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Jesus, The Saviour of the World - Part 2

July 25, 2021



The Bible for Today with John Stott - Premier

John Stott shows us that the message of Luke's gospel is good news of salvation, affecting both our past - through forgiveness of sins, and our future - by the giving of the Holy Spirit to indwell us every day.

Transcript

[Music] Jesus was the friend of publicans and sinners. Jesus was void of all social snobbering. Jesus was full of compassion for their Zoom Society despised.

[Music] Welcome to The Bible for Today with John Stott. John Stott's ministry was centered on five priorities - prayer, expository preaching, regular evangelism, careful follow-up, and systematic training of new leaders. But for all his global influence, he had an unassuming demeanor, preferring to be known as Uncle John, and living in a small apartment above a gallerage of a rectory in London.

Indeed, the rectory of all souls lang in place, which was his home church for almost 60 years. We are privileged to be marking John Stott's centenary by bringing you just some of his timeless teaching. You can find any of the hundreds of sermons he preached by visiting premier.org.uk/JohnStott.

[Music] Last week John Stott looked at a portrait of Christ as painted for us by Luke in his gospel account.

We saw how Jesus is portrayed there as the Savior of the world, and that salvation comprises forgiveness and the gift of the Holy Spirit. This week John Stott continues his message by showing how this salvation is made available to us. You'll find it helpful to have your Bible open to Luke chapter 3, and our text for today is verse 6. Luke tells us that each person who received salvation, like the Ethiopian eunuch, went on his way miserable.

No! Rejoicing! salvation brings joy. Well that's the first thing. The message of Luke is good news of salvation.

Secondly, the message of Luke is good news of salvation in and through Jesus Christ. For he is the Savior, and when he says in Luke 3, 6, "All flesh will see the salvation of God." He is referring to the person to whom John the Baptist was bearing witness, namely Jesus Christ. So Luke tells the incomparable story of Jesus, how he was born of the Virgin Mary in great loneliness to be the Savior of the world, how the old man, Simeon, took the baby in his arms and said, "My eyes have seen your salvation." What he actually saw was a baby.

What he said he saw was the salvation of God. Because the salvation of God is Jesus Christ. And Luke describes how Jesus said in the story of Zacchaeus that was read earlier that he'd come to seek and to save the lost.

So he forgave that prostitute. He declared to Zacchaeus this day, "Salvation has come to this house." And then Luke describes how Jesus died on the cross for our sins and how even on the cross he turned to the thief beside him and said, "Today you'll be with me in paradise." He saved the thief even while he was crucified. Then he was raised from the dead exalted to heaven as prince and Savior.

And from that position of saving authority, he bestowed the Holy Spirit upon the waiting church. And still from that position of authority at the right hand of God, he gives salvation, forgiveness and the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit to anybody who repents and believes.

Now because Jesus is unique in his birth, death, resurrection and exaltation, his salvation is unique. And because in nobody else but Jesus of Nazareth has gone ever become man and died for our sins and been raised from the dead and exalted to the right hand of the Father for unique events, there is no other Savior because there is no body else with the competence to save. But Jesus, that's why Luke records the saying of Peter in Acts 4, 12, "Salvation is found in nobody else, but there is no other name under heaven given to human beings, but the name of Jesus by which we may be saved." Are you with me, Sir, sir? One, the message of Luke is good news of salvation, meaning forgiveness and the Spirit with great joy.

Two, the message of Luke is good news of salvation in and through the unique Jesus Christ who died, rose and was exalted to the right hand of the Father. Now thirdly, Luke's message is good news of salvation through Christ for the whole wide world. All flesh shall see the salvation of God.

Not a loss that all the world is saved or will be saved, but salvation is on offer to the world and to everybody without exception. Dante called Luke the writer of the story of the compassion of Christ. And in Luke's Gospel we see the compassion of Jesus reaching out to all sorts and conditions of men.

He depicts Jesus deliberately going out of his way to honor the people society despised,

to welcome the people society repudiated and ostracized. So let's quickly think of some of the categories on which Luke lays his emphasis. First, the sick and the suffering.

Well, of course, all the evangelists tell Jesus' compassion to the sick and the suffering that Dr. Luke was specially concerned about them. In 1882, a scholar called W.K. Hobart wrote an interesting book called the Medical Language of Luke, in which he tried to argue that about 400 and more of Luke's most favorite words occurred in the writings of the medical authors of Greek antiquity. Now, scholars nowadays think that Hobart greatly exaggerated his case and it cannot be made out as he tried to do it.

Nevertheless, William Berkeley, a modern commentator has said instinctively Luke uses medical words. He takes a doctor's interest in medical symptoms and in the diagnosis of disease. And you notice, touch, when Mark says that a poor woman who is hemorrhaging had suffered much under many physicians and spent all her money and wasn't any better but rather getting worse.

