"And his fullness fills you, even though you were once like corpses, dead in your sins and offenses. It wasn't that long ago that you lived in the religion, customs, and values of this world, obeying the dark ruler of the earthly realm who fills the atmosphere with his authority, and works diligently in the hearts of those who are disobedient to the truth of God. The corruption that was in us from birth was expressed through the deeds and desires of our self-life. We lived by whatever natural cravings and thoughts our minds dictated, living as rebellious children subject to God's wrath like everyone else. But God still loved us with such great love. He is so rich in compassion and mercy. Even when we were dead and doomed in our many sins, he united us into the very life of Christ and saved us by his wonderful grace! He raised us up with Christ the exalted One, and we ascended with him into the glorious perfection and authority of the heavenly realm, for we are now co-seated as one with Christ! Throughout the coming ages we will be the visible display of the infinite riches of his grace and kindness, which was showered upon us in Jesus Christ. For by grace you have been saved by faith. Nothing you did could ever earn this salvation, for it was the love gift from God that brought us to Christ! So no one will ever be able to boast, for salvation is never a reward for good works or human striving. We have become his poetry, a re-created people that will fulfill the destiny he has given each of us, for we are joined to Jesus, the Anointed One. Even before we were born, God planned in advance our destiny and the good works we would do to fulfill it!"
(Ephesians 2:1-10 TPT)

Have you ever been offended by someone coming up to you and asking, ***"Are you saved?"***

Well now you know how much I offended many people soon after I came to an experienced of being saved by Jesus! I was so excited and so thankful that I wanted everyone else the have this same experience. So there is probably a strong possibility that I may offend you again today! But my greatest desire is encourage, build up and comfort you. Today is part three of a five part story of our salvation history. It's a story which began before the creation of the world! This story marks the midway mark in the most wonderful love story the world has ever heard. It's commonly called Good Friday. It is the most important day which divides history into BC and AD – BUT, it is only the midway mark in the greatest rescue in history in which mankind was translocated from the kingdom of darkness to the Kingdom of light and wholeness.

This is worth reading again! I am using the The Passion Translation. ***"For here is the way God loved the world—he gave his only, unique Son as a gift. So now everyone who believes in him will never perish but experience everlasting life. "God did not send his Son into the world to judge and condemn the world, but to be its Saviour and rescue it!"*** (John 3:16-17 TPT)

The meaning of the words 'saved' or 'rescued' is a glorious word to anyone who has ever been in a very dangerous and life threatening position. The Greek word ***Sozo*** is translated using many different English words. There is no ONE English word which can adequately describe the meaning of the word ***Sozo.*** It includes the understanding '***to save, to deliver, to protect, to rescue, to be made whole, to be healed, to be preserved***.' Now any person who has been ***Sozo(ed)*** will gladly, joyfully and gratefully declare that they are ***SAFE.***

So I want to tell you a story (I love telling stories!) In fact, I am going to be telling you two stories which I believe will help to explain the joy, gladness and the sense of gratefulness of having been ***Sozo(ed).***

Tony Bullimore, was one of those 'daredevil' types of people. In 1997, he achieved worldwide fame after he survived for four days in an air pocket under the hull of his overturned yacht. He was taking part in a solo (ie single-handed) around-the-world yacht race, which started in France in November 1996. His yacht, the ***Exide Challenger*** had gone past South Africa and was in the middle of the ocean, 2500 kms from Australia and 1500kms north of the Anartartic. The water in this area is extremely cold. A huge storm, with winds of up to 50 -70 knots arose. This caused waves of 20 – 40 foot to buffet the yacht. Very, very dangerous weather conditions.

Tony said he heard a snapping sound and suddenly the yacht capsized and his world was upside down and the water flooded into the yacht. He had just enough time to switch on his emergency beacon and he also managed to pull on his emergency survival suit. For the next four days, Tony Bullimore managed to survive under the overturned boat on a meagre diet of a bar of chocolate and a couple of bottles of water in plastic bottles.

The Australian air force and navy were mobalised to search for Tony – like looking for a minute needle in a gigantic haystack. After a frantic search, tony's boat was spotted by the airforce plane. The navy frigate, HMAS Adelaide came to the spot, found the boat and launched a rubber dingy in rough waters so search for any signs of life. When they knocked on the hull, they were totally surprised to hear Tony responding from inside the stricken yacht. He had to make the decision to leave the confines of the yacht, dive under the boat and out into the wide-open sea. He was hauled into the dingy and the first thing he wanted when he got to the frigate was a cup of tea!

And while Australia glowed in international praise, the cost of the rescue mission, estimated to have been $6million and the inherent risk of the event's perilous route came under scrutiny. The Englishman said when he returned home "there was nothing but praise for Australia and her sailors and pilots." "***I owe my life to Australia, I'll never forget what their great people did for me.***"

He had been ***sozo(ed)!!*** And he was not afraid to tell the whole world!

In our passage from Ephesians, Paul clearly was reminding the members of the church of three principal topics. First, the spiritual state of the Ephesians before their conversion. Second, the change which God had made in them. Third, the purpose for which that change had been made. From our passage, Paul reminds the Christians in Ephesus that through their faith in Jesus, *(through our faith in Jesus)* each believer moves through the three clear and distinct phases. I am going to try to simplify those three areas as follows:

Before I met Jesus

Then I met Jesus

Since I met Jesus

Before I met Jesus:

Paul was reminded the Ephesians Christians to remember what their condition was before they became Christians. Let's read that passage again – just to remind ourselves of our own condition

> ***"And his fullness fills you, <u>even though you were once like corpses, dead in your sins and offenses.</u> It wasn't that long ago that you lived in the religion, customs, and values of this world, obeying the dark ruler of the earthly realm who fills the atmosphere with his authority, and works diligently in the hearts of those who are disobedient to the truth of God. The corruption that was in us from birth was expressed through the deeds and desires of our self-life. We lived by whatever natural cravings and thoughts our minds dictated, <u>living as rebellious children subject to God's wrath like everyone else</u>.***

Simply put, they were dead. Sin kills people. God had warned people of the very clear boundaries He had set in creation. You are free to eat of any of the many trees within the Garden. But the clear warning is if you disobey and go your own way, do your own thing, become your own boss, the result is – YOU WILL DIE! Paul was not scared to state very clearly that before we met Jesus, we were living as rebellious children subject to God's wrath. Be assured of this truth, God and sin cannot co-exist in the same place.

To be dead in our sin means there is a lack of feeling. There is no breath. In fact, life stinks when you're dead! Well, that's the verdict of Martha when they stood outside the tomb of Lazarus – and he had only been dead for 4 days!

In another passage Paul says ***Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behaviour.*** (Colossians 1:21 NIV). The NLT says that we were enemies of God. To be alienated is to be estranged and separated from God.

You know what, before we met Jesus, we were like Tony Bullimore under an overturned boat. We were doomed to certain death unless someone came at great expense, to knock on the hulls of our helpless situations with the offer to save us. You will remember the words in Revelation 3:20 ***Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.*** (NIV) Can you hear Tony Bullimore refusing swim out from under that boat, saying to those navy people, 'No thanks, I would rather prefer to stay here, in the middle of the vast ocean!'

I know in my own life, before I met Jesus, my life was a shambles, actually. Then I was fortunate, blessed, to meet people who had themselves met Jesus. They had responded to the invitation of Jesus. I remember looking at them in amazement. They had a joy and peace for which I had longed.

Then I met Jesus:
Let me remind you of our text for this morning. I am glad to do this – almost as glad as when Paul was at pains to remind the Ephesian Church members that a 'saved life is a different life!' ***But God still loved us with such great love. He is so rich in compassion and mercy. <u>Even when we were dead and doomed in our many sins</u>, he united us into the very life of Christ and saved us by his wonderful grace! He raised us up with Christ the exalted One, and we ascended with him into the glorious perfection and authority of the heavenly realm, for we are now co-seated as one with Christ!***
How you came to meet Jesus is very different to the way in which say Andrew or Charl or the person sitting next to you. What is of utmost importance is that we were all rescued and united and 'co-seated as one with Christ!' Now that is very different! (It smells so much better!!!) The fragrance of Jesus!

I want to make this one point, very clearly. We were saved from death ***TO*** Life. Jesus would also like to add to what I am saying - ***A thief is only there to steal and kill and destroy. I came so they can have real and eternal life, more and better life than they ever dreamed of.*** (John 10:10 MSG). Another translation of this verse says that Jesus wants '***to give us life its fullness until you overflow!'*** Here's the question. Are you and I experiencing the overflowing life of Jesus? There's room for so much more!! Do I desire to live in this new relocated area?

Since I met Jesus:

This is probably the most important part of this message. Jesus suffered death for a reason. According to our text, Paul makes this very clear

> ***Throughout the coming ages we will be the visible display of the infinite riches of his grace and kindness, which was showered upon us in Jesus Christ. For by grace you have been saved by faith. Nothing you did could ever earn this salvation, for it was the love gift from God that brought us to Christ! So no one will ever be able to boast, for salvation is never a reward for good works or human striving. <u>We have become his poetry, a re-created people that will fulfill the destiny he has given each of us, for we are joined to Jesus, the Anointed One</u>. Even before we were born, God planned in advance our destiny and the good works we would do to fulfill it!"***

Paul is speaking to each of us sitting within the confines of this auditorium. How's your favourite comforting Scripture verse from Jer 29:11? ***For I know the plans I have for you," says the LORD. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.*** (NLT2). Great verse! This is the same verse Jesus applied to his life. Too many people have accepted Jesus into their lives as an insurance plan – to save them from hell and to live a comfortable life. But Jesus went through hell, so that we don't have to go to hell. But this was part of God's plan for His Son. Hell is for those who refuse to be rescued by Jesus. Think about this:

Jesus actually rescues us from God's wrath, from the judgment of God on sin. It was never in the heart of God to send anyone to hell. Man chooses to rather go there than to heed the call of Jesus.

