

## **Series Slide**

Last week I told you a story about a King.

I'm going to tell it to you again...and then I'm going to tell you the story of another king.

In ancient times...Kings rode out to battle.

Sent back either evangelists or war advisors.

War Advisors- King has lost- you will have to defend yourselves.

Evangelists- Good News! The king has won! Now rejoice and celebrate! he's returning! Live in freedom.

Jesus also told a story about a King in the book of Matthew, chapter 18 that goes like this.

A King brings in one of his servants that owes him \$60 billion to settle up. If he doesn't pay the money back as he agreed- he and his family will have to work off the debt as slaves.

The servant begs the king, "Be patient....and I'll pay back everything."

Jesus said the King had compassion on the man...and completely forgave the debt. So the servant now owed him nothing.

Then on his way out of the King's chambers- he runs into a fellow servant that owes him about \$25,000. WAAAYYYY less than \$60 Billion. So he grabs the man and immediately starts choking him...saying "PAY ME WHAT YOU OWE ME!"

So the fellow servant fell down and started begging..."Please be patient with me and I will pay you back!"

But the first servant- who had been forgiven \$60 Billion by the king-went and threw the other man into prison until he could pay back the money he owed.

Now- the King got wind of this...and summoned the man back in and said "You evil man! I completely forgave your debt!- Shouldn't you have showed mercy to your fellow servant, who owed you much less, the way I showed mercy to you?"

And then that man was handed over to the jailers to be tortured until he could pay everything he owed.

Jesus ends that story with an incredibly challenging word. One we don't really want to hear.

**Matt 18:35**

**So also my heavenly Father will do to you unless every one of you forgives his brother or sister from your heart."**

So- here's the question.

Which one of those stories most accurately portrays the gospel and its implications?

**Title Slide "King Me: The Checkered Nature of the Only Gospel"- Romans 1:1-17 (Pg 1450)**

Exactly which one shows us what the Kingdom of God is like?

We love the first story...the King won the battle for us...and we love the implications- now we have joy and celebrate!

We love the first part of the second story- We owe a personal debt to God and he forgives it.

...but then we have some expectation, or duty, to forgive others?

That we don't love so much.

So which is it?

The answer is- the gospel and its implications are all of the above.

First- a confession to you as a logophile- a lover of words.

When I titled the sermon "King Me" I knew I had to get the word Checker into the sub-title. SO I DID.

So by checkered- i don't mean what we mean when we say "I have a checkered past"- with some good and some bad...

Rather- I mean that like a checker board is not All One color- so the gospel- though there is only ONE gospel- has characteristics and implications that can sometimes appear opposite...but actually work together to give us the whole thing.

If somebody looked at a checker board and said "That board is red." You could both agree with them...and disagree with them. It HAS red...so in that sense- yes its red. But it is not COMPLETELY red- It also has black squares...so in that sense- you could say "NO its not red."

If someone says "The gospel is that King Jesus won a victory for us we couldn't win for ourselves" OR they said "The gospel is that I've been forgiven a great debt." I can both agree with each of those statements...and disagree with both of them. Each of them

represent a part of the gospel. Neither of them represents ALL of the Good News about what Jesus did. So that is the sense in which I mean- there is only one gospel...and that gospel is checkered.

Let's dive back into Romans chapter 1- to see how.

#### **Romans 1:1-17**

**Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God —**

**2 which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures — 3 concerning his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who was a descendant of David according to the flesh 4 and was appointed to be the powerful Son of God according to the Spirit of holiness by the resurrection of the dead. 5 Through him we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the Gentiles, 6 including you who are also called by Jesus Christ.**

**7 To all who are in Rome, loved by God, called as saints.**

**Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.**

**8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you because the news of your faith is being reported in all the world. 9 God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in telling the good news about his Son — that I constantly mention you, 10 always asking in my prayers that if it is somehow in God's will, I may now at last succeed in coming to you. 11 For I want very much to see you, so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you, 12 that is, to be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine.**

**13 Now I don't want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that I often planned to come to you (but was prevented until now ) in order that I might have a fruitful ministry among you, just as I have had among the rest of the Gentiles. 14 I am obligated both to Greeks and barbarians, both to the wise and the foolish. 15 So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.**

**16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, just as it is written: The righteous will live by faith.**

#### **Transition:**

Romans, more than any other book of the Bible, gives a multi-faceted, in depth look at what the gospel is and what its implications are.

