

Salvation for the Gentiles

Isaiah 56:1–8

This is a beautiful text with which to restart our afternoon worship. It ends with the promise, “Yet I will gather to him others besides those who are gathered to him.” As we are now gathered together for afternoon worship let us consider what a great privilege gathering with the saints is. Let us consider three questions: who? how? and what? First,

1. Who: my salvation

Who: my salvation (יְשׁוּעָתִי) is about to come—“my Jesus”! (v. 1). The word for “my salvation” is literally “my Jesus”!

John 14:6 (Hebrew): וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו יֵשׁוּעַ אֲנֹכִי הַדֶּרֶךְ וְהָאֱמֶת וְהַחַיִּים

Go to Israel and speak of יֵשׁוּעַ (Yeshua) and any Jew will know who you are talking about: Jesus.

Salvation is not an idea or a method or a product; it is a person—Jesus! The person who is saved, who is in covenant with the Savior—and only the saved person—can say, “my Jesus, my salvation.”

Jesus is the one who can truthfully say, “I am the way.” Jesus is the way—the only way—to the Father. Thomas had said to him, “Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?”—how can we know the way to heaven? Jesus’ answer was simple and uncomplicated: “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”

It is like a child riding in his parent’s or grandparent’s car. He or she may say, “Daddy, do you know where we are going?” and Daddy can reassure him, “Yes, son, I know where we are going.” Daddy can tell his son, “Son, you don’t have to worry; I’ll get us there.”

The believer may not understand all the ins and outs of salvation, but God is not going to suddenly give us a pop quiz: “Quick, what is the difference between justification and sanctification? What is the relationship between divine foreordination and man’s free will? How did sin come into a perfect world? How can a loving God send people to hell? Where is hell? Where is heaven?” You may not be able to answer those questions on a moment’s notice. But qualifying for heaven doesn’t require 100% perfect answers on theological questions; it involves coming to the Father through the Son in simple faith.

Salvation is personal. It is Christ. It is receiving him by faith. It is depending on him 100%. “On Christ the solid rock I stand; all other ground is sinking sand.”

Is Jesus *your* salvation—*your* Savior? This is biblical language.

Moses: “The LORD is my strength and song, and he is become *my salvation*: he is *my God*, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father’s God, and I will exalt him” (Ex. 15:2).

David: “The God of my rock; in him will I trust: he is my shield, and the horn of *my salvation*, my high tower, and my refuge, *my savior*; thou savest me from violence” (2 Sam. 22:3). The violence from which we are saved is the raging inferno of hell. I talked the other day with a man who had been working on a motor vehicle, when suddenly the carburetor caught fire. All the man had to put out the fire was his bare hands. He frantically started slapping the flames with his bare hands. He was able to put out the flames and keep the whole thing from blowing up, but in the process he burned his hands. Hell is a conflagration of unquenchable fire (Matt. 3:12). Christ is indeed the believer’s refuge, the Savior who saves him from the violence of eternal fire.

There’s a lot of talk today about whether an individual can be *forced* to receive the Covid vaccine. Receiving a vaccine is essentially an act of violence against the integrity of the human person. Getting stuck with a needle is an invasion of the human body—essentially no different than getting pierced with a sword or struck with a bullet. Forcing a person to receive a vaccine is an act of violence against a human being. The informed consent of the human subject is absolutely essential. As defined by the Nuremberg Code, “... the person involved should have legal capacity to give consent; should be ... able to exercise free power of choice, without the intervention of any element of force ... and should have sufficient knowledge and comprehension ... as to enable him to make an understanding and enlightened decision.”¹

Jesus saves his people from the violence of eternal fire. He saves those who are in covenant with him, who can justly call him “*my Savior*.” This is biblical language, like “*my Shepherd*” (Ps. 23:1), or “*my Redeemer*.”

God says, “I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the LORD have spoken it” (Ezek. 34:23–24).

Jesus says, “I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine” (John 10:14).

The term “*my Redeemer*”:

“For I know that *my redeemer* liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God” (Job 19:25–26).

“Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and *my redeemer*” (Ps. 19:14).

“I will sing of my Redeemer and his wondrous love to me; on the cruel cross he suffered, from the curse to set me free. Sing, O sing of my Redeemer! With his

¹ <https://history.nih.gov/download/attachments/1016866/nuremberg.pdf?version=1&modificationDate=1589152811742&api=v2>

blood he purchased me; on the cross he sealed my pardon, paid the debt, and made me free. Sing, O sing of my Redeemer! With his blood he purchased me; on the cross he sealed my pardon, paid the debt, and made me free.”

My Salvation, my Shepherd, my Redeemer! The Lord Jesus is in covenant with all who have a personal relationship with him through a true and living faith. These alone can call him “*my* Salvation.”

2. How: not defiling the Sabbath

The fourth commandment is “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.” This is one of the ten commandments—God’s moral law. Its importance may be seen in the fact that it is by far the longest of the commandments. Look at the Ten Commandments as reprinted in our *Trinity Psalter Hymnal*, p. xvi. The fourth commandment is the longest in the number of lines, rivaled only by the second commandment.

