

Christmas: The divine rescue!

Introduce self:

Promote books:

Explain advent:

This morning is the second sermon in our advent sermon series.

The word “advent” comes from the Latin word “adventus” which means “coming.”

Advent is the celebration of Christ’s first coming.

The church has been celebrating advent formally since the 8th century.

The specific dates of Advent change every year, but it usually begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas Day (known as Advent Sunday) and always ends on Christmas Eve.

Why do we celebrate advent??? The birth of Christ is one of the most important events in world history!!!

During this sermon series, you will hear from all three of our campus preaching pastor’s including myself...

Note on expository preaching....

Prayer for illumination:

Please join me in prayer...

Sermon introduction:

Last summer my family spent time at Luby Bay Campground on Priest Lake.

In the middle of the sandy beach, I noticed several logs standing upright, and leaning against each other. It looked like a hastily thrown together tepee. Some of the logs probably weighed a few hundred pounds.

Later in the day, one of my older boys was chasing one of my younger boys down the beach. As the younger boy (Andrew) looked over his shoulder to taunt his brother, he crashed into the pile of logs. Then he fell to the ground. The collision with the logs caused the biggest log to wobble. Then it came crashing down on my child’s back, pinning him to the ground.

Andrew was stuck under the log—bloody, bruised, and screaming. We ran over to him, pulled the log off him, and gently rolled him over. After a few minutes we realized that he could not move his legs. Five minutes elapsed, ten minutes elapsed, and then thirty minutes elapsed, and Andrew could not move his legs. At this point we feared that he may be paralyzed. I saw myself pushing him around in a wheelchair for the next 40 years.

So, finally, and reluctantly, we called 911...

Within minutes (literally), 3-4 volunteer paramedics emerged out of the woods to rescue Andrew. Then an ambulance showed up to rescue Andrew. Then the police boat showed up to rescue Andrew.

Then a helicopter showed up to rescue Andrew.

We were very impressed with how fast the rescue workers responded.

I was also very impressed when I thought about all the infrastructure, administration, and volunteers involved in rescuing my son. We called 911 and instantly tons of things happened—all at once—behind the scenes to get four sets of rescue workers to our location within minutes. Amazing!!!

We love amazing rescues, don't we???

This brings us to the subject of Christmas...

Christmas is first and foremost the celebration of the world's greatest rescue mission. It was not just any rescue mission; it was a divine rescue mission. If we don't understand what the Christ of Christmas rescues us from, we will never be amazed by Christmas.

What did Jesus come to earth to rescue us from? Several things, we will briefly look at three...

Jesus rescues us from hell
Jesus rescues us from Satan
Jesus rescues us from sin

First, Jesus rescues us from hell!

Jesus talked about hell more than anyone else in the Bible. Why? He loved people and he wanted them to rescue them from hell, which raises the question...

What is hell like?

Hell is painful!

Matthew 25:30 (ESV) — 30 And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

The pain of hell is so intense that it causes weeping and gnashing of teeth.

John Blanchard says, "It is never true to say that something hurts like hell. Nothing hurts like hell."

Hell is also eternal!

Matthew 25:41 (ESV) — 41 "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'

Matthew 25:45–46 (ESV) — 45 Then he will answer them, saying, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' **46** And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

2 Thessalonians 1:7–9 (ESV) — 7 and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels **8** in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. **9** They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might,

See also Luke 3:17; Mark 9:43-48; Rev. 14:9-11; Rev. 22:14-15; Rev. 20:15, 21:8, 20:10-14.

In hell there is...

No beauty
No singing
No refreshment
No friendship
No leisure
No rest
No love
No recreation
No hope (because it lasts forever).

And worst of all...

No fellowship with God!!!

Illustration:

Several years ago, I was very sick. My symptoms were a high fever, headaches, nausea, sweating, chills, and aches. I remember getting up late one night to drive home... I wanted to die... In that moment of intense pain and misery, with sweat dripping off my forehead, I sensed God whispering to me, "This is what hell will be like, all the time, and I have saved you from it."

Think of your worst pain and misery in life! Hell will be worse!!!

Objections:

Why would a loving God send people to hell?

Not only is God loving, but he is also just....

We must never forget that when we sin, we are breaking not just anyone's rules, but God's rules...

Furthermore, our punishment is based on the infinite glory of the one we have sinned against.

Illustration:

Imagine that one of your friends was sick of all the panhandling in downtown Spokane. He was so fed up that he actually attacked a homeless guy! What would happen to your friend? He would probably get in trouble.

