

Rev. Janet Doyle  
Elmer Presbyterian Church  
Sunday, October 9, 2022  
Scripture: Psalm 91

## **Sermon: Rescue**

This past week has been life changing for many people dealing with Hurricane Ian. As of Tuesday, over 2,300 people have been rescued and over 100 animals. I watched a video of the Coast Guard rescuing people by having one of their men go down to the flooded areas from a helicopter, find stranded people, put them in a metal basket or cage and send them back up to the helicopter. Person after person rescued by so many trying to help and find those who survived the life-threatening hurricane. Many people didn't leave their homes and tried to wait out the storm that was beyond comprehension.

Those who have rescued people are amazing. It was so touching to watch the Coast Guard officer comfort those whom he met and tell them they were going to be okay. They were going to help them get to safety. He would ask them their name and then comfort and encourage them in their tragedy. He was a reassuring voice in the midst of the devastation around them. Their world flooded, blown away and gone. Each story involves a miraculous rescue of those trapped and alone.

The definition of rescuer is *a person who rescues you from harm or danger*. Synonyms are *deliverer or savior*. The word for Lifeguard and Savior in the Russian language is very similar.

When a lifeguard swims out to save a drowning person, the lifeguard is a rescuer, when a firefighter emerges from a burning house with a child, adult or a puppy, the firefighter is a rescuer. When you are rescued from the hurricane by the Coast Guard officer, they are a rescuer.

We read in Psalm 91:15 today, "When they call to me, I will answer them; when they are in trouble, I will be with them. I will rescue them and honor them."

Verses 1 to 13 are a dialogue between two people, and verses 14 to 16 are the very words of God. These verses describe in detail that God is ready to be our rescuer and we find refuge in him.

Verse 15 addresses the troubles and fears that come our way as human beings. As long as we live on this earth we will be confronted with various dangers and difficulties of life, which often fill our hearts and minds with apprehension about the future.

God's words of assurance tell us that he will be with us in the midst of all our troubles and will rescue us. Therefore, for those who trust in the Lord, there is no need to fear, because the Lord is our Deliverer, Savior, Rescuer.

The Bible is filled with examples of those who endured trials, trusted in the Lord and came through the storms of life stronger with their Rescuer by their side.

Every time we encounter difficult situations that are beyond our control, we too must learn to cry out to God. When we do so, God will have compassion and come to help us, just like the Coast Guard Officer came to rescue the people. The Lord wants to remove our fears and give us confidence to move forward in the midst of the storms. Those around us will marvel to see the wonders that he will do in our lives.

In their desperation, the Israelites cried out to the Lord and the Lord heard their cry and rescued them from the slavery in Egypt. The other week we talked about Joseph, that the Lord was always with Joseph, and rescued him from death to the service of the Lord. We read in Daniel 3 that the Lord walked with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, in the fiery furnace, because they refused to worship the King, and God rescued them. King Nebuchadnezzar had thrown the three men into the fire, but he saw four men, and the fourth one looked like the angel of the Lord. In Daniel 6:27 God rescued Daniel from the mouth of the lions and saved him.

The story of Peter walking to Jesus on the water in Matthew 14 reminds us that even in the midst of the storms Jesus reaches out his hand and rescues us. "Peter called to Jesus, 'Lord, if it's really you, tell me to come to you, walking on the water.' 'Yes, come,' Jesus said. So,

Peter went over the side of the boat and walked on the water toward Jesus. But when he saw the strong wind and the waves, he was terrified and began to sink. 'Save me, Lord!' he shouted. Jesus immediately reached out and grabbed him." Jesus rescued Peter from drowning.

Jesus said in Luke 19:10, "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." Jesus is our Rescuer. Jesus came to rescue those who were sick, those who were blind, those who were deaf, those who doubted who he was, those who were in darkness spiritually.

People followed Jesus because they wanted to receive mercy, forgiveness, grace and new life. People wanted to be rescued, people needed to be rescued. Jesus wants to continue to rescue people today that are stranded in hopelessness and in despair.

Jesus came to earth on a special rescue mission to save us. A rescue mission implies distress. The world was and continues to be in great distress and the only way to be rescued is believing in Jesus Christ; God in human flesh coming to us and saving us.

Jesus is our Lifeguard who is watching and waiting to save us. I don't think it is too difficult for us to admit that the world is in need of rescue. Our news each day tells us that. We have had more sickness and death and violence in the last few years. Everyone needs rescuing whether they realize it or not.

