



Cell phones are great. But they don't always work as advertised. The commercials talk about how great their network coverage is. They talk about how many subscribers they have. They do everything to convince you to join their network. But most of us know how that is when you are off the beaten path. Even many parts of the Beeline don't have coverage for every user. You look at the coverage map and realize there are spotty or gray areas. What if you want coverage to make calls down the forest roads and between the tall mountain passes? For that there's a satellite phone. But then is it worth it if offers a slower connection which costs a dollar per minute? Wouldn't it be nice to have an easy solution? Today we hear an invitation to join something far greater than a phone network. In our struggle against sin and temptation we run into many valleys and dark places. It seems like there is no one-cure-fits-all solution. But we see God saying to us, "I've got you covered. Turn to me." The past five weeks we've been **going through a series for Lent on the theme "fighting temptation."** We've looked at the dangers we face as we struggle against sin and the amazing response of our God who fights for us. In every part of the series we've seen that our fight against temptation means turning to the Lord for the victory. Today we finish our series. We'll close by looking at God's invitation to turn to him. We'll see just what type of invitation he gives for us to turn to him.

God begins with his track-record. When the people of Israel had turned aside from him to other gods, they found it ended up with complete failure. They **had already fallen flat on their faces**. The Assyrians attacked their land and threatened their destruction. God had already foretold this long ago. He could have just said to them "See, I told you so" and let them suffer in shame. But it wasn't over yet. Isaiah warned that more destruction was going to come. The Assyrians hadn't taken the city of Jerusalem, but soon enough the Babylonians would come and destroy Jerusalem. They would destroy the temple. They would take many off into exile away from Jerusalem. The false gods they took to were going to fail them. **God told them so.**

But he gave more than just warning. **He invited them to turn back to him. Then they would enjoy his rescue.** He promised that although Jerusalem would be destroyed, it would be restored. The foreign king of what was a not-so-grand empire in Isaiah's day would come and overthrow the great Babylonian empire. We read in Isaiah 45 of such a rescue and deliverance from God. He even names the man who would do it in the future: King Cyrus. But this wasn't Cyrus' doing! **God foretold it long before** it happened, even calling Cyrus by name! It was as if God is saying "Wait for it! There's going to be a really big rescue coming. Pay attention, I told you this problem and its rescue was coming! I called Cyrus by name. When he comes, you're gonna know I was right!" The verse before our reading in Isaiah 45 says: *Who foretold this long ago, who declared it from the distant past? Was it not I, the LORD?*

But what is so amazing about God's invitation here is that it includes us. "Turn to me... all you ends of the earth." He didn't just rescue Israel from Babylon so that they could return and know he is a faithful God who always speaks the truth. He did it so that all nations and people, including us, might know he is faithful and true. On the basis of this he calls us to trust in him. I'm sure some of you have seen those commercials for the wireless companies. They like to show maps that display where their coverage extends. Or they like to brag about how many users are on their wireless company's network. "Use us and you'll always have coverage wherever you go!" They invite you to join them based on their credentials of being able to provide services and coverage. **God's invitation?** "Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God and there is no other." It's as if God is saying, "You want to know what kind of coverage I got? All the ends of the earth. There isn't a single inch on any map that I don't have covered." One could ask, "Even in the heart of Buddhist filled lands?" "That's covered only by my company," God says. "What about those countless lands controlled by Islam?" "Unlike anyone else," God says, "I've got all that covered." "What about my neighbor across the street who doesn't regularly attend church? Is God's rescue for her too?" Yes! You see God can send the invitation to join his coverage in a way no wireless network can. He has a **monopoly on the business** of divine rescue. Not only does he cover all the earth, but there simply is no other coverage. *"I am God there is no other!"*

There are no other competing invitations, only scams. All other claims to deliver, all other claims to the business of divine rescue have failed and will fail. But when the Word of the LORD says "Turn, and be saved by me, all the ends of the earth." We know that word cannot fail. It is greater than the guarantee of a major cellular network company, greater than a man who claims to have received divine revelation outside of the Bible, greater than all the powers of Satan and every evil. The Word of GOD, his promise of deliverance will not fail. The reason he mentions Cyrus by name hundreds of years ahead of time is so that we might know his Word never fails.

And God attaches his guarantee to his promise of divine coverage: *By myself I have sworn, my mouth has uttered in all integrity a word that will not be revoked:* When God speaks, when he promises, his words don't return back to him unfulfilled. When he promised the people of Israel that Cyrus would deliver them from Babylon, that promise was carried out in history. As are all of God's Words and promises. He alone always fulfills his word. It's guaranteed by the Lord.

