

## Session 2: Salvation



**HEAD**  
Knowledge



**HEART**  
Experience



**HANDS**  
Christian Action

## Session 2: Salvation

### Opening Prayer:

Father, I want to develop a better relationship with you by means of the new life you are promising. I want to know you more fully. I want to have you change my life and to give me the power to live it in a better way. To enable you to do this, I promise to attend the Life in Spirit Seminars each week, to set aside 15 minutes each day to seek you by means of prayerful reflection on scriptures, to pray with the community each week, and to share with the others in the seminar how it is I am growing and what difficulties I am experiencing. I wish to give you the opportunity to give me those things you have promised. I make this prayer through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

### Introduction:

Tonight, our topic is *Salvation* and it is a key subject. So we can begin by saying that **God wants what's best for the world and for everyone in it. That's what love means.** Love is benevolent, *bene volens*, God is wanting what is best for the world and for you and me. Wisdom 1:13-15 says:

*"For God did not make death and takes no pleasure in the destruction of any living thing; he created all things that they might have being. The creative forces of the world make for life; there is no deadly poison in them. Death has no sovereignty on earth, for justice is immortal."*

Of course, that was God's intention before The Fall but the evil one brought sin and death into the world. You could say that the devil is the father of death. Our experience is not as rosy as the one we read about in Scripture. What W.B. Yates wrote is closer to what we are aware of:

*"Things fall apart, the centre cannot hold ... The best lack all conviction while the worst are full of passionate intensity."*

I think that is closer to our experience of life and I also think that we are particularly feeling that in these days of the pandemic – that things are falling apart, that the

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centre cannot hold. We see it too in the natural world where the climate is changing for the worst.

There is breakdown and disturbing evidence in the media every day. Talking about Ireland, we find that:

1. There is disturbing evidence of this in the media every day.
2. Since 1979 Church attendance has dropped from 80+ to 30%.
3. There are very few vocations to the priesthood or religious life.
4. The referendums on abortion & same sex marriage were passed by a two thirds majority. Prospect of a suicide bill.
5. In Nov 2019 the pagan Festival of Puca was revived at Halloween with the support of Failte Ireland and the County Councils of Meath and Louth.
6. Week by week we hear of terrible crimes. 421 suicides in 2019
7. In recent years there has been a growing demand for deliverance and exorcism from people who feel oppressed, obsessed or possessed by evil spirits.
8. Currently there is an epidemic of cocaine use.
9. The social media abound in vile & hate filled postings.
10. There is a worldwide ecological crisis which may be related to the current pandemic.

So, Yeats is not far wrong. Things fall apart and the centre cannot hold.

In the words of St Teresa of Calcutta, the problems of many people in affluent countries like ours are:

*"deep down, at the bottom of their hearts ... here you have a different kind of poverty - a poverty of spirit, of loneliness, and of being unwanted. And that is the worst disease in the world today, not tuberculosis or leprosy."*

Our bellies may be full but often our hearts are sometimes empty. There is a lack of meaning for many people in Western Society. It is said that we are living in a post-truth, relativistic world. Maybe that is why our suicide rates are going up all the time.

### **False answers**

Something major is needed to correct and heal this situation. Of course, the secular world comes up with its own answers:

- ◆ Intellectuals in universities, scientists and executives in companies try to employ learned and ingenious solutions to improve the situation of human beings but many of their own lives are in a mess and many of them believe that we are adrift in a post-truth society where nothing is certain or permanent. You cannot give to others what you haven't got yourself.

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- ◆ Others resort to things such as new age spirituality, transcendental meditation, yoga, mindfulness, psychotherapy, the occult, and non-Christian religions in a vain search for solutions. There are many Christians, who feel that life can be transformed by merely human effort, for example by Government intervention, better education, social work, self-help books etc.

### **Reliable answers**

God's word tells us that the problem goes deeper. Behind the presenting problems that we have described lies a deeper cause, namely the two Ss of Satan and sin.

- ◆ Satan exerts great influence; often it is hidden, but it is there. 1 Jn 5:19 goes so far as to say:

*"We know that .... the whole world is under the control of the evil one."*

That's a chilling statement. Satan tempts people to sin and the bible says that everyone succumbs. Romans 3:23 tells us that *"All people fall short of the glory of God."* Another passage in Romans 7:15-17 describes our common experience when it says:

*"I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me."*

So Satan leads all of us to sin and **sin is the basic problem that underlies all of the other problems of the world.** We need a solution to the problem of sin.

