

Horton Haven Labor Day Retreat-08 Those for Whom Christ Died

by William MacDonald

The sermon emphasizes the immensity of our salvation, the significance of the human heart, and the benefits of being a child of God.

Duration: 38:45

Scripture: Psalm 8:3, Matthew 10:33, Acts 20:28

Topics: "Christ's Death"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the significance of Jesus' sacrifice on Calvary. He emphasizes the immense value of our redemption and the staggering reality that Jesus died for all of humanity. The preacher highlights the frailty and perishability of human life, comparing it to various fleeting and temporary things. Despite our insignificance, God chose to visit and redeem us through the shedding of Jesus' blood on the cross. The sermon concludes with the reminder that Jesus rose from the dead and offers eternal life to all who trust in Him as Savior.

Transcript

Beginning with verse 3, Psalm 8, verse 3. When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars which you have ordained, what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you visit him? For you have made him a little lower than the angels, and you have crowned him with glory and honor. If I could just paraphrase that just a little, I don't want to take liberties with the text, but what we're going to be thinking about this morning is, when I consider Calvary, the work which the Savior did there for me, the shedding of his blood on my behalf, what is man that thou art mindful of him, the son of man that thou visit him? Last night we were thinking about the immensity of our redemption. We felt our brains, as it were, pushing against the sides of our heads, trying to take it in.

What really happened that day, 2,000 years ago, on that cross outside the city of Jerusalem, generally in our minds we just think it was a man, we think of him as a man like ourselves, and he was dying there as a substitute for us. But last night we tried to remind ourselves that it wasn't just a man, it was the incarnate God who died there on Calvary's cross. We mentioned how we get used to the fact how it becomes routine to us.

We no longer gasp. We no longer weep when we think of it. We can be quite unemotional about it all.

But we did mention that every once in a while a flash of light does seem to come through. Some person realizes in a way he or she had never realized before what our salvation cost, the Son of God. And we suggested that four arresting facts take hold of that person.

First of all, who the Lord Jesus is. We've already discussed this. What he did for us, the persons for whom he did it, and the blessings that have flowed to us as a result.

Last night we talked about who he is and what he did there on Calvary's cross. And this morning I'd like to just carry on who we are, the persons for whom he did it. The whole drama of our redemption becomes even more staggering when we think of the people for whom the Lord Jesus died, the one whom he purchased with his own blood.

As we read in Acts 20, 28 last night. Of course, speaking about ourselves, the whole human race. First of all, we're very insignificant.

In the universe of the Hubble telescope, we're really microscopically tiny. In fact, there are no words that would really describe what we are. When you think of the Hubble telescope looking out into what seems to be endless space.

And you know, the planet on which we live, planet Earth, is not exactly the biggest thing in the universe, is it? It's really a speck of cosmic dust. Can you believe that? Earth, the Earth is a speck of cosmic dust in this universe. And if the Earth is that small, what am I? Well, I'm a microscopic midget on a speck of cosmic dust.

That's what I am, really. And that's what brought forth from the psalmist that breathless question, And not only are we insignificant, we're very frail creatures. We're not only minuscule, we're just made of nothing more substantial than dust and water.

Very important, are we? One day we're full of athletic strength, and the next day a non-filterable virus enters our system and we're as weak as water. We who were so strong yesterday, one moment we're able to cope with any problems that seem to arise, and the next day something comes crashing in on us and we're basket cases, emotionally. And not only are we frail, but we're perishable.

Perishable. Born but for one brief day. We're transient.

In the light of eternity, our life doesn't even register on the time scale. In the light of eternity. Our poets, that is the Bible poets, have likened life to a breath, a swift ship, an eagle's dive, a shadow, a hand breath, a sleep.

Life is like smoke, vapor, grass, flowers of the field, a weaver's shuttle. Virgin reduced our biography to two words, four words, sown, grown, blown. And not only are we perishable, but we're really not very nice people.

I think that's probably the understatement of the century. We're all sinners, and sin has affected every part of our being. Paul brings this out very graphically in Romans chapter 3, doesn't he? He gives an x-ray of the human person, and we see that we're totally sinful.

It's affected every part of our being. And although we haven't committed every sin in the book, we're capable of it, I want to tell you, it scares me when I think of the depth of depravity of my heart. And the

potential for evil that's there.

You know, I can be shocked by the behavior of others. I forget that I could be worse than they're doing. Worse than they're doing.

What I am is a lot worse than anything I've ever done. You know, that was the truth that really resulted ultimately in my salvation. Because I had lived a very sheltered life, a very secluded life.

