Here I am Lord…Send Me

Dale Sands 2/9/2025

Isaiah said "Here I am Lord Send Me"

Life saving stations are around us…this Sanctuary, Fellowship Hall, Shared Blessings Thrift Store, our beaches (many thanks to Branch for placing life saving tubes) and other areas. Christ Memorial is a place where we may be rescued or rescue others.

Here is a brief story about life saving stations by Chuck Swindoll:[1]

On a dangerous seacoast notorious for shipwrecks, there was a crude little lifesaving hut with only one boat…the few devoted members kept a constant watch over the turbulent sea. With little thought for themselves, they would go out, day and night, tirelessly searching for those in danger as well as the lost. Many lives were saved by this brave band of men & women. They worked faithfully as a team in and out of the lifesaving station. By and by, it became a famous place.

Some who had been saved, as well as others along the seacoast, wanted to become associated with this little station. They were willing to give their time, energy and money in support of the station: New boats were purchased. New crews were trained. The life saving station, once crude, obscure and virtually insignificant, began to grow. Some of its members were unhappy that the hut was so unattractive and poorly equipped. They felt a more comfortable place should be provided. Emergency cots were replaced with lovely furniture. Rough hand-made equipment was discarded. Sophisticated classy systems were installed. The hut, of course, had to be torn down to make room for all the additional equipment, furniture, systems, and appointments. By its completion, the life saving station had become a popular gathering place, and its objectives had begun to shift: it was now used as a sort of clubhouse, an attractive building for public gatherings. Saving lives, feeding the hungry, strengthening the fearful and calming the disturbed rarely occurred by now.

Fewer members were now interested in braving the sea on lifesaving missions, so they hired professional lifeboat crews to do this work. The original goal of the station wasn't altogether forgotten, however, life saving motifs prevailed in the club's decorations. In fact, there was a liturgical lifeboat preserved in the "Room of Sweet Memories" with soft, indirect lighting, which helped hide the layer of dust upon the once used vessel.

About this time a large ship was wrecked off the coast and the boat crew brought in many cold, wet, half-drowned people. They were dirty, some terribly sick and lonely. Others were 'different' from the majority of the club members. The beautiful new club suddenly became messy and cluttered. A special committee saw to it that a shower house was immediately built outside and away from the club so shipwreck victims could be cleaned up before coming inside.

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[1] *Growing Strong in The Seasons of Life* by Charles R Swindoll. Multnomah Press, Portland, OR, 1983.

At the next Club meeting there were strong words and angry feelings, which resulted in a division among the members. Most wanted to stop the club's lifesaving activities and discontinue all involvements with shipwreck victims. As you'd expect some still insisted upon saving lives, that this was their primary objective – that their only reason for existence was ministering to anyone needing help regardless of their club's beauty or size or decorations. This small group was voted down and told if they wanted to save lives they could begin their own lifesaving station down the coast. They did! This is the group that to me, most resembled Christ Memorial Church members.

Now to a real life example of how Christ Memorial became a life saving station for a couple that I will label as Jane and Joe.

Joe and Jane came to Christ Memorial one Sunday service a few years ago. There burdens were heavy and they needed to get away together for a few days. Joe and Jane carried many significant family challenges; Their youngest son was seriously ill. Sadly this child was ill most of his life, and the recipient of much time, attention and medical care. Then a second son was seriously injured in a sporting accident. He incurred a serious and painful back injury. As was all too common then, the doctor prescribed opioids which led to addiction. Through this challenging time, both boys had come to resent each other, resent their circumstance and would barely speak to one another. The older son would be lost for days on end causing great worry for Joe and Jane.

During the darkest of times, the Joe and Jane found themselves in a pew at Christ Memorial, where Father Ed, gave a sermon about Mercy…. mercy that flows like water from the mountains, reminding us all that God's mercy is passed to us unconditionally. Joe and Jane felt mercy that day; they prayed for merciful healing of their family. Little did then realize their life was about to change in ways they could not have expected:

- Upon returning home, their son's doctor declared their son was now in in full scale remission. He went on to grow up and become an airline pilot.
- Their eldest son, joined AA, and has been clean and sober for several years now, and has a steady job.
- The family healed over the years: the boys became men, and became e best friends who speak nearly every day.
- Thanksgiving 2024 was a joyful time for their family with so much to be thankful for, they returned to Christ Memorial to renew their wedding vows for their 25th anniversary!

This was a homily about recognizing the needs of others in every day life as we may become life saving stations for others…people filled with the mission to reach out to others. In some cases, we are the ones shipwrecked and we come together to heal and be healed. An encouraging word, a warm handshake or hug or eye contact may just be the encouragement and assurance needed just then. Christ Memorial, Shared Blessings, and

Fellowship Hall is a life saving station. Our words, our actions may touch someone at the right moment as we become the life saving crew.

From Psalm 138 today, “The Lord will make good his purpose for me. Oh Lord your love endures for ever – do not abandon the works of your hands. When I called, you answered me, you increased my strength within me.” Amen!