

Good morning! I am Patrick Gibbs, one of the pastors here at MVBC. Pastor Bob was in class all week and gets this weekend off.

For several week now, we as pastors, church staff, elders and ministry leaders have been talking and praying for God's direction for Moon Valley. In some aspects of our ministry, we feel plateaued- like we've leveled off into a state of comfort, contentment and complacency. Our overall attendance is flat, our ministry participation is flat and our attitude and energy as a ministry feels flat too. We are currently in a process of evaluating ourselves- our motivations, our ministries, our methods. And that process will last for a little while longer I suspect.

So, this morning, I'd like to share some things that I sense God is saying to me as I evaluate not only where the church is at, but my own personal motivations, attitudes and ministry.

The verse we are going to look at this morning is 1 Timothy 1:15. If you have a Bible, I invite you to turn there. If you don't, that's ok. The verse is on the sermon notes in your bulletin and we'll also put the words on the screen.

So, let's read □1 Timothy 1:15. In fact, let's read it all together, out loud.

<sup>NIV</sup> **1 Timothy 1:15** Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners-- of whom I am the worst.

PRAY

<sup>NIV</sup> **1 Timothy 1:15** Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners-- of whom I am the worst.

It sounds pretty simple doesn't it? Well, it is. And yet, in our highly technical, complex world, we sometimes miss the simplest things of all.

That's how I feel about this verse. I'd like to divide this verse into 2 parts: God's heart and my part. Those are the 2 things we will focus on this morning: God's Heart and My Part.

So, let's begin by looking at God's heart. I think we find God's heart in the ► phrase,

... Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners...

In this one simple phrase, Paul boils Jesus down to this: he came to save sinners. ► And this is not a new concept.

► <sup>NIV</sup> **1 Timothy 2:3** This is good, and pleases God our Savior, <sup>4</sup> who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

► <sup>NIV</sup> **John 12:47** "As for the person who hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge him. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save it.

►<sup>NIV</sup> **Mark 2:17** On hearing this, Jesus said to them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

I don't think there are any hidden meanings here. Paul intends this to be as simple as it sounds. ► Jesus came to earth to rescue (that's what "save" means) sinners. A quick scan of Jesus life finds him doing all kinds of things with and for sinners.

Jesus left heaven for sinners.

Jesus set aside his authority as God for sinners.

Jesus dined with sinners.

Jesus talked with sinners.

Jesus prayed for sinners.

Jesus commanded his people to serve sinners.

Jesus entire program revolves around rescued sinners.

Jesus is creating a place in heaven for rescued sinners.

Jesus suffered for sinners.

Jesus died for sinners.

Jesus is alive today rescuing sinners.

The angels rejoice over rescued sinners.

God's heart is to rescue sinners.

You see, the Bible says, ►

For the wages of sin is death...<sup>NIV</sup> **Romans 6:23**

Since we have all sinned, we all must die. That's what we need rescued from. And this death is spiritual. It is a separation from God. And everyone needs rescued. So Jesus came and lived a sinless life. He was not required to die physically or spiritually for His sin. Instead, God allowed Jesus to die in my place- and yours- as **the only** payment for our sin. ►

<sup>NIV</sup> **Romans 5:8** But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

And when you believe Jesus or trust his death for you own sin, the Bible says you inherit eternal life. That means we get to live with God forever. It starts here on earth when we believe and it continues in heaven when we leave this earth. ►

<sup>NIV</sup> **John 3:16** "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Jesus came to rescue sinners.

► And I think that really is the heart of God. But I am guessing if you've been in church a while, that doesn't sound new. But let's think this phrase one step further. Jesus came to rescue sinners. If you believe in Jesus for eternal life, then you have been rescued. Now what? Imagine for a moment we are on a sinking ship. The Coast

Guard shows up and rescues you. You are sitting in the safety of a Coast Guard helicopter. But I'm still on the deck of the sinking ship. For those of us today who have been rescued by Jesus, we are sitting safely in the palm of the Saviors hand. But lots of people aren't rescued yet. So, where do you think God's heart is? Who is Jesus most concerned about- people who are already rescued or people who are not? Jesus came to rescue sinners and his heart breaks for those who aren't rescued yet.

So, that's God heart: rescue sinners who still need rescued. But, what is My Part? Paul says two things in this verse that convicted me, and then challenged me.

Paul says ►

<sup>NIV</sup> **1 Timothy 1:15** Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance:

That means pretty much means what it sounds like. Paul is saying, I am getting ready to say something that is reliable. It is trustworthy and you should accept it as true. What is true that we should trust and accept? That Jesus came to rescue sinners.

<sup>NIV</sup> **1 Timothy 2:3** ...God ... wants all men to be saved ...

<sup>NIV</sup> **John 12:47** "For I did not come to judge the world, but to save it.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Mark 2:17** I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

In my head I would say that's true. But when I look at my day-to-day life, I don't often consider it. In fact, I might even ignore it.

