned darkness. He did not come to negotiate our release. He came to confront a system of death that was at work within us, and destroy it. This death had to be destroyed! And He will lay down His life to accomplish it.
      - (2) To accomplish that meant taking on everything hell used to enslave the world. Yes, it would bring joy but not to those who refused to be rescued... who did not want to give up what they had in their darkness. Ie. Rich young ruler went away sad. Pharisee's did not want to give up their pride and position.
      - (3) Jesus came to force us to decide! To lead us into the Valley of Decision. Many people detest the fact that they are being forced to decide, especially in our culture of 'choice.'
    - c) But those who are proud resist Him as God. Ie The rescuer has come but one in danger refuses to be helped. He thinks he can save himself.
      - (1) "*Before destruction a man's heart is haughty, but humility comes before honor.*" (Proverbs 18:12, ESV)
      - (2) "*There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.*" (Proverbs 16:25, ESV)
  2. He will cause many to rise and many to see Him as a sign.
    - a) Rise - anistanai -to rise up, to awaken, to cause to take action.
      - (1) Jesus will cause many to be awakened, see the light and come to Him.

- (2) Only when we surrender our hearts to him as Lord does he become our friend and brother.
- (3) To rise from the dead; at his crucifixion; at the end of the age.
- b) He has been sent as a sign - a sign points to something. But the interesting thing about this word is that it implies "to set in motion" "The *sēmeíon/sign* given to the shepherds sets them in motion (v. 15) so that they themselves implicitly become a sign to Mary. In Mt. 26:48 Judas uses the kiss as a sign indicating whom the guard should arrest. Kittel, G., Friedrich, G., & Bromiley, G. W. (1985). TDNT (p. 1018). Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans.
- c) Some men think it is better to contradict the sign than give up their old lifestyle & beliefs
- d) But this sign, Jesus, points to life...is Life! And those who see move towards it. IE. Life line on a rope.

**Conclusion:**

- Let Simeon's words remind you that you must make a decision about Jesus. There is no middle ground.
- Christmas is God throwing life line to humanity drowning in a raging sea of sin.
- Scrooge asks Jacob Marley, "Why the chains, you were a good man?" Mr. Marley replies: "*I wear the chain I forged in life,*" replied the Ghost. "*I made it link by link, and yard by yard; I girded it on of my own free will, and of my own free will I wore it.*"
  - Marley wanted Scrooge to see was that he was in danger of perishing.
- "*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.*" (John 3:17, ESV)