I had never committed any of the generally considered sins. But when I was 18 years of age, the Lord came in by the Holy Spirit of God, and he showed me that what I was inside was a lot worse than anything I'd ever done. That made me in a hurry to get saved.

I knew that somebody like that could never go to heaven. Shortly after that, I bowed the knee and trusted the Lord Jesus. Our potential for evil is monstrous.

And that's why the prophet Jeremiah reminded us that the heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. There's no overstatement whatever. No one, no one of us ever realizes the depth of depravity of our personal heart.

And that's not all either. We're unclean. We're really unclean.

Bildad, one of Job's so-called comforters, he gave us the ultimate put-down when he argued that if, as far as God is concerned, the moon does not shine, the stars are not pure in his sight, he said, how much less man, who is a maggot, who is a son of man, who is a worm. That's in your Bible. Man, who is a maggot, who is a son of man, who is a worm.

Well, Isaiah was a little bit more delicate than that when he said that the inhabitants of the earth are like grasshoppers to him who sits above the circle of the earth. We're unclean. That's not all we're God-haters.

It's terrible when you think of it, isn't it? We're God-haters. This was the attitude of the unsaved heart of man. We said, depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of your ways.

It often made us uncomfortable to think about God. We were ashamed to talk about him. I noticed that when I get on the plane and take out my Bible and put it there on the little table in front of me.

People sitting next to you try to get as far away from it as possible. Why is that? Incidentally, if any of you do travel, I recommend that you do that. Every trip, take out your Bible.

Sometimes it does lead to a wonderful conversation. But in our unsaved state, we're ashamed to talk about the Lord. Ashamed of Jesus.

Can it be a mortal man ashamed of me? Ashamed of thee whom angels praise whose glory shines through endless days. Yes. Unsaved, we're only happy when we can forget him.

And only sad when we remember him. I tell you, our attitude was that no cosmic deity was ever going to run our lives. We saw ourselves in the words of Major Andre.

He said, against the God who built the sky, I fought with hands up that did not. Despise the mention of his place. Be proud to see a hiding place.

Not a very nice picture, isn't it? But that isn't all. We were murderers. We were murderers.

You never know the depth of depravity of the human heart when you stand before that place called Calvary. Look up that cross and watch man killing the Lord of Glory. That's exactly what happened.

The thought is absolutely overwhelming. It's breathtaking. It's unimaginable.

God comes to earth to rescue mankind. Man turns around and kills him. And as I said last night, while they're doing it, their very breath depends on him.

The very fact that they're alive depends on him. They're killing the Lord of Glory. But that was not the end.

What if he rose from the dead the third day and ascended back to heaven? And ever since then he's been offering eternal life as a free gift to all who would come and trust him as Savior. That's what grace means. God could have turned his back on the human race.

I'll tell you he could have. I must never allow the thought to enter my mind that somehow or other the Lord had to come and die for me. He could have stayed in heaven.

And he would have been as much God as ever. And there would be nobody here to accuse him of injustice. Instead of that, he chose to populate heaven with those who had spat in his face and nailed him to the cross.

This is what I talk about, the immensity of our salvation. Not only that, but we're murderers. We're forgetful.

If we constantly remembered that the Christ of Calvary is the God of eternity, we'd be lost in wonder, love, and praise. Fearful hearts could only be found in love's mysterious heat. It would be such an astonishment to us that we'd want to share it with everybody we met.

Sometimes you find a fanatic for Jesus and you think, well, he's a little bit odd, you know. He's not odd. He's a sane one.

We're the odd ones. I say we wouldn't want to talk about anybody else. It would bow us in worship, compel us in service, and motivate us in witness.

But we don't remember. We commit the awful sin of taking this for granted. And not only are we forgetful, we're unmoved.

We've lost the titanic wonder of it all. We've recited the scripture so often and so mechanically, they've lost their effect on us. They become dull for us.

And I want to tell you, the older we get, the harder it is to maintain the spiritual glory. It's something you have to fight all the time. Too often we have to ask ourselves, am I a stone and not a man that I can stand, O Lord, beneath thy cross and number drop by drop thy blood's slow loss, and yet not eat? There's something the matter with me.

Too often we have to admit, O wonder, to myself I am, thou living, loving, dying Lamb, that I can stand the mystery o'er and not be moved to love thee more. J. H. Jowett said something that I'd like to just quote him on. He marvels at our insensibility.

He wrote, we leave our places of worship and no deep and inexpressible wonder sits upon our faces. We can sing those lilting melodies, and when we go out into the streets, our faces are no different than the faces of those who've left the theatres and the music halls. There's nothing about us to suggest that we've been looking at anything stupendous and overwhelming.

