

## **Sermon Notes for Easter VII C 2010**

### **My lords, said the jailer, what must I do to be saved?**

There is a question for the ages, what must I do to be saved?

It cries out for universal application, but first let us hear it in its context.

### **What a strange and powerful story this is, of Paul and Silas in Phillipi.**

There was a slave woman, seized by demons, who spoke the truth about Paul.

He got annoyed with her pronouncement.

Cast out the demons.

Which irritated her owners, who were profiting from her possession.

So they dragged Paul and Silas into court.

Got them flogged and thrown in jail.

The Lord liberated them by an earthquake.

But they did not run out.

Good thing for the jailer, who was prepared to take his own life.

Rather than die for his inability to keep the prisoners down.

### **His question to Paul and Silas has an obvious first meaning to many Christians.**

What must I do to be saved? means what must I do to get to heaven?

But not so fast; this is a man with a knife to his throat.

He was thinking also; what must I do to be saved from the wrath of the Romans?

How can I be saved from disgrace and failure and punishment and from everlasting death?

### **Paul's answer would reach him on both levels; for this world and the next.**

Believe on the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, you and your whole family.

Faith in Jesus is enough, for you and everybody you love, for this world and the next.

Faith in Jesus gives you a new family in this world; a new home in the next.

### **I have been talking with a young man recently about salvation.**

If you have been with us for the last month or so, you are wondering:

Who is Sittichock Weerapunyanont?

He is the Thai terror of lay readers.

I have heard his name pronounced 9 ways in the last three Sundays.

An exchange student living with the Woodiwiss family.

Living with them, he has come to the fullness of faith and desires to be baptized.

We will do so today.

### **We have spent some time together in preparation.**

And he has asked, "What must I do to be saved?"

He pointed me to the story of the rich young man in the Gospel of Luke.

Who of course came asking Jesus that question.

Whom Jesus told to go and sell all that he had and to give the money to the poor.  
Sum asked, must I sell that I have and give the money to the poor in order to be saved?  
Ashley and I looked sheepish. Oh, no. You are taking this far too literally.  
Though Christians in every generation have followed this commandment;  
We admitted that the worship of wealth and financial security are still God's greatest rival.  
Maybe you should sell all that you have in order to be saved.

**He held up to me on another occasion Jesus' hard words that one must hate father, mother, sister, and brother, even life itself, in order to follow him.**

Must I hate my family in order to be saved?  
Ashley and I looked sheepish. Oh, no. You are taking this far too literally.  
You have to understand metaphor and symbolic language.  
But still, we told him, loyalty to Jesus is ultimate.  
If your family were committed to a way that is not Jesus', well, you might have to choose.  
You might have to turn your back on all whom you love, in order to be saved.

**A striking thing to be with Sum, reading the Gospels with fresh eyes, as he asked the jailer's question.**

Many of us were baptized as small children.  
We have not had occasion to ask the question; much was done for us.  
We may not be worried about what it takes to be saved.

**In our lack of anxiety is a kernel of truth.**

We don't have to do anything to be saved.  
Faith is not an accomplishment or an act.  
It is the free gift of God to all who call out to him in Jesus.  
We are saved not by our actions or personal characteristics.  
We are saved by the grace of God known in Jesus Christ.  
Believe on the Lord Jesus and you will be saved.

**If you believe, of course, God will take hold of your life.**

And wondrous things will happen.  
You'll find that you are nurtured by the scriptures and the breaking of bread.  
You'll find new energy to resist evil and repent when you are unable.  
You'll see that your life begins to take on a Gospel-shape, that others see Christ in you.  
And you will see Christ in those whom God sends into your life as well.  
And you'll do your best to plant seeds of the Kingdom of God all around.

**A Christian life of those dimensions is not what we do to be saved.**

But it is what we do because we are saved.  
A life of holiness and mercy is the only response to the gracious initiative of God in Christ  
Jesus.

**Today as Sum dies with Christ and lives again with him, we have another opportunity.**

A chance to ask ourselves what we must do to be saved.

And again to hear the Holy Spirit speaking through blessed Paul.

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ;

Turn to him; accept him as savior and Lord.

Die with him in these waters and then live the wonderful new life that he has given you.

**Salvation is in the hands of God, who so much desires to share it with you.**