God saves all who look to Jesus lifted up on the cross and those who find the empty tomb and the risen Lord. The rescue operation is for you and for me.

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him will not die but have eternal life." (John 3:16)

A mother was reading Bible stories to her daughter. The Children's Bible she was reading from kept repeating certain key phrases and words over and over again. One of the keywords in the Bible was "rescue" or the phrase "One day God will send a better rescuer." The mother asked her daughter, "Who is the rescuer?" And

the daughter lit up and belted out “Jesus!” She was right. Jesus is our Rescuer.

Ask for God’s Rescue Mission in your life since we cannot help ourselves. We are rescued from death and darkness into life and light by knowing Jesus, the Rescuer. We are rescued by grace through faith by love.

God’s rescue of us is not the end of the story but just the beginning because we are rescued for a purpose. God is at work in your life changing your heart and your mind to be a disciple of change in the world. We all know deep down that we need to be rescued and then to make a difference in the world.

Jesus is able to rescue us because he took the divine judgment we all deserved. That’s what happened when Jesus died on the cross. He took the punishment we deserved.

The story behind the hymn “Amazing Grace” is truly a rescue story.

John Newton was on his ship the ***Greyhound***, which was a slave trading ship. It had been in a storm in the North Atlantic for over a week. Everyone had little hope of survival. On the eleventh day of the storm, John Newton was too exhausted, so he tied himself to the helm and tried to hold the ship to its course. With the storm raging fiercely, Newton had time to think. His life seemed as ruined and wrecked as the battered ship he was trying to steer through the storm. Since the age of eleven, he had lived a life at sea. Newton had a reputation for profanity and coarseness. He rejected his mother’s teachings about God. He was beyond hope and beyond saving, yet Newton’s thoughts began to turn to Christ. He found a New Testament and began to read. That day at the helm, March 21, 1748, was a day Newton remembered ever after, for “On that day the Lord sent from on high and delivered me out of deep waters.” Many years later, as an old man, Newton wrote in his diary of March 21, 1805: “Not well able to write, but I endeavor to observe the return of this day with humiliation, prayer, and praise.”

Only God's amazing grace could rescue a rude, profane, slave-trading sailor and transform him into a child of God. Newton never ceased to stand in awe of God's work in his life.

Ephesians 2:8-9 tells us, "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast."

John Newton was rescued by God and became a supporter and inspiration to William Wilberforce who led the fight to pass the British Slave Trade Act in 1807, which abolished the slave trade in England.

The hymn we are going to sing next, "**Love Lifted Me,**" was written by James Rowe in 1912. Rowe was inspired by the Bible story of the disciples in a boat in the middle of a frightening storm and Peter joined Jesus on the water walking towards him. Then Peter, starting to sink, calls out for Jesus to save him. The other story he thought of was when Jesus was asleep in the boat while the disciples were in a powerful storm thinking they were about to die. They woke Jesus and asked him to save them. Jesus rebukes the storm and rescues the disciples on the violent sea.

Rowe's hymn incorporates both stories, using sinking into the sea as an illustration for "sinking deep in sin...Sinking to rise no more." Jesus, "Master of the sea," hears our cry for help, reaches out in love to rescue us.

The last stanza of the hymn says, "Souls in danger, look above, Jesus completely saves, He will lift you by His love out of the angry waves; He's the Master of the sea, Billows His will obey; He your Savior wants to be, Be saved today. Love lifted me! Love lifted me! When nothing else could help, Love lifted me."

In Psalm 91:14-16 the Lord says to us, "*I will rescue those who love me. I will protect those who trust in my name. When they call on me, I will answer; I will be with them in trouble. I will rescue and honor them. I will reward them with a long life and give them my salvation.*"

Contemporary Christian Singer Lauren Daigle sings a song called "Rescue." It is a song where God is hearing our SOS call.

Listen to the words:

You are not hidden; There's never been a moment; you were forgotten; you are not hopeless though you have been broken; your innocence stolen. I hear you whisper underneath your breath; I hear your SOS, your SOS. I will send out an army to find you in the middle of the darkest night. It's true, I will rescue you. There is no distance that cannot be covered over and over. You're not defenseless. I'll be your shelter; I'll be your armor. It's true, I will rescue you and I will never stop marching to reach you in the middle of the hardest fight. It's true, I will rescue you. I hear you whisper underneath your breath, I hear your SOS, your SOS. It's true, I will rescue you."

Jesus is our Rescuer! He hears your SOS call! Grab hold of the life preserver and be rescued!