And what is the explanation of the loss? Preeminently, our impoverished conception of God. I was speaking at an assembly not, well, some months ago now. And there's a young lawyer there, and he's really on fire for Jesus.

He's one of these fanatics I was talking about. And I was speaking about the wonder of Calvary's love. He came up to me after, he said, what did he say? When I walked down the aisle, after the meeting, he said, those people were talking about a football game.

He said, are they saved? Well, I can tell you that they're saved. They've just lost the wonder of it all. And we have to recapture the immensity of Calvary, the suffering Savior there on the cross of Calvary, the omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent Lord of Glory, God, manifested in the flesh.

It's so breathtaking, it's a wonder I can stand here and talk about it. Who he is, what he did, the people for whom he did it, and then the blessings that flow to us as a result of that. Some people wear a t-shirt that says on the back, this paid our game.

I like that. Have you seen that t-shirt? It shows a hand with a spike driven through it. It says, this paid our game.

Consider the incomparable benefits that flow to us through Christ. First of all, we're saved. That's wonderful.

I think when we think of that, when we think of our redemption, that's one of the first things we think about. We're saved from hell, from the lake of fire. It's fire that's unquenchable and everlasting.

Concerning the inhabitants of hell, the Lord Jesus said, In other words, their mental anguish and physical suffering are unending. Hell means separation from God, and I cannot think of anything worse than that. It's existence in the blackness of darkness forever.

It means to be in a place where there's no love. It means to be in a place where man still has all his sinful temptations, but he doesn't have the ability to fulfill them. That's hell.

And I want to tell you, dear friends, if the Lord Jesus had done nothing but deliver us from that fate, that would have been wonderful. He could have stopped there. He could have put a period in the sentence there.

But he didn't. Not only are we saved, we're forgiven. Our sins are forgiven.

That's wonderful. All of them. Christ paid the penalty.

God can righteously forgive us when we put our faith and trust in his Son as our Lord and Savior. Listen to what the Scripture says. Our sins are gone as far as the east is from the west.

That's good. Glad I didn't say north and south because I could measure that. As far as the east is from the west, buried in the sea of eternal forgetfulness, blotted out as a thick cloud, cast behind God's back, cast

into the depths of the sea, made white as snow.

God's forgiveness is so great that as he looks down, he can't find a single sin on William MacDonald with which to punish him with eternal death. Pretty good, isn't it? Not a single sin. As sinners, we receive judicial forgiveness the moment we trust Christ our Savior.

As believers, we receive parental forgiveness when we confess our sins. Good to remember that. There are two kinds of forgiveness in the New Testament.

The judicial forgiveness, that's the forgiveness of God the Judge. And I receive that judicial forgiveness when I put believing, some true believers. As a child in the family of God, I receive parental forgiveness when I confess my sins.

1 John 1. We're saved, we're forgiven, we receive eternal life. Eternal life is not the same as endless existence. Even the unsaved have endless existence, don't they? When you think of eternal life, don't just think of endless existence.

It's more than that. It's the life of Christ. Eternal life is the life of Christ.

It means that we receive a new quality of life. We become partakers of the divine nature. That doesn't mean we become God, as some TV preachers say today.

It doesn't mean that. We become partakers. In other words, a new nature is brought into us, and that explains the explosive effect of salvation in a human life.

It explains how this young fellow, he's on drugs, he's on liquor, he's burned out with sex and all the rest, and he gets saved and he's out preaching the gospel of redeeming grace today. You know, no psychology will ever explain that. It's the imprecation of a divine nature called eternal life.

All things become new. A new love of holiness, a new hatred of sin, a new love for one's fellow believers, a new desire to witness for Christ, a new freedom from the dominion of sin, a new life of righteousness, and a new desire to confess Christ. It's interesting, isn't it, when a person gets saved, he wants to confess Christ.

Interesting. He didn't want to before. An hour before, he didn't want to.

Not only that, we're accepted in the beloved. I think this is one of the great truths of the New Testament. As long as we were in our sins, we had no right to enter into the presence of God.

We were unclean, unholy, unworthy. Interesting. The moment we're born again, God sees us in Christ, and he accepts us in that age.

Our hymn says that so beautifully. God sees my Savior, and then he sees me in the beloved. Accepted and free.

As to our standing before God, we're just enveloped in Christ. God looks down and sees Jesus, and not me. A beggar can't enter a ruler's presence because he's unworthy.

