

## Salvation In Capernaum

Valley Center Seventh-day Adventist Church

June 6, 2009

*\*This Sermon is available in audio format for listening or downloading on our Audio Sermons page*

Oh, that we would see a picture of Jesus today! Oh, that we would know Him as He is and not as the devil has painted Him! Because the world was blackened by sin and ignorance of God's true character, through the misrepresentations of Satan, God Himself came to this planet in order to reveal Himself and place before men the true character of divinity. The devil had twisted the minds of mankind with his fabrications and misrepresentations of what God is like, and it was to dispel this darkness that God became man and was born into the human family.

Some people think that Jesus is different than God the Father. Some think that they might be able to find a Friend in Jesus, but that the Father is austere and stern. Not so! Jesus said emphatically, "If you have seen Me, you have seen the Father." John 14:6. Jesus' death on the cross did not create love in the heart of the Father toward lost mankind; it was because God loved us that He sent His Son into the world.

When we "behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us;" when we look to Calvary and see the shed blood of a dying Savior, our hardened hearts become softened and we begin to appreciate the great sacrifice made in our behalf so that, lost sinners though we be, we can receive the great Gift of salvation through Christ.

It's funny the things that stand out in your memory. A little more than 20 years ago a Sabbath afternoon meeting was scheduled in the Oceanside SDA Church, featuring actor-turned-SDA pastor Clifton Davis. The house was packed. Perhaps some were coming there just to meet one who had been a television celebrity. I'm not sure where Pastor Davis had been earlier in the day, but evidently his schedule was crowded and the announced time for the meeting to begin had arrived and no Clifton Davis in sight. The meeting began and various preliminaries were conducted, in hopes that the guest speaker would come eventually.

Because it was a warm afternoon, the side doors of the church were opened and from my vantage point sitting on the platform, I could see through the door to the outside, by an angle not visible to the congregation. So it was that I spied a car speeding up to the church and quickly parking next to the curb. I recognized the form of Pastor Davis and breathed a thanksgiving prayer that he had arrived safely.

It was clear that he was conscious that he was late, as he hurriedly exited the car and walked briskly up the sidewalk toward the church, a look of anxiety written on his face. All this was visible to those on the platform, but not to the congregation.

At that very moment, a young man was singing the beautiful song, “No One Ever Cared For Me Like Jesus.” Here’s the picture that is frozen in my mind forever. An anxious, hurried guest speaker, with a concerned look on his face, late for his appointment, rushing up the walkway, when suddenly, the music and its message stops him in his tracks. He pauses. The look on his face changes and softens from anxiety to calm, from concern to peace. His shoulders relax. The lovely strains of the music bring a smile to his face. He waits quietly till the song is finished, enjoying, savoring every note, every word. When the song was over, with an entirely different demeanor than he had possessed when striding up the sidewalk, he steps through another side door and makes his way onto the church platform.

I can’t tell you much about what Pastor Davis preached that day. I remember it was a good message. But I had already seen a “sermon,” one I’ll never forget, in what had happened before, obscured to the vision of the audience. I’ve thought a lot about that afternoon since then. It seems to me that it can be a lesson of life; that while we’re, like Clifton Davis that afternoon, busy in the hustle and bustle of life, always running “late,” that what we need is a picture of Jesus, maybe through Scripture, song or someone’s smile so that we can be assured of His love toward us at every moment. We need to know, as the song says, “No One Ever Cared For Me Like Jesus.” Knowing that changes the way you think. Knowing that gives meaning to life. The anxiety and worry would leave our faces just as it did Clifton’s that Sabbath afternoon. God loves us! God loves you!

Such a picture of Jesus is given to us in the story that unfolds in our study today. It’s a story that is reported by all three synoptic writers; Matthew, Mark and Luke. We’ll study the story from Mark’s viewpoint, recorded in the last part of chapter 5 of his book. Putting together the accounts, we discover that Jesus had just arrived in Capernaum, having come across Lake Galilee from the area of the Gadarenes, where He had healed the demoniacs. Because the townspeople had requested Him to leave, having lost their herd of swine when the devils entered them and drove them into the lake, He then traveled by boat the 5 or 6 miles across water from a point on the eastern shore of Galilee, at about its center point north to south, in a northwesterly direction to Capernaum.

