

## **“Salvation: Saved from What?”**

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(adapted)

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Unitarian Christian, William Ellery Channing, the so-called Father of North American Unitarianism, wrote the following amazing words:

*Human ignorance is seen in the low ideas attached to the word “salvation.” People think that salvation is something which another may achieve for them. The word Hell, which all persons acquainted with Jewish geography know to be a metaphor...this word has done unspeakable injury. It has possessed the diseased human imagination with thoughts of torture, and turned their thoughts to Jesus as someone outside them who will deliver them. But the salvation which humanity needs is not from outside things, but is from the evil within the mind, which hardens itself against love, which makes gain its god, which shuts itself up in a dungeon of self-interest, which consents to be a slave, and which allows itself to be formed by custom, opinion and changing events. To save, in the highest sense of that word, is to heal the diseased mind, and restore it to freedom of thought, conscience and love.*

But my life has not convinced me that Hell consists of simply bad intentions in the mind, selfishness and a hard heart. I am sure that some of these problems contribute to the building up of Hells on this earth, but in my experience people don't just need to be saved from their minds, but from their conditions and situation.



FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH  
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## **Salvation**

“He who hesitates is sometimes saved.”  
-James Thurber (1894 - 1961)

“We want God to come and save us. But he won't. God doesn't stop levees from failing, stay the force of tsunamis, (or) stop planes from smashing into buildings. Deus Ex Machina is overrated.”  
-Waiter Rant, *Waiter Rant weblog*, 09-09-05

“The dogmas of the quiet past, are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise with the occasion. As our case is new, so we must think anew & act anew. We must disenthrall ourselves, and then we shall save our country.”  
-Abraham Lincoln, *Annual message to Congress, December 1, 1862*

“If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich.”  
-John F. Kennedy, *Inaugural Address, Jan. 20, 1961*

“Human salvation lies in the hands of the creatively maladjusted.”  
-Ralph Waldo Emerson

**Preliminaries** Announcements, opening reading, chalice lighting, “Saved from What?” reading.

**Opening / Chalice Lighting**  
~James A. Baldwin  
There is never time in the future in which we will work out our salvation. The challenge is in the moment; the time is always now.

**Check-in** Take a minute or two to briefly share the high point or the low point of your life since we last met.

**Reading** *Read “Salvation: Saved from What?”*  
*By Mark Belletini on the back*

**Sitting in Silence**

**Sharing / Deep Listening** Share your response to the preparation questions for this session.

**Discussion** This is a time to supportively respond to something another person said or to relate additional thoughts that may have occurred as others shared.

**Singing**  
~*My Life Flows on in Endless Song,*  
*Hymnal # 108*

My life flows on in endless song above earth's lamentation. I hear the real though far-off hymn that hails a new creation. Through all the tumult and the strife, I hear the music ringing. It sounds an echo in my soul. How can I keep from singing!

What though the tempest 'round me roars, I know the truth, it liveth. What though the darkness 'round me close, songs in the night it giveth .No storm can shake my inmost calm while to that rock I'm clinging. Since love prevails in heav'n and earth, how can I keep from singing!

When tyrants tremble as they hear the bells of freedom ringing, when friends rejoice both far and near, how can I keep from singing! To prison cell and dungeon vile, our thoughts to them are winging, when friends by shame are undefiled, how can I keep from singing!

**Closing / Extinguishing the Chalice**  
~Lynn Ungar,  
*Minister for Lifespan Learning, Church of the Larger Fellowship*

*Join hand or link arms as you say the closing words together:*

“We are saved, step by step, as we make choices that allow us to grow, to care, to connect, to build. Salvation is the entirety of that journey.”

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