

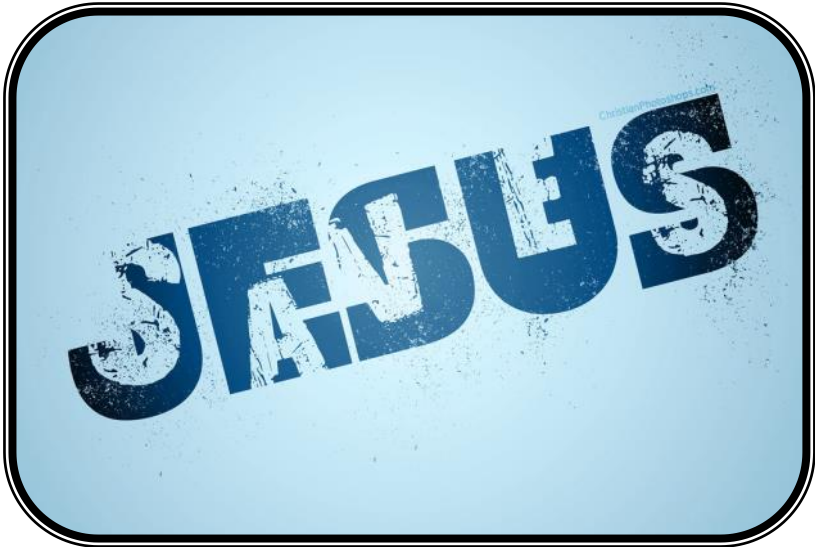
# Menifee United Church of Christ

Established in 1962 by God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit

## SERMON FOR

October 25, 2015

*“Jesus Saves You, This I Know”*



Reverend Bill Freeman: Senior Minister  
Eckart Seeber: Music Minister  
Marie Paulus-Nyquist: Children's Minister  
Chuck Otto: Lay Reader

## ***Menifee United Church of Christ***

*Sunday Service and Sunday School 10 AM*

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***Live Life Fully Alive!***

### **Job 42:10-13**

*And the Lord restored the fortunes of Job when he had prayed for his friends; and the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before. Then there came to him all his brothers and sisters and all who had known him before, and they ate bread with him in his house; they showed him sympathy and comforted him for all the evil that the Lord had brought upon him; and each of them gave him a piece of money and a gold ring. The Lord blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning; and he had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand donkeys. He also had seven sons and three daughters. Furthermore, the former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office; but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. Consequently he is able for all time to save those who approach God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.*

### **Hebrews 7:23-28**

*For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, blameless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. Unlike the other high priests, he has no need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for those of the people; this he did once for all when he offered himself. For the law appoints as high priests those who are subject to weakness, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect for ever.*

### ***Jesus Saves You, This I Know***

Jesus and Satan were arguing about who was better on the computer. Finally, God had had enough. God said, "I'm putting

you two to the test. You each have one hour to show me what you can do on the computer.” So Jesus and Satan sat down at their keyboards and started typing away. When the hour was almost up, a storm formed outside, lightning struck the building they were in, and the power went out. When the power came back on a minute later, Satan said, “Oh no! I’ve lost everything I wrote!” Meanwhile, Jesus printed out what he’d been working on: The Sermon On The Mount. Satan said, “That’s not fair. He cheated. How’d he manage to print all that?!” God said, “Well, Jesus saves.”

Jesus saves. Each one of us probably interprets that phrase differently. To some it has to do with a joke. To others it has to do with life in this world. And to still others it has to do with life in the world to come.

Oprah did a show once, more than once I think, several years ago, on the topic of near-death experiences. One of the guests said he was a life-long atheist. But then he had a near-death experience. He seemingly died, left his body, and he said he felt like he was heading to a bad place, perhaps Hell. So then this life-long atheist thought or yelled out, “Jesus!” Then he said he immediately went to Heaven, at least for a little while, before returning to his body. So, Jesus saves people in the hereafter.

Do you believe that Jesus saves you? Do you believe that Jesus will save you in the hereafter? Do you believe that Jesus saves you in the here and now?

The late William Sloane Coffin, the one-time chaplain at Yale and the former Senior Minister at Riverside Church in New York City, believed that “Jesus saves.” William Sloane Coffin said, “If you ask me if Jesus literally raised Lazarus from the dead,

literally walked on water, and (literally) changed water into wine, I will answer, 'For certain, I do not know.' But...I have seen Jesus change...sinners into saints, (change) hate-filled relations into loving ones, (and change) cowardice into courage." So, Jesus saves people in the here and now, too.

Jesus is our brother. Jesus calls us his brothers and sisters. And while each of us may have Guardian Angels, I believe that Jesus is our Super Guardian Angel. He's got our back. He's got our front. He's got our sides. He's got above us. And he's got below us. We've got nothing to fear because Jesus saves us. Always. And forever.