The village (Capernaum means “Village of Nahum”) of Capernaum became a hub of Christ’s ministry. It was even called “His city.” Located on the northwestern

shore of Galilee, near where it was fed by the Jordan River, it was noted for its good fishing. For many of the disciples, this was their home turf, including Levi Matthew, whom He called to be one of the twelve. It was about this time that Matthew, the former tax collector, hosted a dinner in Jesus' honor, to which he invited many of his former associates.

“Now when Jesus had crossed over again by boat to the other side, a great multitude gathered to Him; and He was by the sea. And behold, one of the rulers of the synagogue came, Jairus by name. And when He saw Him, he fell at His feet and begged Him earnestly, saying, ‘My little daughter lies at the point of death. Come and lay Your hands on her, that she may be healed, and she will live.’” Mark 5:21-23.

The name “Jairus,” as it appears in the New Testament is apparently from the Old Testament name “Jair,” (“Jah enlightens”) which was applied to several, including the father of Mordecai who was the cousin of Queen Esther. The first part of the name is the abbreviated form for the name of the LORD, “Jah,” and the last part of the name is the word “light.” It is essentially the same as the name “Uriah” with the parts transposed. As happened to many names in New Testament times, an “s” was added (compare Isaias, Jeremias, etc.) and so the name became Jairus.

He is identified as being a “ruler of the synagogue.” The synagogue was the meeting or assembly place for the Jews of the first century. Most every town would have had its synagogue, to be distinguished from the temple at Jerusalem, where sacrifices were offered on the altar. The synagogue (from Greek meaning “to lead together” or “gather”) was the center of religious life for each town. It was typically constructed on the highest prominence of the city, and designed so that worshipers, as they entered and as they prayed, faced Jerusalem. Worship services would be duly conducted on the Sabbath; rabbinical schools would teach pupils there during the week. The “ruler” of the synagogue was a very important person, responsible for the arrangement of the weekly service on Sabbaths. He was, generally speaking, the man in charge. Jairus was such a person.

But Jairus had a problem. His little girl was gravely ill, and nothing was helping. Overcoming his fears and prejudices, boldly coming before Jesus, he begged Him for help. His faith was bolstered by the reports of other healings brought about by the Master. Sometimes it's an illness that drives us to Christ. Sometimes it's misfortune or calamity of another type. Maybe it's loss of income from a job that folded. At times God uses tragedy to bring us closer to Him. Whether Jairus would have sought out Jesus had not his daughter reached the point of death we can't tell,

but there's no question that, in the long run, a blessing was his through this tragedy. Salvation came to his home that day!

“So Jesus went with him, and a great multitude followed Him and thronged Him. Now a certain woman had a flow of blood for twelve years, and had suffered many things from many physicians. She had spent all that she had and was no better, but rather grew worse. When she heard about Jesus, she came behind Him in the crowds and touched His garment; for she said, ‘If only I may touch His clothes I shall be made well.’” Mark 5:24-28.

Another one seeking help that day was this poor woman who had suffered from her affliction since the daughter of Jairus had been born. For twelve long years she had endured not only the discomfort of the illness, but the cruel indictment, according to Jewish theology current at that time, that it was her own doing that had brought on the disease. She felt that God was punishing her for her sins. The weight of guilt was added to her burden of disease.

It was a very chauvinistic society into which Jesus was born. Do you know that there is only one woman in the entire Bible whose age at death is mentioned? Sarah, the wife of Abraham, lived to be 127 years of age. She's the only woman accorded that honor. When it came time for a census back in the Old Testament, it wasn't women and children who were counted. Leaving Egypt at the time of the Exodus there were about 600,000 men, besides women and children. Even in New Testament times, that practice still prevailed. At the feeding of the crowd when the 5 loaves and 2 fishes were multiplied, the count was 5,000 men “besides women and children.” Matthew 14:21. You might get the impression that women and children didn't “count” in their day!