Remember- the word gospel means- "Good News" or "Good Message" or "Good Announcement".

Here's how I would define that message from what Scripture gives us.

## **Jesus, the crucified and risen Messiah, is Lord.**

Each one of those words, you can double-click on and there is a whole host of meaning behind each one...but that is the shortest summary of the gospel that you can give.

Here's the thing though- with just that statement- its hard to understand WHY that's good news. The book of Romans is going to give us all of that context, with so many of the gospel's implications- or the results of Jesus, crucified and risen Messiah- being Lord.

This passage in Romans gives you 8 of those things today in 4 points...that seem contradictory...but that together form the Red and the Black squares that make up a full checker board.

### **1) The gospel is cosmic & individual.**

When I say cosmic- I mean that the gospel has implications for the whole universe... and the gospel has implications for you...just one person.

#### **v 3-4**

Did you see what Paul wrote in his introduction? He said the gospel is "concerning the Son of God- Jesus Christ...or Jesus the Messiah...who is in the prophesied Kingly line of David...and God the Father appointed him to be the powerful Son of God... according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection."

There is nothing in there about you or me. That word LORD is an intentionally inflammatory word for the Romans.

The saying of the day was that "Caesar- their king- was LORD." Even that Caesar was the "Son of God".

The announcement of the gospel is "Good News"- Caesar is not King. There is a better King...a King of the entire cosmos. "Jesus, the crucified and risen Christ...is LORD."

The implication of that is that when Jesus died- and resurrected he took all the brokenness in the world...the very curse that creation was put under by God because of humanity's evil- that curse was absorbed in Jesus. Now all of creation will be made new. New Heavens and New Earth. It started on the day he resurrected- and will be fully completed when he returns.

#### **v 5**

When Paul finally starts talking about you and me in this verse- we are the subjects of Jesus the Lord- we have received grace- the underserved favor of a king- to bring about the obedience to the King that comes from the loyalty we have toward the king that is making all of creation brand new.

The point of the good news is that Jesus is Lord of all. All people. All things. The whole universe.

Here's a hymn from the early church that Paul quotes in his letter to Philippians. Its a summation of the gospel. And you'll notice- a lack of focus on the individual- and a heavy focus on Jesus- the cosmic- all-encompassing universal reign of King Jesus.

**Phillipians 2:6-11**

**6 [Christ Jesus], existing in the form of God,**

**did not consider equality with God**

**as something to be exploited.**

**7 Instead he emptied himself**

**by assuming the form of a servant,**

**taking on the likeness of humanity.**

**And when he had come as a man,**

**8 he humbled himself by becoming obedient**

**to the point of death —**

**even to death on a cross.**

**9 For this reason God highly exalted him**

**and gave him the name**

**that is above every name,**

**10 so that at the name of Jesus**

**every knee will bow —**

**in heaven and on earth**

**and under the earth —**

**11 and every tongue will confess**

**that Jesus Christ is Lord,**

Again- you notice in this hymn of the 1st century church- that the only mention of me and you and the rest of humanity- is that we will bow to King Jesus and say “You are our Lord!”

Jesus is LORD. He is the King. And every time I say with my words or my life- that its me that should be King of the universe...its me that should be the focus of the world’s attention- we are staging a little personal coup...our own little government overthrow. To say- The world should be run MY WAY.

KING ME!

And the Gospel says- “Its good news that Jesus is king of everything!”

Do you really think you can fix the world? Bring about healing, and justice, and peace, and wholeness?

Do you really have a plan you think that will bring about healing for everyone?

World history is littered with people that have believed they can bring Utopia- with the right government- the right technology...