God nowhere says, “I’ll be satisfied if you keep only nine commandments.” He requires obedience to all ten. Each one is important to him. The fourth commandment is an integral part of the moral law. Keeping the Sabbath day holy is a universal command binding every human being on earth. Our Confession of Faith, summarizing the teaching of Scripture, says, referring to the Ten Commandments, “The moral law doth forever bind all, as well justified persons as others, to the obedience thereof.” No one can claim to be excused for failing to keep the fourth commandment because he was ignorant of the duty, or because he followed a false religion.

Our Shorter Catechism asks, “Q. 59. Which day of the seven hath God appointed to be the weekly sabbath?” The answer, summarizing Scripture, is this: “From the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ, God appointed the seventh day of the week to be the weekly sabbath; and the first day of the week ever since, to continue to the end of the world, which is the Christian sabbath.”

The Lord Jesus kept the seventh-day Sabbath all throughout his life. But after his death there is no record of his meeting with his people on the seventh day of the week. Instead, he met with them on the first day of the week—on resurrection Sunday, again the next Sunday, then on the day of Pentecost (fifty days, Jewish inclusive time, counting both the first and last days, equivalent to our 49 days), after he had ascended up to heaven, when he poured out his Spirit upon his church. The Jews, rejecting Christ, keep the seventh day of the week. Muslims keep Friday as a holy day. The Muslim cannot say, “I am not required to keep the Christian sabbath because I live under Shariah law.” The Muslim—as well as the Jew, the Buddhist, the Hindu, the Wiccan, the animist, the secular humanist, or the person whose god is his belly (Phil. 3:19)—is required to keep the Sabbath holy to the Lord and not defile it. To fail to keep the Sabbath day holy to the Lord is to defile it. It is sin. The word for *defiling* (חָלַל) can be translated *profaning* or *polluting*.

We are responsible to keep the Sabbath holy to the Lord by not doing unnecessary work and by gathering with God's people for worship. We defile it by doing unnecessary work and failing to gather for worship (unless providentially hindered).

We have considered the *who*: Christ, and the *how*: keeping the Sabbath holy to the Lord and not defiling it. Lastly, consider the *what*.

3. What? the fundamental duty

In Isaiah 56 we discover that everlasting salvation is promised even to the Gentiles ("the sons of the foreigner"). These were the *goyyim*—the Gentiles—those who were not a part of the covenant people, Israel.

Ephesians describes it this way: "Ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: but now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ" (Eph. 2:12–13). What a horrible fate!

But in our text this afternoon we learn that God has a future for the Gentiles. He revealed himself to the Jews, not so that they could keep salvation all to themselves, but so they could share it with the Gentiles. The Jews were all along to be "a light to the gentiles." The aged saint Simeon, taking up the infant Jesus in his arms, understood this. He said, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; *a light to lighten the Gentiles*, and the glory of thy people Israel" (Luke 2:29–32).

With the coming of Christ God has a future for the Gentiles. Those who were utterly separated from God's people are now invited to join themselves to the Lord, and serve him (vv. 3, 6). Those who were utterly separated are now "gathered" to the Lord (v. 8).

The prophet Jeremiah prophesies of the time when "they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the LORD; and all the nations shall be *gathered* unto it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart" (Jer. 3:17).

What wonderful news! All the *nations* shall be gathered to the heavenly Jerusalem, the church and kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ! How God's people look forward to that day!

But in the meantime, here in this time and place, brothers and sisters, it is our privilege to gather to the Lord to worship him with his people, to gather week by week on the Lord's day, to meet with the risen and ascended Christ and raise up our voices in Christian worship.

Can you say with the Psalmist, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord"?

I was talking the other day with a woman who said that her mother, when she heard that if she became a member of this church she would be expected to attend worship every Sunday, told her that was unreasonable and would really stress her out—would really add undue stress to her life. That is how the world views gathering every Lord’s day for worship. But those whose hearts have been born again by the Spirit see gathering with God’s people every week as a joy and delight. It is a joy and delight to gather in the presence of our Lord and Savior who loved us and gave himself for us, and sing the praises of the Lamb who was slain! As Isaac Watts put it, “Let those refuse to sing, who never knew our God; but children of the heavenly King will speak their joys abroad. We’re marching to Zion, beautiful, beautiful Zion; we’re marching upward to Zion, the beautiful city of God.” Yes, let us gather with God’s people; it is the joy of our life!

Here is the fundamental duty and mark of the church: it gathers weekly—every Lord’s day—with the Savior and his saints.

In the words of hymnwriter Robert Lowry, “Shall we gather at the river, where bright angel feet have trod, with its crystal tide forever flowing by the throne of God? Yes, we’ll gather at the river, the beautiful, the beautiful river; gather with the saints at the river that flows by the throne of God.”

Our gathering with the church on earth is a foretaste of our gathering with the saints forever by the throne of God. What a day that will be! Amen.