Luke took it as a personal affront to the medical profession. So he turned it down a little bit and all he says he she couldn't be healed by anybody. But Jesus healed her.

So Luke was concerned or she is Jesus was concerned for the sick and suffering, second for the women and children. Now in the ancient world, both were despised. The women were rejected and any babies that were unwanted were simply abandoned on the local rubbish dump.

But Jesus treated women and children with courtesy and respect. And although all three of them are synoptic evangelists record Jesus saying let the little children come to me, Luke calls them babies. And Luke says Jesus put one by his side, close to him, probably put his arm around him and Luke is the one who tells the only story that has survived from the boyhood of Jesus when he was 12.

As are the women, it's Luke who tells with great delicacy and restraint, the wonderful story of Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist and Mary, the mother of Jesus. We know their stories only from the turn of Luke. Luke tells the story of that prostitute I mentioned of Martha and Mary and the woman bent double, probably with arthritis, who couldn't stand upright.

And about the group of women who supported Jesus out of their means and who wept at the cross and watched where he was buried and went to the tomb on Easter day and joined the Christian company before the day Pentecost. There's a lot about women and children in Luke, but Jesus has compassion for all thoughts and conditions of men. The second the suffering, the women and children next the poor and the oppressed.

Luke is especially interested in economic inequality in human society and in the distribution of wealth. It's Luke who says twice that Jesus came to preach good news to

the poor. It's Luke who tells the parable of the rich fool and of Dives and Lazarus and of the unjust steward, which are all about the use of money.

And it's Luke who portrays the early Jerusalem community in which there were no poor people because the wealthy people cared about them and shared their affluence with their poverty, the poor and the oppressed. Then fourthly, there were the publicans and sinners, both of them social outcasts. The publicans because they were tax collectors in the employment of the hated Romans and the sinners in inverted commas because they were uneducated men and women ignorant of the law, ignorant of the Pharisee traditions that tried to interpret the law and therefore they were sinners.

And they were despised the publicans and sinners, but Luke tells us Jesus didn't despise them. The publicans and sinners, Luke says in chapter 15, gathered round him to listen to him. And he told the parables of the lost coin, the lost sheep, the lost boy, only in Luke in order to show the great love that God has for the alienated and the lost.

So it's Luke who tells the conversion of the tax collector. It was read to us and he was a tax collector and it's Luke who tells the parable of the Pharisee and the publican in which the publican was justified and the Pharisee went to hell. Jesus was the friend of publicans and sinners.

Jesus was void of all social snobbery. Jesus was full of compassion for those whom society despised. Luke tells us that.

And then fifthly the other category is the Samaritans and the Gentiles. We take the Samaritans first, they were a hybrid race, you know, half Jew, half Gentile. And they were descended from the mixed population in Israel after the Assyrians in the 8th century BC populated Israel with pagans, Gentiles.

So the mixed race developed and the Jews despised the Samaritans for a number of reasons. But Jesus didn't. And Luke tells us so.

Luke tells us how Jesus rebuked James and John because they wanted to call fire down from heaven on a Samaritan city. Jesus told them that they didn't know to what spirit they belonged. It's Luke who tells us that it's of the leprosy victims who were healed, the only one who came back and thanked Jesus was a Samaritan.

It's Luke who tells us that the hero of the parable about what happened on the Jericho road was a Samaritan. And the Samaritan did to a Jew, whatever he dreamed of doing to a Samaritan. Jesus loved the Samaritans, Luke says, and he loved the Gentiles too.

I wonder if you know this, this to me is a very wonderful thing. At the beginning of each of Luke's two volumes on the origins of Christianity, his gospel and the Acts, near the beginning of each, there is a signpost verse that points the direction in which he is going to go. The one near the beginning of Luke is our text tonight, Luke 3, 6, all flesh will see

the salvation of God.

And the one near the beginning of Acts is Acts 2, 17, when Peter quotes Joel, I will pour out my spirit on all flesh. All flesh will see the salvation of God. I will pour out my spirit on all flesh.

At the beginning of both volumes, Luke indicates what his concern is for all humanity. But there are no disabilities in race, sex, class, age. There are not disabilities in the way of receiving salvation.

Salvation is offered to everybody if only they were repent and believe. Well, let me recapitulate and then have a few more moments in which to conclude. I've tried to show that Luke's message is the good news of salvation equals forgiveness plus the spirit.

Second, it's good news of salvation through Christ, whose birth, death, resurrection and exaltation were unique, so that his salvation is unique. Nobody is qualified to save but Jesus only. And thirdly, it's good news of salvation through Christ for all flesh, irrespective of everything else.

