

## Rescued before we knew we needed it - Advent 4

*Isaiah 7:10-16; Psalm 80:1-7,17-19; Romans 1:1-7; Matthew 1:18-25*

### PRAYER

Earlier this year Pete and I took our seaplane on a flight to dip in and out of all the lakes in the high country, up in the Snowy Mts. I packed a good picnic, including rugs, warm coats, thermos etc. Pete looked at the gear and said did I think I had too much as we have to watch weight but I was sure that as it was a day trip it would be alright. I didn't want to get cold on this flight.

It was a perfect flying day, with very little wind & the sun shining.

First we flew from Goulburn to Burrinjuck Dam and alighted on the water a couple of times, then we climbed up and flew across the mountain ranges to Blowering, near Tumut. After a delightful water landing we flew up the river to Talbingo. A spot that reminds me of the grandeur of God. The steep tree covered mountains come majestically into the edge of the water, in such a scenic way – and we had the whole waterway to ourselves. Then we flew onto Lake Eucumbene, which is the highest one planning to later stop for lunch at Lake Jindabyne.

Now the higher the altitude the thinner the air. This makes a difference for lift.

We flew into the far end of Eucumbene – near the dam wall to avoid fishermen and scaring the fish, literally miles from anywhere. But as we tried to take off we couldn't get the plane on the plane to get it airborne. Pete had me leaning forward shifting weight, but to no avail.

Before we could even start to think of plan B a boat came up and offered to help. We tried one or two things with it and they didn't work, and the boat nosed in close to our cockpit and said was there anything else they could do and Pete said we'd have to offload cargo.

I started feeling guilty I had packed such a good picnic and wondered how we'd get our lunch back if we offloaded it but Pete was looking at me – I was the cargo! And the chap with the boat was offering to take me all the way down to Old Adaminaby to off load me there.

There was no other option I climbed out of the cockpit across the nose of this very expensive speedboat and Pete took off heading to Adaminaby airstrip. This luxury boat took me the entire length of Lake Eucumbene, a great trip and dropped me off at Old Adaminaby. The man then looked for a lift for me

to get to the town but couldn't find one but suggested I walk up to the Caravan Park and ring a taxi. I suddenly realised that I didn't have a wallet with me and he pulled out a \$50 note and gave it to me, just like that. I started walking and had gone only half a minute when I saw a four wheel drive turn around and look like it was going in my direction so I flagged them down. They stopped, looking very confused but agreed to give me a lift to the town and bit further on to the airstrip on the other side of the town.

To get into the cab of their vehicle one jumped out and I had to sit between them and off we went. As we left the lakeside I realised I was in their hands and so prayed for my safety and that they would be totally trustworthy. They had been camping out for days and sitting between them it was obviously they hadn't been having showers. I remember thinking that if they decided to turn the car in the wrong direction as we came to the main road towards Adaminaby no one would know where I had gone and who I was with.

God was looking after it all and I got to the airstrip only 15 mins after Pete got there and we had our picnic there. With an amazed thankfulness for how God had provided for us. We later flew onto Lake Jindabyne, doing a beautiful water landing, having loved the adventure and knowing to be careful in the high country.

We were both in awe and full of thanksgiving for how we had been rescued and provided for before we even knew we'd need it or had even had time to pray and ask God for help. We hadn't begun processing the situation before the help arrived. We knew it was God's amazing provision. And yes we met up with the couple later and returned the \$50 and were able to thank them.

The need being known by God and provided for had me think about the big picture of salvation.

That is how it is for us - the whole of humanity – before our generation ever knew we needed rescuing God knew and had it in hand. God provided for it in a way that would be effective and lasting.

That is why, when we celebrate the coming of the Son of God as the babe in Bethlehem we cannot leave it there, but also remember with gratitude it involves the Cross as well.

For as our first reading tells us that the virgin will give birth to a Son, Immanuel, and He will know enough to reject wrong and choose right.

He indeed had a spirit of holiness on Him, as the Romans reading puts it, and did not sin. This meant that He who knew no sin became sin so that we could become the righteousness of God.

He rescued us from certain eternal death long before we knew we needed rescuing.

The Psalm repeats the request in v 3 v 7 and v 19 that we might be saved.

And verse 5 of Romans 1, tells us that through Jesus, and for His name's sake, we have received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that come from faith.

Apostles are those who are sent out. We can all be sent for God. Sent to our work places, our neighbourhood, our schools, and our families. Apostles also transform the community around them.

In the secular Greek language, when an army conquered a territory, they took in administrators and apostles, and governors. In that context the apostles' job was to transform the community, the culture – basically to make it more Greek – then it would be less likely to revolt and settle down to a new identity.

We can all be apostles in that sense – we can be those who transform the community around us – for Christ and with Christ of course.

With His birth, death and resurrection, Christ transformed the hope of humanity, the hope of all creation.

V 6 in Romans 1, “And you also are among those who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.”

We are called to belong to Jesus Christ.

As someone said in Bible study on Friday night, that makes us very special.

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Because we are so valuable to the Lord, so precious, that we were worth rescuing, and were rescued with the sacrifice of His own life even before we knew we needed it.

How special we are when we realise that in order to rescue us Jesus took upon Himself all our bad cargo, our burden of sin, releasing us to take off into a new life free and unencumbered. Offering us a new life of belonging to Him and with all the hope of eternity and of living with our inheritance.

We are indeed very special.

And celebrating Christmas is about celebrating not only the arrival of Jesus in the world but also the outcome of the Cross, the consequences of the Cross.

At a time when we are planning and wrapping presents and gifts for others, when we receive – **what will we give to Jesus, the One who gave His all for us?**

What can we give one so powerful and who has myriads of angels at His beck and call?

- Will we offer Him our hearts fully?
- Will we offer Him 10 minutes of worship each day?
- Will we offer a gift of seeing, with His help, Christ in others?
- Will we offer, with His help, to overcome some behaviour he would not find holy in us?

**I wonder if the best gift we can offer to Jesus is that of Praise and Thanksgiving. Thanking Him for who He is and what He has done.**

What a gift it would be to God to wake up each morning and spend 5-10 minutes thanking Jesus for what He's done.

We can write our own Psalms or rework the words say of verse 3,7, &19 of today's Psalm. *Thank you for restoring us O Lord of hosts. Thank you for shining the light of your countenance on us. Thank you for saving us. Oh Lord our Redeemer and our King.*

Sermons need to be practical. To give us some teaching, some insights but also application. Application for our own lives.

So the application from today is to:

- remember that God saved us even before we knew we needed rescuing.
- That we can all be apostles and tell others this.
- That we can help transform the community around us with God's help.
- And that we can be thankful - as our gift back to our Saviour.

And we can begin this on Christmas morning – and practice it every day after that – in our own words - thanking Jesus for His gift to us.

Let's do it now. As I pray some prayers of thanksgiving please pray your own in your own hearts.

The more we thank Jesus, the more it honours Him and values what He did for us.

Let us pray: