

Introduction

- My original title for this evening's sermon was "Jesus alone delivers", which made me smile in the context of the arrival of Matthew Alexander Charles this week!!
- so I changed it to "Jesus alone saves"
- Rescues - helicopters - Boscastle - powerful images of the power of the weather, and the danger it can pose
- perhaps most vivid shot was of the cars being swept along in the water...
- people being winched up to safety, four helicopters working in tandem!

So What if Jesus is Miles Better?

- Last week we established that "Jesus is miles better", not just slightly superior!
- OK, so what?

We shouldn't drift

- "We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away." (v.1)

- That is the danger...
- drifting away from our faith, from a true trust in Jesus
- such a trust was where the original believers to whom Hebrews was written started
- and it is where we started - in my case, at an SU camp at Easter time in 1980, at Meigle, I came to see that Jesus had died on the Cross for me!
- But the reason this letter was written was because there was some danger that they drift away from that initial faith:
- in their case it had something to do with angels - perhaps feeling that the divine son couldn't have anything to do with such unclean creatures as themselves...
- and the danger was that they lean on the angels, and not on Christ - and so fall into the danger of "not escaping if we ignore such a great salvation" (v.3)
- North Norfolk coast is treacherous
- tide comes in fast, there are strong currents, ridges on the beaches allow the water to get in behind you....
- only a moment's inattention and you are in great danger!
- often fatalities
- BBC website this year someone who was rescued with his young son on a lilo - and then the same thing happened the next day!!
- he had not paid attention to what was being said!
- unbelievable - yet it happened
- Its unbelievable that anyone should neglect such a great salvation, yet that is the danger
- we only have to look around and see who isn't here at worship who could be to feel the weight of that truth

He saves!

- So in the context of that danger (of drifting) the writer to the Hebrews is at pains to establish that the only rescue on the cards is the "miles better" one that comes through Jesus
- For make no mistake - it is a great salvation!
- escape - v.3
- means we will not taste (the full power of) death - v.9
- brings us to glory - v.10
- makes people holy - v.11
- brings us into God's family - v.11
- freedom from the fear of death - v.15

- Because Jesus saves, wonderfully, effectively!
- Essentially our choice, using the picture of the Boscastle floods, is this:
 - we are **faced with the floods of death** that stem from our sin...
 - will we **wade into the waters** in the hope we can make it through on our own...
 - or **accept** the help of the **helicopter sent from God!**
- That's the starkness of the choice!

How does Jesus save?

- Jesus is miles better... because he can save in a way that the angels can't
 - why is that? how is it that Jesus saves?
- **Illustration: Managers**
 - If you're a footie fan, you'll know that players towards the end of their playing careers sometimes "test the waters" about moving into management by becoming a player-manager:
 - as well as managing, they come on to play - sometimes regularly, sometimes less so
 - bringing their experience, their overall vision, their "touch" to bear - even if their legs aren't as quick as they used to be!
 - But there are a few managers around who will **never** be able to play for their side
 - Sven Goran Erikson would be one; Bertie Vogts would be another... I think Lawrie Sanchez would be another, but Mark Hughes would not!
 - because they are not from the country whose national team they manage!
 - they are not English, Scots or Northern Irish, so they could never play for that team!
 - **(Mark Hughes is Welsh, and did indeed play for the Welsh National side!)**
 - Likewise the High Priest in ancient Israel was a **representative**:
 - he needed to be a member of the people of Israel so that he could represent them;
 - when he went into the Holy of Holies, and offered a sacrifice, it was **"as if"** the whole nation offered that sacrifice

Jesus our Representative

- Jesus was made like us in every way (v.17) so that he could offer himself on our behalf:
 - we sinned, and our lives were forfeit
 - yet Jesus came, offer his life for ours, like for like
 - only one who came and "put on the shirt of humanity" could represent our whole race
 - only such a one could die in our place and have it accepted as representative
- Psalm 8:4-6 is the key OT text, amplified by Psalm 22:22, Isaiah 8:17 and 8:18
 - in original context refers to mankind as made little lower than the angels
 - but applied here to the perfect and representative man, who came from glory and was made/became a little lower than the angels, but then was crowned with glory and honour following his suffering on our behalf!
 - so the writer to the Hebrews sees Jesus as the ultimate fulfillment of the Psalm's vision through his suffering and exaltation
- And one particular, practical implication of all of this is v.18:
 - **"Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted."** (v.18)
 - someone who has **"been there, got the T-shirt"** has more right and ability to speak into a situation
 - whether it is in giving directions - **I've been there...**
 - or whether it is standing with someone in a great crisis - **I too have lost a child, faced a divorce, struggled with redundancy, whatever...**

- Jesus has stood where we have stood in facing temptation:
 - he knows what its like, and he is able to help!

Conclusion

- Imagine you are taking some **exams!**
 - start off studying as the teachers say, but its hard, you can't see your progress....
 - you still want to pass the exam, you need it for Uni entry or whatever
 - temptation is to give up - not so much quit the course as quit the studying, try another approach, hope that a last minute cramming session will work, that copying someone else's essay will somehow teach us something...
- *Horrid Henry and the book reading competition!!*
 - tell story - doesn't read - wants prize of a trip to a theme park - makes up books the teacher hasn't heard of!! - but the prize is to the new theme park, "**Book World**", where the activities include checking out a library book and speed reading!!
- If I were to say, "**don't give up**" we tend to think of literall giving up:
 - stopping doing anything
- But there is as much danger in us giving up our trust in what will save us:
 - drifting from solely relying on Christ for salvation towards something else instead or as well...
 - Christ **and** Mary's prayers in particular parts of the Roman Catholic tradition
 - Christ **and** not swearing, smoking, drinking, going to the cinema, wearing a hat to worship, or some combination of those...
 - Christ **and** having a particular label, being known in certain circles, reading certain authors (and not others)
- **Don't drift - because the salvation is so wonderful!**