Does our trust in the Lord always reflect confidence in his claims? We may hear God say, "Don't worry about tomorrow, we are more valuable to him than anything" but when the pressure hits, we worry "How is God going to get me through this?" When we hear God say to his disciples, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted." We might wonder during

that time of mourning, “Is this what you said I get God?” And when we suffer as God’s people his promises to his people seem so far off. How do you think the exiled people of Jerusalem felt even when they had God’s promise of restoration? They mourned what felt like the loss of divine coverage and rescue. “By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion.” (Psalm 137:1)

There are times when the Christian will hit a dark valley and wonder if God has them covered with his rescue plan. Where is God’s rescue when you feel like the suffering has no end? Where is his coverage when your prayers seem to fall on deaf ears? Where do we sometimes feel tempted to turn when life brings us into a dark valley? Many are tempted to buy into the lies that substance abuse can heal us. It can’t. It will not remove the darkness, only make it cloudy and more dangerous. Others turn to sexual sins hoping that a new relationship -which is not based on a good relationship with the Lord- can help them. It can’t. Their partner is just as sinful as they are and just as lost without the Lord. Still others believe they can help themselves -until the worries of life loom over them like a mountain and they realize they are cut off from all help and are alone. Don’t we do the same when we struggle against sin and evil but decide to handle it ourselves instead of taking it to the Lord? Who are we turning to for help when we tackle life’s struggles by ourselves?

The author of the world’s history tells us how it will all end. In the end all will acknowledge him and must say that in the LORD alone is divine rescue! God says, “Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear.” ²⁴They will say of me, ‘In the LORD alone are righteousness and strength.’” All who have raged against him will come to him and be put to shame. Even those who rebel and turn not to him but away from the LORD will be forced to bend their knees in submission before him. On the last day, Scripture says, all the dead will be raised. And it will be that the LORD will be seen by all, and all will bow before him as the only God. Those who turned to other sources of help, who did refuse him, will be put to shame. They will not be honoring him as LORD in joy but trembling in fear and disgrace. Their Judge will say, “I told you so.”

But that promise of deliverance will not fail for those who trust him. When the LORD comes, we will all bend our knees before him to honor him as our deliverer. We will rightly say, “**In the LORD alone are righteousness and strength.**”

The word for **righteousness** here in Hebrew is actually what we would literally translate into English as “Righteousness-es” meaning all his righteous acts. He delivered the people of Israel from captivity. Just as he had delivered so many in the past through victory in battle, through the crossing of seas, and through his working. All these acts of deliverance were to prepare the nation of Israel and the world for his great act of deliverance.

Jesus entered the city of Jerusalem to carry out that greatest act of rescue. That man on a beast, Jesus our LORD, came “in the name of the LORD.” In him alone was the way to rescue. As he came riding into Jerusalem that great procession of honor to the King began. The descendants of Israel shouted, “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!”

But **where was the rescue plan** when this king was beaten? Where was the rescue plan when this king was made to carry his cross and then hang on it in shame and loss? God’s Word had not failed. In fact his Word foretold all this. He foretold it like no other ever could have. In the LORD alone, and by his working our rescue was accomplished –just as he told us! Jesus entered the city of Jerusalem to carry out just what God had foretold long before. Just what Jesus himself said would take place: *The Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.* That death he would face on the cross, and that blood he would shed would remove the sin and shame of the world. Those who relied on him will *never be put to shame.* God said ahead of time this suffering would take place for his Son. “*Who foretold this long ago, who declared it from the distant past? Was it not the LORD?*”

“All the ends of the earth” can now turn to Jesus and be saved from sin, from the curse of sin and its guilt. All the ends of the earth find rescue not just from not exile in a foreign land, but eternal torment. Jesus came that “everyone” who believes might receive this rescue won for the entire world.

The descendants of Israel, all who believe the trustworthy and unfailing word of the LORD, are saved. You, by God’s working are those who join in this holy nation rescued by God. You join the procession here as we gather to proclaim “Hosanna, Hosanna, Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is he! Blessed is he! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD! Hosanna! Hosanna! Hosanna in the highest!”

And we continue in the LORD alone, until we see him, and we bow down and exalt him. Because **that procession which began on Palm Sunday will continue until he returns to bring us to the eternal Jerusalem.** Then with knees bowed every tongue will proclaim “In the LORD alone are righteousness and strength.” In the LORD all believers will be found righteous. They will be rescued from *all* their troubles. Turning to Jesus as we will receive his righteousness and no longer be doomed to death, crying, or pain. Jerusalem will be completely restored. Not a mere city on earth, but one that includes all those who through faith turned to the LORD alone for rescue. -- that includes you and all believers of all time from all the ends of the earth.

And you and all believers in seeing our LORD coming again will join that song that the children and people sang to their LORD as he entered Jerusalem, “Hosanna! Blessed is the king of Israel!” And at the end of that great procession will not be a cross, but a crown and an eternal throne of glory, a feast with our king. Then the king who died and who rose again will say to you who turned to him in all your troubles, “See, I told you so! I’ve got you covered.”