Let's think again about the sinking ship. The sinking ship represents those who still need rescued. The Coast Guard helicopter is the church. It is the place where rescued people find safety. Jesus is the pilot. You have been rescued from the sinking ship. You are sitting in the safety of the helicopter. Now what?

Unfortunately, many of us in the church have been rescued for a while. And the helicopter doesn't seem to be rescuing many people. So we stop looking out the window for people to rescue. And we start asking the pilot to make us more comfortable: meet our needs, take care of our injuries, fly us to safety, calm our fears. We focus on each other in the helicopter and forget that there are people still sinking on the ship.

If God's heart is to rescue sinners, and I have been rescued, then do I care about those who still need rescued? Might I- might we- think differently if we looked on people as sinners needing rescued? I think we would. Unfortunately, the church has a reputation for focusing on the sin instead of the rescue. Everyone sins; but not everyone is rescued. Even Jesus focused on the rescue, not the sin. Listen again to John 12:47?

<sup>NIV</sup> **John 12:47** "As for the person who hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge him. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save it.

Jesus came to rescue sinners. I'm not talking about being aggressive. I'm not even talking about sharing the gospel with people. I'm not talking about bringing your friend to church. I am talking about something more

foundational than that. I'm talking about an attitude adjustment. I'm talking about actually caring for sinners- those outside the church. I am talking about seeing people as people who need to be rescued. I'm talking about actually wanting to look out the helicopter window and look for sinners who need rescued.

Do you see the person you share a cubicle with as someone needed rescued?

Do you see your employees as people who need to be rescued?

Do you see your children as people who need to be rescued?

Do you see your children's teacher as someone who needs to be rescued?

Do you see the neighbor across the street as someone who needs to be rescued?

Because Jesus does. That's his heart. That's who He cares about. That's who he died to rescue.

I must confess, I don't ordinarily see people as needing rescued. It's not because they aren't out there. It's not because I don't know them. It's because I don't fully accept the statement that Jesus came to rescue sinners. I don't see them like Jesus does- as sinners who need rescuing.

But Paul says something else that challenged me. ►

<sup>NIV</sup> **1 Timothy 1:15** Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners-- *of whom I am the worst.*

Paul says he is the worst sinner there is. If you read the surrounding verses, you find that Paul admits to persecuting the church and blaspheming God before he believed in Jesus. He goes on to say that if Jesus is patient and merciful with someone like himself, Jesus is patient and merciful with everyone. And that raised a question in my mind. Do I remember what it felt like to be rescued?

Paul didn't seem to dwell in the past, but he was never so far removed from his past that he forgot how awesome the rescuing of Jesus is. In verses 12-16, He says things like:

<sup>NIV</sup> **1 Timothy 1:12** I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, ...

<sup>NIV</sup> **1 Timothy 1:13** Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy ...

<sup>NIV</sup> **1 Timothy 1:14** The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, ....

<sup>NIV</sup> **1 Timothy 1:16** ...I was shown mercy ...

<sup>NIV</sup> **1 Timothy 1:17** Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Paul had an attitude of awe at the Jesus who rescues sinners. Some of us have lost that awe. Not only do we not see ourselves as the worst of all sinners, we frankly forget what it felt like to need rescuing. In our head, we know the Bible says we needed rescuing, but in our heart, we don't feel the awe anymore of having been rescued and we haven't frankly helped rescue anyone in a while. And because we don't, our passionless message that "Jesus came to rescue sinners" sounds like a boring religious cliché.

If God's heart is to save sinners, then My Part is to care about those needing rescued.

And that brings me to my big idea this morning. The big idea is actually a prayer; a prayer I'd like to challenge us to pray. Here is the prayer: ► Lord, break my heart for sinners.

Watch this and listen to the words.

►BREAK MY HEART Clip

►“Break my heart for what breaks yours.” Someone once said “The church is the only organization organized primarily for the benefit of its non-members.” (William Temple, former Bishop of Canterbury) Paul reminds us in this one simple verse that God's heart is for sinners. Lord, break my heart for sinners. And that's really what I want us to pray for.

And it seems to me that this prayer has 3 parts.

1. Ask God to remind you of how it felt to be rescued from sin.
2. Ask God to break your heart for 1 person who doesn't know Him. You might already have that one name in your head.
3. Ask God to break our churches heart for our community.

I know we all can pray this prayer individually and I believe that God will break our heart for sinners. But I think it might be good to pray together also. For the next 3 weeks, I would like to invite you to pray with me. We'll meet in room 10 at 8:15 AM before first service. We won't take prayer requests, we won't have coffee or donuts or a time to get to know each other. We're just gonna pray and ask God to break our heart for sinners.

Let's pray!

“Lord, I thank you for making sinners the passion of your heart. And I thank you for rescuing me. But I have forgotten what it was like to need rescuing. Please forgive me. And Lord, really break my heart for what breaks yours. As a church Father, break our hearts for those who still need rescued. Amen.”