

Sermon: *Washing Away the Junk*  
Text: *John 14:1-14*  
Date: *April 20, 2008*  
Place: *Jesup First UMC*

A man was tucking his son into bed one night and pointed at the boy's chest and said: "*Chris, do you know what you have in there?*" The boy said: "*My guts?*" He said: "*No, you have a piece of God.*" The Boy said: "*God is in my guts?*" The dad said: "*No, we have a piece of God inside us.*" The boy said: "*Do you have a piece of God? ... Does mama have a piece of God? ... Does Matty have a piece of God?*" And his dad said: "*Yes, Matty has a piece of God inside of him too.*" The boy said: "*No sir, daddy. I've been with him a lot, and if he has a piece of God in him, it must be covered up with a lot of junk.*"

That's our problem, isn't it? Our goodness – to whatever extent it exists – and that spark of godliness, is all covered up with a lot of junk. That's not how we were created. We were created in the image of God, designed to live in communion with God and one another. But Adam and Eve disobeyed God! And through that one act of disobedience, sin entered the whole world. Paul told the Church at Rome that we were all born into sin. It's part of who we are; it is built into our DNA. So, King David said: "*I was born guilty, a sinner when my mother conceived me.*"

Now, there are really two results of this sinfulness: first, we are physically and spiritually alienated from God; the intimacy that Adam and Eve shared with God has been lost. And the second result of our sinfulness is: we are spiritually dead. Romans 5:12 says: "*Therefore, just as sin came into the*

*world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned.*

But the Bible says we don't have to remain alienated from God and we don't have to remain dead in our trespasses and sin. We can be made alive in Christ and we can share intimate fellowship with God because "*God was in Christ Jesus reconciling the world to Himself.*" Jesus came and suffered and died to make us an offer that we cannot refuse, the offer of salvation.

Now, the Church talks about salvation. Paul said: "*God does not desire that anyone should perish but that all might be saved.*" But what does salvation mean? What does it mean to be saved? Let me share a few things with you this morning.

#### **1. SALVATION IS A TURNING TOWARD GOD.**

Now, before you and me could turn from our sins and turn to God, God first turned toward us. Paul said: "*God proved His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*" When Adam and Eve sinned against God, they didn't go looking for God; God came looking for them. And He came looking for us too! You see, our lives are so broken, so alienated from God that if God hadn't taken the initiative, we would never turn to Him. Our turning to God is not something we do; it is something that God's grace enables us to do.

And so, God in His Prevenient Grace turns towards us, calling us, wooing us to Himself, and then, God's grace enables us to turn to Him. Now,

this is critical, because Jesus said: *“I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except by me.”*

***He is the Way, the only road that leads to God.*** To find the Way is to find the only path to the Father and to walk with Him through along the Christian journey. To reject the Way is to wander and meander through life without meaning, without direction, and without hope.

***He is the Truth, the ultimate reality.*** Everything else seems false and phony compared to knowing Him. That’s why Paul was able to say, *“Whatever I had gained, I count as loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Him and being found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own ... but having the righteousness which comes by faith.”* And to reject Him is to live life as a lie.

***He is the Life.*** To know Him is to truly live, to live a life that is abundant and eternal. And to reject Him is to reject life, to remain dead in our trespasses and sins and alienated from God.

But we have turned to God. And when we woke up in life’s pig pin and decided to go home, we found God running toward us with open arms. And He takes us into His arms, puts a robe on our backs, and shoes on our feet, and a ring on our finger and says, “Let’s have a party for my child who was lost has been found.” That’s salvation!

Salvation is turning to God.

## **2. Salvation is turning to the Church.**

Like I said last Sunday: there's nothing on earth greater than the Church. Even at its weakest, the Church has done more good and has accomplished more in this world than anything else. The Church is the Body of Christ; it is the Body and He is its Head. And so, to turn to God, or to turn to Christ, is to turn to the Church. To abide in Him is to abide in His community. To love Him is to love His bride, the Church.

Now, there are some in our culture who say things like: "*You know, I'm okay with Jesus; it's the Church I can do without.*" And Church attendance continues to drop all across the country. More people are getting their spiritual enrichment from the television, or the radio, or by the Internet than from the local Church. But listen, turning to Jesus without turning to His Church is like saying: "*You know, Tucker, I love you, but it's your wife I can't stand.*" Listen, that's fighting words as far as I'm concerned.

And I believe they are fighting words for Jesus too. Jesus loves the Church. In Ephesians, Paul says, "*Christ loved the Church and gave Himself to make her holy.*" And Jesus wants us to love the Church too and to give ourselves to it. And when we turn toward the Church, we take vows to God and to one another to be faithful to the Church and uphold it with our prayers, our presence, our gifts, and our service. That's what it means to turn to the Church.

Salvation is turning to the Church.

### **3. Salvation is turning to the world.**

When we turn to God and to His Church, it is only natural that we turn toward the world too. You see, God loves the world. John 3:16 says: “God loves the world so much that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him might not perish but have everlasting life.” And God expects us to care about the world as much as He does. He wants us to be moved with compassion when we see the lost and the hurting, the hungry and the naked.

You see, that’s part of what it means to be indwelt by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit comes to live within us to empower us to live the Christian life and to empower us and equip us for ministry in the world. Jesus said: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in Judea and Samaria, and to the utter most parts of the world.” So, every day, when we leave our homes and go out into this community, we are being sent out to make a difference in the lives of others, to bring people into God’s Kingdom. That’s what it means to turn to the world.

Salvation is turning to the world.

Now, we have been given a beautiful symbol of our salvation. In baptism, we see a beautiful symbol of what it means to turn to God, to turn to the Church, and to turn to the world. Listen to our Baptism liturgy: “*Through the sacrament of baptism, we are incorporated into God’s mighty acts of salvation,*” that’s turning toward Jesus, the way the truth and the life. “*We are initiated into Christ’s holy Church,*” that’s turning toward the Church. “*We are incorporated by the Holy Spirit into*

*God's new creation and made to share in Christ's royal priesthood,"* that's turning toward the world.

Today, I urge you to remember your baptism and give thanks to God.