Jesus saw no lines of distinction among the people. No lines based on skin color, gender, age, education or wealth existed in His mind. Every soul was precious! How interesting that this story features two, a woman and a child, who would have been among the ones that “didn't count.” See this lesson in the story: in God's way of thinking, everyone counts! You are important to Him! If you had been the only one in need of salvation, He would have sent His Son to die for your sins!

Somehow this lady believed that Christ could heal even her, though she was too modest to approach Him directly with her need. “If I can only touch the hem of His garment, I'll be healed.” What faith! If we would only believe, we would find that God is not far from us! If we would just exercise enough faith to reach out to Him, we would find that He has been trying to reach out for us all along!

The faith of this woman was rewarded by an instantaneous and complete healing. “And Jesus, immediately knowing in Himself that power had gone out of Him, turned around in the crowd and said, ‘Who touched My clothes?’” Jesus knew that divine virtue had been ministered for the healing of someone near. And so He asked, “Who touched Me.” This would not be the only time in this story that a comment made by Jesus would be misunderstood by those who heard. “But His disciples said to Him, ‘You see the multitude thronging You, and You said, “Who touched Me?””

The Bible makes it clear that the miracles performed through Christ were of the power of God ministered through the agency of the Holy Spirit. And yet the miracles were conducted “through” Christ. He “knew” (the word is in an emphatic form indicating He “knew completely or thoroughly”) that divine power had been ministered through Him benefiting someone.

“And He looked around to see her who had done this thing. But the woman, fearing and trembling, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth.” Doubtless this poor woman was moved into thinking she might have done something wrong or acted impulsively in her desire for healing and came before Him in fear, but she needn’t have worried. Christ was not going to rescind the blessing.

He called her forth for a couple of reasons. He wanted to make sure that there would be a clear understanding that it was not superstition that had brought healing. The hem of Christ’s garment did not contain a magic potion. It was her faith that brought healing. “And he said to her, ‘Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace, and be healed of your affliction.’” Jesus wanted her to know that she, although a woman afflicted with an ailment, counted. She had been noticed by Christ! A double blessing awaiting her; not merely the healing from her disease, but knowing that she mattered to the Master, knowing that He gave her not only healing of body, but of soul. A literal translation of what Jesus said would be, “Your faith has saved you.” The phrase “Go in peace” echoed in her mind the rest of her life. God had accepted her, a sinner, and she had found a Friend and Savior in Jesus. Do you have that peace in your heart today?

This interruption was the shining moment in the life of the afflicted lady, but served only to slow down the progress of the procession leading to the home of Jairus. “While He was still speaking, some came from the ruler of the synagogue’s house who said, ‘Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?’ As

soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, He said to the ruler of the synagogue, 'Do not be afraid; only believe.'"

Fear cannot exist in the atmosphere of faith. Darkness cannot exist when light is admitted. You may be in the darkest cave, but if a flashlight is turned on, darkness flees. In the same way, you may be trapped in the despondency of discouragement, with no apparent way of escape. Light can enter your heart if you look up in faith. Is not the God of the universe still on the throne? Is not the hand that guides planets and solar systems still reaching out to mankind? Has Jesus lost any of His power? Is anything too hard for the Lord? Did He not say when He left, "All power under heaven is given Me"?

Someday we'll look back and wonder why we ever doubted, why we remained in the shadows when the light of God's grace could have chased the gloom away? We'll wonder why we ever questioned His love and His ability to save! We'll see life through different eyes on the other side. Now, "through a glass darkly, then face to face." Are you imprisoned by fears and doubts right now? Christ's words are meant for you. "Do not be afraid; only believe." Soon the clouds will part. Soon the sky will split. Soon the chariot will come. Soon eternity will begin. This is not the time to lose confidence in God. He's coming soon to complete His great plan! "Do not be afraid; only believe." The trials and tribulations of our present life will seem so miniscule when we realize how close our God has been by our side. It does Him no honor for us to weary ourselves in worry and anxiety. He would have us delight ourselves in the magnitude of His ever-present help. Be encouraged! Look up! Be not afraid; only believe!

