

## Notes for Brian's Sermon at Brentwood Presbyterian Church

Sun, Apr 22, 2018

### No Other Source of Salvation? (Psalm 23 & Acts 4:5-12)



**This Jesus is ‘the stone that was rejected by you, the builders; it has become the chief cornerstone.’  
There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved.  
(Acts 4:11)**

#### The story line of our passage/ text

As the Holy Spirit shaped the early forms of this fellowship of the friends of Jesus that is the church, those who chose to accept Jesus as Lord and follow his ways of being with God in mission ran into considerable opposition, especially from the religious authorities they were questioning - yet Peter insists that this crucified Jesus is the One who came in the name of the Lord to give us light so we could be the blessings that God created us to be (cf Ps 118, a hymn of praise to God's victory, the achievement of God's intent, from which the image of the cornerstone is taken) – so what do we do with this claim of no other source of salvation in our time and place? – how do we stand firm in this conviction in the midst of the kind of indifference and hostility that our spirituality faces in the growing secularity and diversity of Greater Vancouver?

#### Provocative Points to Ponder

- Let me begin by saying that I fervently believe in Peter's witness – there is no other source of salvation for this world – Jesus Christ is the One who has accomplished this for all of us – once and for all – I will stake my life on that truth
- But, and I think this is a big but ... - I'm not convinced that the ways many outside the church understand that claim really understand what God intends – nor am I convinced that the ways many within the church claim to know, with great certainty, what God desires for us and demands of us (ways of believing and acting) are as true to the witness of the Scriptures to the living Word in Jesus Christ as they think – there is an arrogance in their certitude that bothers me
- So, in such a context, how do we affirm the truth that there is no other source of salvation than Jesus Christ? – as I have come to understand it so far, there are two crucial aspects to such witness in our world – first, there is an unshakeable faith that God is acting in Christ through the Holy Spirit to realize fully God's intent for justice and kindness to rule the world – second, my response of gratitude for God's open invitation to participate in this salvation is to sow seeds of that faith in every circle of influence open to me, then nourish those seeds as the Spirit presents the opportunities
- That happens most regularly as we gather for worship on Sundays and Wednesdays and for Bible Study every other week for much of the year, as we ponder our Scripture texts each week, and as we initiate conversations about how we can use our space to witness to God's grace, expanding our imaginations to experiment with new possibilities

– it also happens when we welcome our neighbours into this space for concerts, workshops, and community conversations about issues that affect our wellbeing – eg the SFU Philosophers’ Cafes – 14 came this past Thurs – topic was how we experience and deal with negativity – Daniel, a Spanish gentleman who has been to a couple now, returned from the washroom late in our conversations with the poster we have in both bathrooms – “These are great insights into how to respond to negativity,” he said – a simple poster – I think they cost us \$40 each at Bed, Bath, and Beyond – not Bible quotes, but statements from a variety of sources that all point to the Commonwealth God invites us all to enjoy – I’m deeply convinced that Jesus Christ is working in these kinds of dynamics – and we, as this fellowship of his friends, holding fast to the conviction that Jesus Christ is the cornerstone of God’s reconciliation of the whole creation to its original purpose, are helping that to happen

- It is not our place or task to convince others that we are right – it is not our place or task to think that the way we currently understand God’s salvation is right – it is our place and task to sow seeds of faith with others and grow with them as the Spirit brings God’s intent to full fruition

## **Your Notes**

**Prayers of Thanks** – on this Earth Day, for the marvellous ways in which you have designed creation to provide beauty and sustenance for our souls – open us to your presence in everything we see, and feel, and hear, and smell, and touch – attune us to the energy of your love flowing in everything around us and in our own beings - (silence to consider this)

**Prayers for Help** – restore in us a deep awareness of the responsibilities you have given us as caretakers of this creation – sharpen our senses of the best ways to be good stewards of the riches you have put into our hands – shape our imaginations to find ways to tend this garden together - (silence to consider this)

**Prayers for Awe** – as we leave this place of worship this morning, draw our attention to some particular piece of your glorious creation and help us stand in awe for a moment, remembering your love – (silence to consider this)