To escape from the power of sinful negativity and alienation, we need to be freed from the grip of Satan and sin. God sent his beloved Son Jesus into the world for this precise purpose. As 1 Jn 3:8 tells us:

*"the Son of God appeared to destroy the devil's work."*

Colossians 1:13-14 states:

*"For **he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness** and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."*

### **Jesus died a ransom for many**

Jesus was crucified by sin and Satan. However, he remained faithful to God. Evil did seem to have the last word when Jesus died but in actual fact the last word belonged to God. It was a definitive word of vindication and liberation, when God the Father called Jesus forth from death to eternal new life, to be Lord of heaven and earth.

The implications of the death and resurrection of Jesus are awesome:

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- ◆ **The power of Satan is broken in principle and is being broken in fact.** Exorcists know this. I have seen it myself when I have prayed with people for deliverance. When you start off, the person would be in a dreadful state – out of control physically, perhaps frothing at the mouth, or speaking in a guttural voice on behalf of the devil, but as you rest your confidence in Jesus and the victory of the cross and command the evil spirits to leave the person who needs deliverance, you can see the battle yielding to success and the person is restored to peace of mind and tranquillity. All of us when we are assaulted by the evil one, by temptation, **can raise the shield of faith**, as Paul says in Ephesians, chapter 6, and we find, as the scriptures promise, that **it puts out all the fiery darts of the evil one**. Those who trust in Jesus, the One who is risen from the dead, find that he protects them from the assaults of evil.
- ◆ Secondly, sin is dealt with because if we believe in Jesus, **if we believe in the free offer of forgiveness and love we receive it**. Paul says in Romans 8:1, *"For those who are in Christ there is now no condemnation"*. We are declared acquitted and not guilty by God's grace, not because we merit it or deserve it, but simply because God offers it. We trust in that offer of Jesus and it becomes ours in our experience. In other words, all those who, sorrowfully aware of their sins, look into the eyes of Jesus expecting only mercy and love will receive only mercy and love, now and at the hour of our deaths.

I have often asked the Lord to give me a second or two before my death to place all my trust in him. I am not going to rely on any merits in my own life, I am not going to worry about my lack of merits, I am just going to look into his eyes trusting in his mercy and I know that he cannot say 'no' to me because he is Mercy itself and I know that in him my salvation is assured.

### ***The miracle prayer***

Many people have found that they can connect with the saving power of Jesus by saying the so-called miracle prayer which goes as follows:

Lord Jesus, I come before you, just as I am,  
I am sorry for my sins, I repent of them, please forgive me.  
In your Name, I forgive all others for what they have done against me.  
I renounce Satan, the evil spirits and all their works.  
I give you my entire self, Lord Jesus, now and forever.  
I invite you into my life, and I accept you as my Lord, God and Saviour.  
Heal me, change me, strengthen me in body, soul, and spirit.  
Come Lord Jesus, cover me with your Precious Blood,  
and fill me with your Holy Spirit.  
I love you Lord Jesus. I praise you Jesus. I thank you Jesus.  
I shall follow you every day of my life. Amen.

It's a wonderful prayer, isn't it! Some people say this prayer every day. As we experience the liberating and transforming presence of Jesus, we are called to show to others the loving mercy that God has first shown to us. In this way we become yeast in the dough of society. As St Paul says in 1 Corinthians 5:8,

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*"Therefore, let us keep the Festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth."*

You see, when we do that, when we rely on the Lord to deal with Satan and sin, things no longer fall apart because the centre holds and **the centre is Jesus Christ – he holds things together**. As a result of this process we contribute to the building up of "a civilisation of love", one which is the coming of God's kingdom on earth. The phrase "civilisation of love" is taken from the writings of St. John Paul II. It's another way of talking about the kingdom of God and the coming of God's kingdom on earth. There is a quote from John Paul,

*"yes, the civilisation of love is possible, it's not a utopia, but it is only possible by a constant and ready reference to the 'Father, from whom all fatherhood and motherhood on earth is named', from whom every human family comes."*

Next week we will discuss what new life in Christ is and what a person can expect from being baptised in the Holy Spirit.

### ***Suggested discussion starters***

- 1) When you were reflecting prayerfully on the nominated scripture texts during the week did anything really make a graced impression on you?
- 2) What struck you most about to-night's presentation?
- 3) What do you make of the following words of St Paul in Rm 10:9-10, "If you confess that Jesus is Lord and believe that God raised him from death, you will be saved. For it is by our faith that we are put right with God; it is by our confession that we are saved."