

**Easter 5 B - – Power Points of life - The Power to be Saved**

**Read: Acts 4: 5–12 and or memorize: Acts 4: 12**

**Just imagine, that you were forced to testify before a court. How would you feel? Might you be fearful about being questioned? That's the situation that Peter and John find themselves in. They are being questioned by the authorities. Peter is a pretty common person, fisherman by trade, but disciple by calling.**

**The interrogation is about a young slave girl they healed. It had created quite a stir. They are brought before magistrates, who order them beaten; then thrown into prison for the night. The jailer is commanded to guard them carefully. We know where Peter stands on one issue: “There is salvation in no one else! God has given no other name under heaven by which we must be saved.”**

**The Christian faith is based on the Bible’s testimony that Jesus is Lord! Just as the blood cells of our bone marrow keep us alive, salvation is the bone marrow of the Bible. It is the life force of our faith; and the central teaching of all Christianity.**

**It was that truth that caused Martin Luther to nail his 95 Theses to the door of the Wittenberg church, calling the larger church to repent of its sin of failing to proclaim that message. The interesting thing is, a lot of times when you ask people what it means to be saved, they're not sure how to answer that. They might stutter and stumble and wonder. So, we want to talk about what it means to be saved today.**

**Salvation is personal. You cannot be saved by your mother, your father, your brother or any other person, even your pastor. It is based on a personal relationship with Jesus. We believe, based on John 14: 6, where Jesus says, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” That it can only happen by personal faith in Jesus.**

**Consider this, if you were drowning in a swimming pool and a lifeguard pulls you out; you have been saved. Jesus is the lifeguard, the one who saves you. Paul and Silas were spending the night in a Roman jail in Philippi because Paul had healed a girl and cost her owners money. Later than evening, an earthquake shook the doors open and the chains were loosed from all the prisoners.**

**At that moment, the jailer came to see what happened and when he saw the doors open, he drew his sword to kill himself, because that would be his punishment for his prisoners escaping. When Paul saw him, he called out to him to stop, explaining that no one has escaped. In great joy the jailer turned to Paul and Silas and asked, "What must I do to be**

**saved? "Paul offers him the only person who saves, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved."**

Parents understand the need for salvation; survival is a daily challenge. Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "There never was a child so lovely, but his mother was glad to get him asleep." So, with kids to raise, bills to pay, jobs to keep, we sometimes need to pray, "Lord, help me make it through the night. Lord, would you give me a little assistance through the day." Salvation is a matter of survival.

When a child is developing in the womb, he or she has all the abilities to see and hear and speak, but cannot do any of them. It is when he or she is born that they see the light, hear the sounds, take a breath and begins to experience life and love in a whole new dimension. They are alive!

**Physical birth does not save us. Jesus says we must be born again.** When we are born again of water and the Word, we are given the Holy Spirit. We begin to see things with new eyes, hear things with new ears, believe with new minds and love with new hearts. We experience life from a whole new perspective. We are alive in Christ. Salvation is not some pie in the sky thing. It's life down here and in heaven.

I have been reading a book by Gary Sinise, to those of you who may not know his name you may remember the character, Lt. Dan in the movie "Forrest Gump." The book is entitled *Grateful American*. It is autobiographical. He shares the downward spiral of his family's life, when his wife becomes an active alcoholic. They go through some very different times and eventually he has to confront her and tell her that unless she gets help and stop drinking, their life is over.

She goes into recovery through a rehab and follows it with involvement with alcoholics anonymous. Neither she nor Gary had a religious background. They are both actors, which means they are often working on location. Their lives are already unsettled and her alcoholism makes it even more unsettled. During her recovery, she discovers some roots in Roman Catholicism.

At one point, Gary comes home from a location shoot and his wife tells him that she is joining the church and that the children are going to attend Roman Catholic school. He's not really wild about that. He heard that the nuns were pretty difficult to deal with and wasn't sure he wanted his kids exposed to them. As time goes on, she introduces him to a nun who spent three hours talking with him. She dispels some of his fears by showing him her love for Jesus and helping him see Jesus loves him also.

One Christmas Eve, after his wife has been a member for a long time, Gary tells her and the family that they're going out to dinner, but on the way to dinner, they drive to the church. His wife is asking him why they are there as he walks in and is greeted by the priest, who explains that Gary has gone to instruction and is being confirmed in the faith that evening. Gary explained to her he came to understand that they needed something more than themselves to survive. He needed to be saved, just as they were. When you are born again, you can live, not merely survive. For his family, they began to put God first. You and your house can do the same.

Another young mother enrolled in a Bible study where her questions about God were answered. She became a regular attender and accepted Jesus as her Lord and Savior. She sang all the way home. She walked in the door, hugged her husband and whispered in his ear, "Honey, I've been saved." She was the happiest she had ever been.

Then life happened. A few weeks later, she fell and broke her leg. Unable to get around to do her housework, the work piled up, the kids constantly bickered, and the young woman grew more and more discouraged by the day. She went from the height of a newfound experience to the depth of every day.

Before long, she doubted her religious experience was authentic at all. Have you ever found yourself doubting God's presence when life seems to be falling down or all around you? Do you know what that is like to have a wonderful religious experience and then have to work it out in the nitty-gritty? The good news for us is, when we face doubt, that we have a Savior who assures us that He is with us to helps us. That is what it means to be saved.

Did you ever hear of the story about a woman who died and went to heaven? She met Saint Peter at the Pearly Gates and asked this question, "How do I get in?" "Well," replied Peter, "you have to spell a word. The word is love." The woman said, "L – O – V – E." Then, St. Peter said "Welcome, come on in." After some time of enjoying her heavenly rewards, Peter came to her one day and said he needed a day off. He asked if she would be willing to work the gate for him. She was glad to do it.

And who would show up put her husband. "What are you doing here?" inquired the woman. "Well," said delighted husband, "remember that cute, young nurse that took care of you while you were terminally ill. We fell in love and married a few months after your death. Believe it or not I won the lottery, so we bought the big house and did all those things we dreamed of doing, but never had the money to do. On our last trip I was killed in a ski accident, so here I am. How do I get in?" "Well," said the wife, you have to spell a word." "Fine," said the husband, "give me the word." She thought for a moment and said, "supercalifragilisticexpialidocious."

**You might laugh, but there are many people who think there is some password or special knowledge to get into heaven. There is no password or special knowledge to salvation. Grace is free for all who come to faith in Jesus Christ. But don't be mistaken, grace may be free, but it is not cheap. It cost Jesus His very life.**

**How are we saved? It is by grace through faith that we are saved, not by our works. It is all about the unmerited, unconditional love of God extended to us. You can't buy it, but you can receive it. Sometimes, it can feel really hard for us to accept, because of our circumstances. Jesus assures us that that is true.**

**The whole question in the interrogation of Peter and John has to do with power and authority. When they were brought before the authorities, they are asked, "By what power or what name did you do this?" "Peter's response is clear and simple, "in the name of Jesus Christ, Jesus saves."**

**In 12 step programs, the first step is to admit that you are powerless and cannot overcome your problem. In the second step, you confess, "We came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity." For Christians that higher power is Jesus Christ. We confess that we cannot save ourselves. The first step is to come to believe there is a God. The second step is to remember that you are not God. God is our higher power who does for us that which we cannot do for ourselves: save us. The question you must ask yourself is, "Will you accept that gift? "**

**Count me in: Rejoicing in the love of Jesus, I will share that joy with others.**