But if somehow or other, the royal prince befriended him, the royal prince could take him in to see the ruler, couldn't he? And there the beggar doesn't go on his own merits, he goes in the person of the royal

prince. The Lord Jesus is our royal prince. He brings us into the presence of God, and we're absolutely qualified for that.

And then Paul tells us in Colossians that we're complete in Christ. That's a wonderful thing. Complete in Christ.

What does that mean? It means that the moment you have the Lord Jesus Christ, you're a citizen of heaven and God. Because you have Christ, you can't improve on him. It's really marvelous when you stop to think.

Who could have ever devised a plan of salvation like this? No man could have ever done it. That's why there are no degrees of fitness for heaven. A lot of people saved in this room this morning, but nobody's more fit for heaven than anybody else.

Why? Because if you have Christ, you have perfect fitness. And you can't improve on that. You can't improve on that.

The Lord Jesus is our fitness for heaven. I wish that were more commonly known in the Christian world. Because we have Christ, that the Father has made us fit to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in life.

And not only that, we're children of God. You know, we take this for granted. Children of God.

What a wonderful thing to be able to look up and call God your Father. We're born into the family of God. I tell you, no angel is as privileged as that.

This is something that's reserved for sinners, saved by grace. To be a child of God, a member of his family. I think it's marvelous when we study the starry universe, or even study the living cell, we can say, my father made it all.

And he did, too. My father made it all. I tell you, worldlings may boast of their ancestry.

Their relatives, their ancestors came over and they flower and all the rest. They're linked with the famous people of this world, or they're tied to the wealthy. But I'm going to tell you, all of these honors are toddly compared to being a child of God.

This was purchased for us at the cross of salvation. It becomes even more breathtaking where heirs of God in joint heirs with Jesus Christ. I don't think any of us know what that means today, fully.

Do you? Heirs of God in joint heirs with Jesus Christ. This means, hold your hat, all that God has is ours. That's what it means.

Apostle Paul says, all things are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's. When we think of that, when we think of all things are yours, we immediately think of things material. It's not just material things.

Paul explains the all things. He says, God's servants. You don't have to choose whether you like this creature better than this creature.

They're all yours if they belong to the Lord. He not only goes to that extent, but he says the world, life, death, things present or things to come, they're all yours. I think it's safe to say that our minds are

incapable of fathoming all that's included in being an heir of God.

I want to tell you the day is coming when we're going to enjoy fully when the inheritance is going to be ours. I want to tell you there's no Cinderella story like this one, from such rags to such riches. Isn't it wonderful that in devising a plan of salvation, the Lord had all of this in mind? He did.

Not only so, we're indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God. This really causes me to stand back in awe that the Holy Spirit of God, one of the persons of the Trinity, actually dwells in my human body. I tell you, if I just lived in the daily consciousness of that, it would make an improvement in my spiritual life, wouldn't it? It would really have a sanctifying influence on me.

He's there as a seal. He's there as a seal, marking me out as belonging to God. He's there as an earnest, as a down payment, guaranteeing me that just as surely as I have him, the whole inheritance is going to be mine someday.

He's there as the anointing. He enables me to distinguish between truth and error. And he's there as the helper, the comforter, the one who draws near in times of need.

He guides us, he prays for us, and produces a fruit of holiness in our lives. You may well ask, what good and needed ministry does the Holy Spirit not perform for us? Guy King said, Guy King, in one of his books, was going over some of these things. He said, what lucky beggars we are.

We know there's no luck in the family of God, but I like what he said just the same. What lucky beggars we are. Then we're the bride of Christ, members of the bride of Christ.

The church is the bride of Christ. And this speaks of the special love that he has for us. Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing.

Friends, this is marvelous, that one day we're going to be presented there in heaven, and not so much as a wrinkle, not so much as a birthmark, not so much as a blemish. Without spot, without blemish, is that final day. What has God brought? I want to tell you, to be a member of the bride of Christ is a greater honor than to be a member of any fraternity, sorority, organization that the world has to offer.

The church means more to God than all the nations of the world put together. Did you know that? I'll tell you why. Because the nations are a drop in the bucket to God.

That's what they are. That's what Isaiah says. Drop in the bucket.

Empty out the bucket, and there's a drop in there. Doesn't say that about the church. Doesn't say the church is a drop in the bucket.

No, it's the bride of Christ, the body of Christ. The fellowship of the excellence of the earth, all purchased for us by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Another blessing that flows to us, we're able to pray.

We're able to pray. We have constant access to the sovereign of the universe. I read recently in one of the news magazines that people who have to get to President Clinton quickly, if they want to write a letter, there's a special zip code.