What if he attacked the mayor of Spokane? He would get into more trouble!!!

What if he attacked our governor? He would get into even more trouble!

What if he attacked our president? He would get into even more trouble!

Why? The greater the person we sin against, the greater the consequence.

When we sin against God, we are sinning against the greatest being that has ever existed.

There is no greater being that can even be conceived!

He is a being of infinite power, glory, and splendor. Therefore, our punishment is of infinite duration.

John Piper writes,

“...degrees of blameworthiness come not from how long you offend dignity, but from how high the dignity is that you offend.” (Piper, 50)

How does Jesus rescue us from hell?

He entered this world as a helpless child.

He lived a perfect life.

He then suffered and died on a Roman cross in our place.

In other words, he experienced hell on the cross!!!

But Dave, he only suffered for a few hours. Yes, but he was the son of God. Since he was the son of God, he was worthy enough to bare sin's eternal penalty in a few hours.

Jesus suffered on the cross and rose from the grave to rescue us from Hell's eternal torments.

Application:

This raises two questions...

Have you thanked Jesus recently? This divine rescue is the reason for Christmas joy!!!

Have you been rescued? Elaborate!

First, Jesus rescues us from hell!

Second, Jesus rescues us from Satan!

Why do we need to be rescued from Satan? He wants to destroy us!

1 Peter 5:8 (ESV) — 8 Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

Satan is constantly on the prowl, looking to destroy people's lives.

He is really good at destroying lives, since he has thousands of years of practice.

In other words, we are no match for the Devil!

Illustration:

My son played flag football a few years back. He was on a team with 3rd and 4th grade boys. The biggest kid on the team probably weighed 115 pounds. What would happen if my son's team strapped on pads and took on the Seahawks this afternoon?

The average size of an NFL lineman is 6 foot 5 inches tall and 310 pounds. The average size has gone up since then. Most of these guys can bench press over 400 pounds and squat more than 500 pounds.

That means that one NFL lineman could bench press my son's entire offensive line at the same time.

My son's team is no match for the Seahawks (maybe this year???)

In a similar sense we are no match for the devil. He is stronger, faster, and more experienced than us. Plus, he has been destroying lives for thousands of years. He knows all the tricks. We desperately need to be rescued from him.

Objection...

Do you really believe in the Devil???

In the early part of the 20th century, the famous liberal theologian Rudolf Bultmann said,

“It is impossible to use electric light and the wireless, and to avail ourselves of modern medical and surgical discoveries, and at the same time believe in the New Testament world of demons and spirits.”
(Bultmann, Kerygma and Myth 4-5)

Why do I believe in the devil??? A few reasons...

There is too much deplorable wickedness in the world, that can't be explained by natural selection, to not believe in the devil.

In addition, I have heard demons speak out of people. I have seen demons throw people to the ground. I have seen people delivered dramatically from years of demonic oppression.

Finally, Jesus Christ believed in the devil, and he proved he is the son of God by rising from the grave.

How does Jesus rescue us from Satan? By dying!

Hebrews 2:14–15 (ESV) — 14 Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, **15** and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.

Jesus became a human to share in our flesh and blood. Because of the incarnation, Jesus was able to destroy the devil... How? Jesus died as the perfect man, paying the full penalty for our sins. His death on the cross in our place, enables us to be forgiven.

Since Jesus birth, life, death, and resurrection enables us to be forgiven of all our sins two things happened...

Satan can't successfully accuse us... explain!

Satan can't scare us with death... explain!

Application:

Make no mistake, Satan is still alive and active.

But he can't ultimately destroy us since we are justified and adopted children of God.

Furthermore, when Christ died on the cross, he dealt Satan a mortal blow. Satan is dying...

To quote the words of the great hymn, *A mighty fortress is our God*, “We know his doom is sure.”

He is like a mighty dragon who has been stabbed in the heart. He has a mortal wound, and his days are numbered. As a result, he is thrashing his tail around causing all kinds of damage.

But someday, Satan will be cast into the outer darkness forever.

This was ensured when Christ came the first time. But there is more...

First, Jesus rescues us from hell.

Second, Jesus rescues us from Satan.

Third, Jesus rescues us from sin!

More specifically, Jesus rescues from the power of sin!

Romans 6:1–6 (ESV) — 1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? **2** By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? **3** Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? **4** We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. **5** For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. **6** We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.

Paul says that through union with Christ our old self was crucified with Christ (verb tense is aorist—indicating definitive action in the past). This means the old self, dominated by sin, was put to death. Therefore, the power of sin over us has been defeated—decisively.

