

It's Pretty Clear John 10:1-10

Are you saved?



As a Presbyterian, when I see those billboards  
I'm not one to dwell on them.

We are not as particular  
as some of our brothers and sisters of the faith  
when it comes to knowing  
the exact date and time of our salvation.

I had a friend in college  
who celebrated two birthdays;  
one her biological birthday  
and the other was the day she was saved.  
The cake-loving part of me thinks that is genius.

We southerners are very familiar  
with the question, *are you saved?*  
Some of us may have grown up in traditions  
where you may have been charged  
with asking others that very question.  
Maybe you've left a salvation tract in gas station  
or prayed **the prayer** with someone  
at just the right moment.  
But it seems that this notion of being saved,  
as it is usually presented  
has more to do with **our personal decision,**  
**and our sense of eternal destiny.**



It seems to put the act of saving  
in the past rather than in our present.  
The decision is ours

rather than God's.  
You've heard the folks who would answer,  
*are you saved*, by saying,  
Yes, 2000 yrs ago.  
We can pick and pull and find verses  
that are easily interpreted to say  
that being saved is key to the Christian life.  
That in Christ there is a salvation.  
I believe both of those things.  
But if being saved  
means naming that one moment in the past,  
then I'm not sure I can find that one moment.

But if you asked me  
when have I experience God's salvation  
—now that I could be a lot more concrete about.  
That, it turns out, has come to me several times;  
I bet you could name some too--  
those moments when Christ  
was working in our lives  
to bring God's work to the forefront;  
  
the moments when good was worked out  
even though it may have been hard;  
when death and decay and bondage  
might have surrounded us  
but then Jesus showed up  
in a person or situation  
offering freedom and new life.

Salvation, as on going,  
I can be a lot more concrete about.



And speaking of concrete

I have found **the verse**.  
You know what I'm talking about.  
Like the key that would open every door,  
this is **the verse** that might be  
our elected official  
in that salvation conversation.  
It is **the verse** that might just be the balm  
for our sin-sick souls and society.  
Remember that Michael Jackson song,  
Heal the World?  
"Heal the world, make it a better place/ for you and for me/ and the  
entire human race/there are people dying/ if you cared enough for the  
living/make it better place for you and for me."<sup>1</sup>  
I literally cannot resist  
a Michael Jackson illustration  
even if it borders cheesy, elevator music.

In all seriousness this verse could heal the world.  
Taken seriously, it could heal our skewed ethics.  
This verse is one of the single most  
important and definitive statements  
in our holy scriptures.  
I think we could sum up all of the Bible  
in just this **one verse**.

And it's not like I haven't read it before.  
But it wasn't until someone else said,  
"you, know it really doesn't get more explicit,  
than what Jesus says [here],"<sup>2</sup>  
it wasn't until someone else said it,  
that I saw it.

But before we look at **the verse** I think  
sums up our gospel,  
let's back up a little first.

Our reading starts

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Jackson, Heal the World <http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/michaeljackson/healtheworld.html>

<sup>2</sup> David Lose, <http://www.workingpreacher.org/craft.aspx?post=3198>

at the beginning of chapter 10.  
with sheepfolds, gates and thieves.  
But starting there is jumping  
into the middle of the story,  
So let's back up to chapter 9  
—the story of the man born blind.

When Jesus and his disciples see the man,  
the disciples want to know,  
“Jesus who sinned, this man or his parents?”  
To us, if the man was born blind,  
that's just that  
—he was born blind.  
But have you ever asked a question  
that sounds like this?

My life is so busy, Lord,  
and I feel like everything is caving in on me.  
Where did I go wrong?  
Who sinned Lord?

I don't have a lot of friends  
and I'm not popular at school;  
why don't I fit in?  
Who sinned Lord?

My drinking has gotten out hand,  
but I can't admit it.  
Why can't I control this Lord?  
Who sinned?

Often for us, sin and salvation  
are like the ebb and flow of how we think;  
you can't have one without the other.  
The disciples want to know who sinned  
in the blind man's life  
—which was important  
to how he would be given salvation;  
should he offer the sacrifice or his parents?

But listen to how Jesus

talks about sin and salvation:

“Neither this man nor his parents sinned;  
he was born blind so that God’s works  
might be revealed in him.” (John 9:3)



Isn't that interesting?

Where the mention of afterlife and destiny?  
What about this man's choice?  
Saying, “he was born blind  
so that God’s works  
might be revealed in him.”  
makes it sound like Jesus is pointing  
to the healing that he will do for this man,  
regardless of the “sin” in his life.

God's work of salvation in this story  
has no mention of eternal life—  
and really speaks only of the present:  
of God's works being done  
while the disciples are there.

Being saved in this way  
has nothing to do with personal choice,  
nothing to do with this man's eternal destiny;  
being saved means something for life, now.

But because the blind man was given sight,  
because he was given salvation  
the temple authorities are suspicious.  
His blindness points to sinfulness.

The religious men in charge  
can't wrap their heads around how,  
having been born blind,  
this man now can see.

But to the man it is pretty clear;  
the reason he can now see is Jesus.  
To the Jesus, his blindness leads to his salvation.

Jesus offered this man salvation,  
in the form he needed it  
and when he needed it.  
Since the Temple clergy can't understand  
how God's work of salvation  
can happen outside  
of their own carefully cultivated boundaries,  
they look for ways to get rid of Jesus.  
Because Christ offers salvation  
apart from the institution,  
the institution doesn't know what to do with him.