And if they put that zip code on the letter, whenever that zip code, whenever that letter hits the mail room in the White House, it goes directly to the President. And there's a special phone, too. A special phone number.

If they want immediate access to the President, they have a special phone number. Dear friends, we've got something better than that. We don't need a zip code.

We don't need a special phone number. All we need to bow the knees, raise our hearts to the Lord, we have instant access day and night to him. We pray.

We don't realize what a wonderful thing we have. By faith we enter the sanctuary of God with our praise, our worship, our supplications, our thanksgiving, our intercessions. And we know that he answers every prayer.

He doesn't answer every one of mine. Yes, he does. If you're a child of God, God answers every prayer in exactly the same way you would answer it if you had his wisdom, love, and power.

To me, that's a wonderful encouragement in the life of prayer. God answers every prayer in exactly... You say, well, I didn't get what I wanted. No, his wisdom kept you from getting what you wanted.

His love kept you from getting it. He answered it. He answered it in the way that you would if you had his wisdom, love, and power.

And just remember, this privilege of prayer that you have was purchased for you when God incarnate dies in the cross again. You say, you've exhausted the subject. No, I haven't exhausted the subject.

I haven't even scratched it. But we have eternal, we will have eternal glory. Savior was not satisfied to save us from hell, but to give us prolonged existence on earth.

He could have done that. I think that's what would have happened to Adam if he hadn't sinned. He'd just have gone on living on earth until he did sin.

That's not fun. You had the sword of Damocles hanging over your head all the time. The fear that you'd make a botch of it all.

I don't want prolonged existence on earth. The Lord Jesus will not be fully satisfied in how I'm there in heaven in a resurrected body, just like his resurrected body, a glorified body. I'll be with him in heaven.

I wonder if Garvey wrote those wonderful words. And if it's so, I shall be like thy son. Is this the grace that he for me has won? Father of glory, part beyond all thought, in glory to his own blessed likeness.

Dear friends, after we've said all that, we haven't even scratched the surface of the blessings that flow to us from the cross. Paul sums it up in Ephesians 1. He says we're blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. We're blessed with every blessing that the wisdom of God has conceived us.

That's why. Blessed with every spiritual blessing that the wisdom of God has conceived. We're the most favored people on earth, in the universe.

The most favored people in the universe, and it's all because of Calvin. His change, our change. Now dear friends, we need to respond.

We need to respond. There's only one conclusion. When you think of all of these four wonderful things, four wonderful things, who he is, what he did, who we are, the blessings that have flowed to us as a result.

As we said last night, it has to be everything. God didn't put you and me down here just to make money. There's more to life than that.

The Savior didn't die for me so that I would just go on living my life. He didn't die for me so that I would live. He died for me so that I would live.

God doesn't want you and me to put away our lives in trivial pursuits. If I really believe what I've been talking about today, I will not be content to be a minor official in this frantic enterprise. I have to determine that love so amazing, so divine, will have my heart, my life, my all.

I want to tell you that if we really wake up to the truth of Calvary, it leads us down a one-way street that ends in total sinister. You say, Brother McDonald, I trusted Christ at my table years ago. You know what I'm talking about.

You can trust Christ at your table. You can turn your life over to the Lord Jesus for salvation. The question is, have you ever turned it over to Him for service? Have you ever got down on your knees and said, Lord Jesus, you bled and died for me.

Here is my life. I just disavow any plan, any ambition, any desires of mine. From this moment on, I want only to do what you want me to do.

As I say, it's possible to trust Him for salvation, be delivered from hell, but it's another thing to turn control of your life to Him. To say, O Christ, thy bleeding hands and feet, thy sacrifice for me, each wound, each tear demands my life and sacrifice for thee. I want to tell you, if some people from this conference would rise to the challenge and do that, and turn their lives over to the Lord for whatever He might have, they never can know what could be done.

You never know on the day you do that what wonderful things the Lord has in store for you. If He could say to you today, now look, I want you to sit down and think out the very best pattern, the very best blueprint for your life that you can think of. He can do better than that.

He can do better than the best you could think about. Because He has options that you don't know anything about. And God's way is the best way.

We're going to go on in our following meetings and talk about this whole subject of commitment in the Bible. A thread that runs through the whole Bible, the subject of commitment to Him. Shall we look to Him and pray? Father, we just think of the marvelous, tremendous, astonishing, staggering truths that we've been contemplating today.

And we realize that these things require a response sometimes. We pray that You'll give us grace, Lord, to turn the reins over to You. Turn control over to You.

Help us to give up our small ambitions, Lord. Step out in faith that You will do only what's best for us. We ask it of the Savior, Jesus.

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