

Numbers 21:4-9
Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22
Ephesians 2:1-10
John 3:14-21

Sermon March 10th, 2024

Jesus Came to Save the World

There are a lot of doomsday preachers in the world today. Shouting through their megaphones on street corners (**Image One:** someone shouting from megaphone). Posting daily on their social media platform of choice. Preaching from pulpits and podiums from coast to coast. In-person or on television or on YouTube or on Facebook. Trying so hard to get our attention.

And as annoying as they can be. And they can be very annoying. On some level, who can blame them. We see wars breaking out all over the world. The superpowers on the United Nations security council seem to be playing a great big game of chicken with one another. Our Canadian politicians can't get along with each other if their lives depended on it. Reflecting just how polarized our communities are getting (**Image One**).

Climate change has flexed its muscles on several occasions over the last few years. From long lasting forest fires to more intense storms and weather patterns to extended droughts to rising ocean temperatures to increasing our vulnerability to the spread of communicable diseases (**Image One**).

Cancers and dementia are happening at higher rates. The economic situation is getting worse. The statistics in most mainline churches show stark figures predicting the possible extinction of our denomination as early as the 2040s (**Image One**).

I can see why some preachers, some intellectuals, some political leaders fall into this doomsday trap. Preaching a message either to scare us into making changes that in their minds we need to make to save our future. Or a message that comes from a place of lament and despair. A message that can leave us feeling hopeless for the future.

Similarly, in the time Jesus enters the scene in the first century of the common era, the Judeans are living under Roman Occupation where their resources and freedoms are very limited. Where they are overtaxed. Where they live under this constant threat that the Empire may decide the Judeans are a threat to their wellbeing and wage war on them. The economic situation is worsening. The amount of people living in poverty is growing. Disease is everywhere.

Some leaders in Jesus' time are doomsday preachers struggling to preach a message that gives hope to the people (**Image One**). Preaching a message to scare people into joining a violent revolution to overthrow the Empire.

Well, in John's gospel, we see that Jesus is offering a fresh perspective, a fresh voice. Jesus is preaching a different message from these doomsday preachers. Jesus proclaims that he has come not to condemn the world, but to save it. And he will not revert to violence in order to save it (**Image Two**: Jesus preaching).

Paul, and others, continue to proclaim this message challenging people to stir clear of the violent revolutions taking place around them. Inviting people to join a community that's purpose is to reflect where Jesus is healing and redeeming the world.

Likewise, we are invited to continue to proclaim a message of hope as we live in these troubled times (**Image Two**). We are invited to be part of a community that is living out God's grace, hospitality, and love in the world. We are invited to proclaim a message that helps people see where God's healing and redeeming work is happening in the world.

As followers of Christ, we are not called to scare people into doing things we want them to do. We are not called to fly the white doomsday flag and preach a message that can lead many people in our congregations to adopt an escapist theology where we all hide out in our safe little corners till Jesus comes again. Or under our safe little pew for that matter.

We are called to pick up our cross and walk along side Jesus. Standing face to face with the principalities and powers that are trying to bring destruction and hopelessness to our world, and proclaim, that God's love will prevail. That God's healing and redeeming work is happening despite their attempts to cause destruction (**Image Two**).

There is hope in the present. There is hope for our future. There is hope for peace. There is hope for unity. There is hope for a cleaner and healthier planet. There is hope for people living in poverty that their needs will be met. There is hope for the future of the church.

There is hope because Jesus has come not to condemn the world, but to save it (**Image Two**). There is hope because Jesus has invited us, the church, to continue being active participants in Jesus' saving ministry for the world. A ministry where we live out and reveal where God's healing and redeeming work are at play.

There is hope because Jesus has come not to condemn the world, but to save it!

Let us pray, gracious God, help us continue to live out your grace, hospitality, and love as we live in these troubled times. Helping people see where your healing and

redeeming love are at work. Giving people hope for the future of our church, the future of our planet. **Amen.**

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