One solution:  
put him outside the parameters,  
label Jesus a sinner:  
*well Jesus healed this man on the Sabbath.*  
*And if this Jesus claims to from God,*  
*then he would know*  
*that he has violated the Sabbath law.*  
*Only sinners do that.*  
*He must be a sinner,*  
*which means he cannot be who he says he is.*

We often do we say the same thing  
about each other?  
You can't call yourself a Christian,  
because you say one thing and do the other.  
He must not love Jesus  
or he wouldn't have voted that way.  
She must not be very faithful  
or she would be at church more.  
They must not read their Bible  
because they're in a same sex relationship.

We're awfully good at putting up  
carefully cultivated parameters too,  
aren't we?

Even when those parameters seem like  
they serve a good protective purpose,  
Jesus says, *theses parameters you declare  
are too restrictive to the salvation I bring.*

The blind man is the one  
who can tell us about being saved,  
*you know I don't know whether he is a sinner.  
Here's what I do know,  
I was blind, but now I see.* (John 9:25 CEV)

It's pretty clear there;  
pretty explicit;  
pretty definitive.

What he's saying is,  
I was blind,  
I was bound to **a life of exclusion,**  
but now I see,  
**now I live a life of inclusion in freedom.**

And that is salvation.  
That is being saved.  
That is the hint that chapter 9 gives us  
that a bigger promise salvation is coming.  
This salvation is outside the bounds  
of our parameters.

So to the ones calling him a sinner,  
who are acting as "gate keepers" Jesus says,  
you are supposed to be the shepherds  
and you're supposed to take care of the sheep  
and you are not.

Anyone who goes in by the gate  
is a shepherd of the sheep.  
Jesus says that he's the gate,  
and that whoever enters through him is saved.  
According to Jesus

anyone that goes over the fence  
or around the gate is a thief or a robber.  
This is an indictment to the people  
who are calling Jesus a sinner.  
This is directed at the folks  
who care not for the people  
but for the rules.  
Rules that were meant  
to keep people out,  
rules that tell some  
they aren't meant  
for God's revealing work  
of salvation  
to be done in them.

When Jesus says he's the gate,  
he isn't making a claim of exclusivity.  
He isn't stating who gets to heaven  
and who doesn't.

He says, "I am the gate.  
Whoever enters by me will be saved,  
and will come in and go out and find pasture." (John 10:9)

**Jesus says being saved is about life right now.**

I'm no expert, but sheep don't care  
about finding pasture  
when they are dead.  
Blind men don't care about seeing  
after they die.

Sheep want green grass and still waters, **now**.  
Blind men and women want sight **now**.



Perhaps you've heard this modern day parable before:  
[A terrible storm is in the forecast](#)



and local officials sent out  
an emergency warning  
that the riverbanks would soon overflow  
and flood the nearby homes.

They ordered everyone in the town  
to evacuate immediately.  
A faithful Christian man heard  
the warning and decided to stay,  
saying to himself,  
“I will trust God and if I am in danger,  
then God will save me.”

The neighbors came by his house  
and said to him,  
“We’re leaving and there is room for you in our car,  
please come with us!”  
But the man declined.  
“I have faith that God will save me.”

As the man stood on his porch  
watching the water rise up the steps,  
a man in a canoe paddled by  
and called to him,  
“Hurry and come into my canoe,  
the waters are rising quickly!”  
But the man again said,  
“No thanks, God will save me.”

The floodwaters rose higher  
pouring water into his living room  
and the man had to retreat to the second floor.  
A police motorboat came by  
and saw him at the window.  
“We will come up and rescue you!” they shouted.  
But the man refused,  
waving them off saying,  
“Use your time to save someone else!  
I have faith that God will save me!”

The flood waters rose higher and higher  
and the man had to climb up to his rooftop.  
A helicopter spotted him  
and dropped a rope ladder.  
A rescue officer came down the ladder  
and pleaded with the man,  
"Grab my hand and I will pull you up!"  
But the man STILL refused,  
"No thank you! God will save me!"

Shortly after, the house broke up  
and the floodwaters  
swept the man away and he drowned.

When in Heaven,  
the man stood before God and asked,  
"I put all of my faith in You.  
Why didn't You come and save me?"  
And God said, "I sent you a warning.  
I sent you a car.  
I sent you a canoe.  
I sent you a motorboat.  
I sent you a helicopter.  
What more were you looking for?"<sup>3</sup>



Salvation and being saved  
get painted too much  
with the brush of the what is to come.

Salvation is often understood  
as the erasure of our sin and failure

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<sup>3</sup> <http://epistle.us/inspiration/godwillsaveme.html>

rather than the creation of new life and possibility.  
Remember, that we are not only  
saved *from* something  
but also *for* something....<sup>4</sup>

Which is what Jesus  
has been trying to tell us from the get go.  
And it is right there in front of us,  
and it is pretty clear.

Jesus says to all of us  
and that means the whole world  
—for God so loved all of it—  
that Jesus says to all of us,  
“I have come that you might have  
life and have it abundantly.”

Is there a more explicit promise of salvation?

So that's it.

**The verse.**

Now anytime we are asked  
at the question,  
are you saved,  
we should feel a little more grounded.

Of course I'm saved;  
everyday, all the time.

The promise of salvation is right here  
and it is for right now.

I have come that you might have life  
and have it abundantly.

This seems like it's pretty clear.

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<sup>4</sup> ibid