"And He permitted no one to follow Him except Peter, James, and John the brother of James. Then He came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and saw a tumult and those who wept and wailed loudly. When He came in, He said to them, 'why make this commotion and weep?'" It was considered mandatory for proper lamentation to be expressed by hired wailers at such occasions. A rabbi famous in ancient times, Rabbi Judah said, "Even the poorest man in Israel (for his wife's funeral) must provide no less than two flutes and one lamenting woman." Mishnah Kethuboth 4. 4, Soncino ed. of the Talmud, p. 266. Because He, as the Author of life, knew that soon this young maiden would live, all such wailing and lamenting was totally unnecessary and out of place.

"'The child is not dead but sleeping.' And they laughed Him to scorn." This is the second time in this story that what Jesus said was misunderstood. What He said is still being misunderstood by the world, and even the professed Christian world of

today. The teachings of the Bible are plain and simple. They can be grasped by anyone who sincerely desires to know the truth. When man disobeyed in the Garden, he was told that he would die and return to dust. Man returns to the earth at his death and rests unconsciously in the grave.

This we know from Scriptures of Old and New Testament. “For the living know that they shall die; but the dead know nothing.” Ecclesiastes 9:5. “But man dies and is laid away; indeed he breathes his last and where is he? As water disappears from the sea, and a river becomes parched and dries up, so man lies down and does not rise. Till the heavens are no more, they will not awake nor be roused from their sleep. Oh, that You would hide me in the grave, that You would conceal me until Your wrath is past, that You would appoint me a set time, and remember me! If a man dies, shall he live again? All the days of my hard service I will wait, till my change comes. You shall call, and I will answer You; You shall desire the work of Your hands.” Job 14:10-15.

Man’s state in death is that of being unconscious. “His sons come to honor, and he does not know it; they are brought low, and he does not perceive it.” Job 14:21. “Do not put your trust in princes, nor in a son of man, in whom there is no help. His spirit departs, he returns to his earth; in that very day his plans (“thoughts” KJV) perish.” Psalm 146:3, 4. It was the arch-deceiver of Eden who preached the first sermon on the immortality of the soul. “You shall not surely die,” was spoken by the serpent, but his words are echoed by the pulpits throughout the land. The influx and advancement of spiritualism in the media today is the result of a lack of knowledge of Bible truth on this subject. The teaching of the natural immortality of the soul and the nullification of God’s commandments are the two great principles upon which Satan will deceive multitudes.

The teaching of Christ, given in the plain and simple words of this story, is that the dead “sleep.” They go to neither heaven, nor hell nor purgatory but to the grave to await the voice of the Lifegiver. Satan wants this truth hidden, so that he can teach many false things about God and so that he can gain access through spiritualism to mislead the minds of humans. The Word of God is armor to those who read and believe its truths. The dead are “asleep,” waiting patiently and unconsciously the resurrection. Aside from some specially noted exceptions such as Moses, Enoch, Elijah and those brought back to life at the resurrection of Christ, all the dead (including David, the “man after God’s own heart;” see Acts 2:29, 34) are asleep in their dusty graves.

Those who accept Christ as their Savior can rest assured that He will bring them back to life. Therefore we do not “sorrow as others who have no hope.” I Thessalonians 4:13. While death is an enemy, the Christian has hope that he or she will see their departed loved one again. Oh, that we would have the “faith of Jesus” respecting the glad reunion of our sleeping loved ones!

“But when He had put them all out, He took the father and the mother of the child, and those who were with Him, and entered where the child was lying. Then He took the child by the hand, and said to her, ‘Talitha, cumi,’ which is translated, ‘Little girl, I say to you, arise.’ Immediately the girl arose and walked, for she was twelve years of age. And they were overcome with great amazement. But He commanded them strictly that no one should know it, and said that something should be given her to eat.”

What rejoicing in the home of Jairus! What rejoicing when this scene is enacted on a global scale when Jesus returns! Today, we need to see Jesus as a kind and loving Savior, who can heal our souls if we would just reach out and touch the hem of His garment by faith. We need to see Jesus as the omnipotent and live-giving Lord Who has authority over death and the grave; Who will come back soon and bring back from the land of the enemy those who have been asleep in their graves. We need to hear the simple but powerful words, “Your faith has made you well. Go in peace. Do not be afraid. Only believe.”