Therefore, Paul can write,

6:2 “how can we who died to sin still live in it?”

6:6c “so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin”

6:11-12 “So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. **12** Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions.”

6: 14 “For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.”

6:18 Christians have been “set free from sin.”

Again, through our union with Christ, when Christ died, our old self (ruled by the sin nature) was crucified. As a result, that part of us is dead. We are no longer enslaved to the power of sin. Something radical has happened. The old self was literally crucified with Christ.

Theologians call this definitive sanctification, and it is distinguished from progressive sanctification.

Definitive sanctification happens the moment we are converted, and progressive sanctification happens throughout the Christian life.

According to Wayne Grudem definitive sanctification is,

“This initial step in sanctification involves a definite break from the ruling power... of sin, so that the believer is no longer ruled or dominated by sin and no longer loves to sin.”

Through our union with Christ, there has been a definitive break with the power of sin...

Illustration:

February 2nd, 2014 was the best day in Seattle Seahawk history...

Why? It was the day of Super Bowl XLVIII (48)

The Seahawks defeated the Broncos 43–8, the largest margin of victory for an underdog and tied for the third largest point differential overall (35) in [Super Bowl](#) history.

Seattle built a 22–0 halftime lead, and then a 36–0 advantage before allowing Denver's first and only score on the final play of the third quarter. The Seahawks defense scored a [safety](#) on the first play from scrimmage, the quickest score in Super Bowl history. They also became the first team in a Super Bowl to score on a safety, a kickoff return, and an interception. The Broncos were held to almost 30 points below their scoring average.

The broncos were decisively defeated by the Seahawks, and nothing can change that...

The two teams can't go back in time and play that super bowl again.

It is over... the Broncos lost. And the Seahawks will forever be known as the team that decisively defeated the Denver Broncos in Super bowl XLVIII.

Jesus Christ has defeated the power of sin, and nothing can change that. It is over, it is done, sin has been defeated. Nothing can change this fact.

What is the application?

Christians should never say, "this sin has defeated me. I'm done fighting."

Or...

I have battled anger my whole life, I will never be victorious!!!

I have struggled with lust for decades, I might as well quit fighting!!!

My marriage will never get better...

I will never be a disciplined person...

I will never be able to forgive so and so...

Saying these things is flat out denial of the effectiveness of Christ's rescue mission.

Back to Romans 6...

"You also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 6:11).

"sin will have no dominion over you" (Rom. 6:14).

I'm not advocating a modified version of sinless perfection. We will sin until the day we die. Yet, Paul tells us clearly in Romans 6 that Jesus has rescued us from the enslaving power of sin. Said another way, he has

broken the ruling power of sin in us. If you are still enslaved to sin, and you are a Christian, something is drastically wrong! Christ came to rescue us from the guilt and POWER of sin!

Some of the great hymn writers understood definitive sanctification better than us...

“He breaks the power of canceled sin he sets the prisoners free!” (O for a Thousand tongues to sing)

“Be of sin the double cure, cleanse me from its guilt and power.” (Rock of Ages)

Jesus cleanses us from both the penalty of sin and the power of sin—he is the double cure.

Although we sometimes still feel enslaved to sin, we must remind ourselves that we are no longer enslaved to sin.

We don't have to be mastered by lust, anxiety, or pride—there is real hope for change!

Defeat and failure are not inevitable, no matter how many years we have struggled. We must reckon ourselves dead to sin, which means we must remember that we are no longer mastered by the power of sin.

Jesus came to rescue us from hell.

Jesus came to rescue us from Satan.

Jesus came to rescue us from the guilt and power of sin!!!

Conclusion:

Back to the white sandy beaches of Priest Lake.

We thought that Andrew needed to be rescued, so we called 911.

The paramedics showed up.

The ambulance showed up.

The police boat showed up.

The helicopter showed up.

They were all willing to drop what they were doing to rescue Andrew.

Andrew was rushed to the ER in the back of an ambulance to get x-rayed. Fortunately, there was no long-term damage, just some very painful scrapes and bruises.

He really did not need to be rescued by the professionals. We could have stayed at Priest Lake three more days and avoiding packing up early to drive to the hospital.

Some of you think that you don't need to be rescued.

“What is all the fuss, I'm doing ok, I really don't really need to be rescued. I just have a few scrapes and bruises.”

But the reality is far worse...

Everyone apart from Christ is in deep trouble. We all need to be rescued from hell, Satan, and the power of sin.

Here is the good news, because of Christmas, everyone who repents of their sins and looks to Jesus can be rescued.

Let's pray...