I am amazed that the offer of God to save us fulfils so much – that we will be the visible display of the infinite riches of God's grace and kindness. We were saved from death TO life.

One of the people who came to faith in Jesus wrote this poem. He was a great man; played cricket for England (that was before the England team became better known as the South African B Team). His name was CT Studd. (I am only quoting the first two verses of a rather lengthy poem)

Only One Life, Twill Soon Be Past **by C.T. Studd**

Two little lines I heard one day,
Traveling along life's busy way;
Bringing conviction to my heart,
And from my mind would not depart;
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.

Only one life, yes only one,
Soon will its fleeting hours be done;
Then, in 'that day' my Lord to meet,
And stand before His Judgement seat;
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.

We live in a culture where it is wrong to say something is wrong. Not only is that wrong, but it makes it even tougher to do what's right. That's why moral courage is the rarest kind of courage. It takes a daredevil to do what's right. Is this what Jesus did and won.

Today we glory in the victory of Jesus. And He has commissioned us to invade enemy territory. Hae has empowered us to knock on the hulls of the capsized boats under which so many people are living. Jesus' name means He saves – He saves people. He has saved you and me!

The glory of this day, this Good Friday, is that we are filled with gratitude that the punishment for our wilfulness has fallen on Jesus. He died my death, your death. In our place.

I started with a story. I want to end with yet another true story of Fr. Maximillian Kolbe. He was a Roman Catholic priest who stood up against the evil of Nazism. He was arrested in Poland in February of 1941, and in May sent to the Auschwitz death camp. His tattoo prisoner number was 16670. While he was there, a prisoner managed to escape. The camp commander was angry. In his anger, he decided that 10 men would randomly be selected to be starved to death, as a deterrent to any other prisoner contemplating trying to escape.

One man, Franciszek Gajowniczek, heard his name been called. He collapsed to his knees in anguish, crying out that he was a married man with children. He would never see them again. Fr. Maximillian Kolbe stepped forward and offered to take Franciszek's place. His offer was accepted. What followed were of unimaginable horror, as the men suffered the pains of dehydration and starvation. On August 14, 1941, after three weeks, Fr Max Kolbe and three other prisoners were still alive. The command was given and Fr. Kolbe and three fellow prisoners were killed with injections of carbolic acid.

Franciszek Gajowniczek, spent the remaining years of his life paying witness to a Franciscan monk who died in his stead at the Auschwitz concentration camp. He joyfully, gratefully and gladly spoke of how his life had

been preserved, how he had been rescued, saved, restored to his wife. He was overflowing with praise for Fr Maximillian Kolbe, who gave his life to save Franciszek. He died in March 1995 at the age of 94.

This begs two questions, Are you grateful that Jesus died in your place? Will the rest of your life be a declaration of gratitude?

So, my dearly beloved people of God, 'Are you saved?'

Ministry Time:

1. Are you still under the capsized boat, treading water, existing on a meagre ration of life – waiting for death to finally come your way and claim you forever? Jesus is knocking on your wrecked boat, calling out your name. You can come out from that precariously dangerous existence and be rescued, saved, healed, restored, loved and given a cup of tea
2. You may need to move on from the experience of being saved and be united with your family of fellow believers. You're saved but uninvolved in the work for which God saved you. Are you growing in your faith?
3. ***We have become his poetry, a re-created people that will fulfill the destiny he has given each of us, for we are joined to Jesus, the Anointed One.*** There are people out there to needing to know the healing, restoring, forgiving, embracing acceptance of the Jesus who rescued you. Can you tell them, with all the joy and thankfulness, ***'I owe my life to Jesus – He rescued me from death***.'
4. ***Testimony from Peter Blake:***
   Healing of his kidneys from - Stage 3 chronic kidney disease.
   'I would really want to say to anyone that it was not the god of Hinduism, Islam, Mormonism or religion that healed me but the God of Abraham and Israel, the One Who is the Alpha and the Omega, Who is before all things and in Whom all things consist, the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. Only He has the power to perform miracles, and all I can do is commit the rest of my life to Him. I have given Him thanks but my thanks just seems so minuscular in this situation. Nothing I can say or do even comes remotely close to His glory and splendour. He is the Lord!!'