Blind Bartimaeus heard that Jesus was walking by, according to the Gospel of Mark. So Bartimaeus shouted, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" Then Jesus said to those around him, "Call him here." And they did so. Then Bartimaeus threw off his cloak, sprang up, and came to Jesus. Then Jesus said to him, "What do you want me to do for you?" The blind man said to him, "Let me see again." Jesus said, "Your faith has made you well." Immediately Bartimaeus regained his sight and followed Jesus. So Jesus saves people from a life of physical blindness. And Jesus saves people from a life of spiritual blindness, too.

It's good to wander. Maybe not blindly. But it's good to wander and to wonder. But it's not good to be aimless and confused. Jesus saves you from aimlessness and confusion. Jesus saves you from despair. Jesus saves you from fear. And Jesus saves you from hopelessness. Jesus gives you faith now and for the future. Jesus gives you hope now and for the future. Jesus gives you love now and for the future. And Jesus gives you joy now and for the future.

The story of Job is problematic. God and Satan have a bet about just how devout Job is? So God gives Satan permission to test Job's faith by taking away many of his loved ones and his livestock? But then, just as you're scratching your head, wondering why God would allow this to happen, according to the book of Job, "the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before." More loved ones and more livestock. So God did that, and since God and Jesus are one, we could say that Jesus did that, too. So Jesus saved Job from a life of misery. And Jesus has saved countless others from a life of misery, too.

I do believe that Jesus saves you. And I do believe that God saves you, too. After all, you have a finite number of paths to God, but God has an infinite number of paths to you. And remember: God is a Supreme Being, not a supreme bully. God did not create you to hate you, but to love you.

Jesus saves people "who approach God through him," according to the book of Hebrews. So, Jesus is like our advocate, our mediator, our go-between with God. Hebrews also says Jesus can do this because he "has been made perfect forever." So, Jesus saves people forever.

So, is Jesus the only advocate, the only mediator, the only go-between people have to God? Well, this is a United Church of Christ church, so you're free to believe what you want to believe about that. And I'm a United Church of Christ minister, so I'm free to believe what I want to believe about that, too. And I believe that Jesus saves people. And I believe that Muhammad saves people. And I believe that the Buddha saves people. And I believe that all religious leaders save people.

When I was called to this church a year-and-a-half ago, I was called to be a progressive presence in this church and in this community. For the past 10 years, I've committed my ministry to being a progressive voice for women, gays, the poor, immigrants, and people of color. And I believe that's what Jesus wants me to be and wants this church to be: A progressive voice crying in the wilderness of Menifee. This church is a progressive church that does not always take the Bible literally, but always takes the Bible lovingly, the way Jesus did. This church is a progressive church that works for social justice, the way Jesus did. And this church is a progressive church, that cares more about people than about money, the way Jesus did.

Jesus loves this church. And Jesus has saved this church for 53 years.

The woman who lives next door to Kathleen and me has a beautiful rose bush in her front yard. She pruned it a few weeks ago and it looked terrible back then. But now that rose bush has come back stronger, healthier, and more vibrant than ever. That's what pruning does, it reduces the size of something, like a rose bush, so it can come back stronger, healthier, and more vibrant than ever.

Jesus is saving our church by pruning it, reducing its size, making it smaller, so it can come back stronger, healthier, and more vibrant than ever. As Jesus says, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. God removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit God prunes to make it bear more fruit." I believe this church will bear more fruit in the coming year, because I believe Jesus saves.

Jesus saves you, this I know, by showing you the way. The way to move beyond the physical to the spiritual. The way to move beyond the secular to the sacred. And the way to move beyond the natural to the supernatural. You can achieve all that by spending time alone, the way Jesus did in the wilderness, communing with God. You can achieve all that by spending time enlightening others, the way Jesus did throughout his ministry, spreading the Good News of faith, hope, love, and joy in the kingdom of God. And you can achieve all that by spending time helping others, the way Jesus did wherever he went, being the hands and feet of God. On earth as it is in heaven.

So, what do we do when Jesus saves us? Hopefully we save others. Like the other night, when a young couple came to this church looking for food. And we gave them a bag of food from our Food Pantry. And we gave them a blanket from our Clothing Closet. Jesus saves. And so does Menifee United Church of Christ. And I'll bet you do, too.

It's like what Teddy Roosevelt said, "Do what you can, with what you have, where you are." Who could ask more of us than that?

Let us pray...

*God of Love,*

*Help us to know that Jesus saves us.*

*Help us to know that Jesus saves everyone.*

*And help us to know that we can save people, too.*

*Now and forevermore.*

*By the power of the Holy Spirit.*

*And in the name of Jesus.*

*Amen.*

## THE GOLDEN RULE

*Do to others what you would  
have them do to you.*

Christianity

*What is hateful to you  
do not do to others.*

Judaism

*None of you believes until he wishes for his  
brother what he wishes for himself.*

Islam

*Do not do to others  
what would cause pain if done to you.*

Hinduism

*Hurt not others in ways that you yourself  
would find hurtful.*

Buddism

*Regard your neighbor's gain as your gain,  
and your neighbor's loss as your loss.*

Taoism

*Do not do to others  
what you do not want them to do to you.*

Confucianism

*Treat other people  
as you'd want to be treated in their situation.*

Humanism