Nobody is excluded from the salvation of God. Now, as we conclude, I very much pray that we may learn these important lessons about the universality of the author of salvation. If Jesus is the Savior of the world, that includes me and you.

There is nobody here tonight who is excluded from the offer of salvation. And Luke tells his story in such a way as to address the reader directly. For example, at the beginning of the gospel, the angel says, "I bring you glad tidings of great joy unto you is born in the city of David the Savior." And as we read it, the "you" becomes "we." We are that you, for whom the Savior has been born.

Or again, in Acts 2, I've already quoted it, the sermon of Peter, "repent, be baptized, every one of you." You will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit for the promises to you and to your children, etc. Who is that you? Well, it's we. The second person becomes the first person is, "We read what Luke deliberately records.

He records it in such a way as to address his readers directly. He says to his reader, "You, dear reader," is the one I'm talking to. And all flesh includes you and me.

But how skillful is we excuse and exclude ourselves from that offer? There are some doing it now, even as I'm talking. You're trying to wriggle out of it, as if the offer doesn't include you. I want to tell you, there's nobody in church tonight so dissolute, so depraved that Jesus Christ cannot save you.

There's nobody in church tonight with such crippling inferiority, feelings that you have the liberty to say, "He doesn't love me. He does. You're included." There's nobody here so despised and exploited and oppressed by society that Jesus Christ doesn't respect

you.

He respects you all the more because other people may despise you. And to turn it the other way around, there is nobody here so self-righteous and so self-important and so self-satisfied and selfish that you don't need Jesus. You do.

For the salvation of God is not for any elitist group, the religious or the irreligious or the weak or the strong or the good or the bad or the educated or the uneducated. It's for everybody. All flesh shall see the salvation of God.

Friend, regular, it includes you. Then the second lesson to learn is this. If Jesus is the Savior of the world, it includes not any us, but everybody else as well.

So we cannot enjoy a monopoly of salvation. If you've received salvation from Jesus Christ by repentance and faith, then you have a responsibility, as I have to, to share the good news of salvation with your friends and neighbors and relatives and others. For yet again, I'm afraid I have to say that many of us who are shamefully skillful at disqualifying and disenfranchising from the gospel, the people we don't happen to like.

Either we have a color prejudice, shame on us, or we're anti-Semitic, shame on us, or we're color conscious, beastless knobs, or we have a phobia against thorniness, homosexual people, AIDS victims. Jesus has no phobia against AIDS victims, nor against homosexual people, nor against anybody else that we would like to disenfranchise. There are no untouchables in the sight of Jesus Christ.

You know when the prostitute came to Jesus, or let me put it the other way around, when a prostitute approached a Pharisee, he would shrink away from her in horror. He wouldn't want to be contaminated by a woman like that. But when a prostitute came behind Jesus and covered his feet with kisses, wiped them with her hair, Jesus didn't shrink from her, he didn't shrink from anybody.

He wouldn't shrink from an AIDS victim, you may be sure. He accepted her love, and he forgave her sin. And I think that this is what I want you to take away.

This is what Luke is saying to us tonight. We are not untouchables. If you think God wouldn't touch you, and nor is anybody else on the contrary, in and through Jesus Christ, God is stooped from heaven to the Lord.

To reach out and touch us. There is no untouchable to the love of God. Praise God.

Let us pray. Take up in your thoughts the word untouchable. Do you think you are untouchable by Christ? Then he stretches forth his hand tonight to touch you.

Do you have a phobia that you think other people are untouchable? Then in prayer, stretch out your hand in love to touch them. Nobody untouchable to the love of Christ.

Heaven, let's say that we thank you very much for Luke's portrait of Jesus.

That we have seen Jesus tonight as the man of compassion, reaching out to touch people in their need. Whoever they may be, you want to pray that you will touch us. And through us touch others, we ask it for the glory of your great name.

We can be touched by Jesus Christ and made whole. You've been listening to the conclusion of a message by John Stott on Luke's portrait of Christ as the Savior of the world. It's just one of four messages that John gave at also his church on the Gospels, and you can hear the other three by visiting their website.

John Stott is well known for his many books, and this week we highlight one that explains today's message in more detail. It's simply entitled "The World". Our website has the details along with sermons and videos of John Stott preaching at venues across the world.

Just visit premierchristianradio.com/JohnStott. The legacy of John Stott lives on and is growing, touching every level of society across the world. Today, Christian leaders throughout the majority world are being equipped to provide pastor training and resources in their own countries thanks to the vision of John Stott, who donated all his book royalties to support this ministry through Langham Partnership. To find out about this and other ministries, John Stott founded, go to premier.org.uk/JohnStott. Join us at the same time next week for more from The Bible for Today with John Stott.

[Music]

(buzzing)