At the advent of the internet- that’s what the world believed. That the internet would unite us all.

Ladies and Gentlemen of the jury- I implore you! How’s that going for us?

**Back to 1)**

It is good news that Jesus is Lord of the universe.

But how exactly do I get to be a part of that Kingdom?

This is where the individual comes in. The gospel is not just good news for the cosmos. Its good news for me...and you...for each of us as individual people.

**1:1**

First off, we don’t even have this letter if the gospel isn’t individual.

Remember this is Paul writing this letter. A few weeks ago- we were in Acts looking at Paul, who at that time was called Saul. And he had a very personal, individual encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus.

In fact, to open the letter to the Romans- Paul says that he has been individually set apart and sent out (thats what “apostle” literally means- “one who is sent”).

**v 5**

Paul says to the Xians in Rome, that- like me- each of you individually has received the individual grace of God- the forgiveness of your individual sins...and the credit for the good works of Jesus...and each of you has been sent out with the good news for others as well.

#### **v 12**

Then Paul says that he wants to be mutually encouraged by each other's faith.

That means that each of us as individuals has a responsibility and an opportunity to hear the news about Jesus' death in our place and resurrection and his promised return...and believe it.

#### **v 16**

Then Paul says the gospel is the power of God to save- not merely groups of people- but people one at a time. Every ONE who believes.

#### **Back to 1)**

Here's how the cosmic & individual work together to end distortions of the only gospel.

Some people only want to embrace the cosmic nature of Jesus' Lordship. "He's going to fix everything broken."- but they don't want to embrace the individual nature of the gospel, because that means they have to admit they have individual sin. And that...is not pleasant.

Others want to believe that the gospel is only good news to individuals. That there is no larger Kingdom where Jesus is Lord. In this way, the gospel simply becomes "sin management"- where Jesus clears you of your guilt...then you go off and do whatever it is you feel like doing.

But if the gospel is cosmic- if Jesus is Lord of all- it means that when he forgives me and redeems me- he sets me apart as subject in his Kingdom. I stop saying "King ME!" and when Jesus says, "Who will go for me? Who will be sent out to bring about the obedience to the gospel?"- that's where I gladly reply- "KING, MY KING- ME! I'll Go!"

If you are going to say that its good news that Jesus is Lord of all, then he has to be Lord of you!

**Transition:** That brings me to the next set of Red & Black squares...

#### **2) The gospel is offensive & comforting.**

I've heard the gospel preached sometimes like its only bad news. There is a whole tradition of preaching in the fundamentalists churches where you would struggle to

understand if anybody really believed the gospel was good news. Because most of the preaching is about how bad you are.

Which is strange since Jesus himself said things like when he quoted the prophet Isaiah in Matthew chapter 12 that Isaiah's prophecy was about him.

**Matt 12:18**

**18 Here is my servant whom I have chosen,**

**my beloved in whom I delight;**

**I will put my Spirit on him,**

**and he will proclaim justice to the nations.**

**19 He will not argue or shout,**

**and no one will hear his voice in the streets.**

**20 He will not break a bruised reed,**

**and he will not put out a smoldering wick,**

**until he has led justice to victory.**

**21 The nations will put their hope in his name.**

or what he says just before that in Matthew 11

**Matt 11:28-30**

**28 "Come to me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, because I am lowly and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."**

The fact that Jesus is Lord- is a great comfort to us. He is like no other teacher, no other leader, no other king. He is gentle with people who have been hurt and abused. He doesn't come to put lofty expectations on you to prove yourself.

His name is our Hope. JESUS means that God Saves.

He doesn't argue or shout- Strange how many people that say they follow Jesus do a lot of arguing and shouting...when Jesus himself says he does neither.

Strange how many people heap burdens on others in the name of Jesus- while Jesus himself says "I came to give you rest".

Strange how so many people that claim to follow Jesus use his name to condemn others- when Jesus himself said this...



**John 3:17**

**For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.**

Now- look what Paul says here

**Romans 1:16**

ON one hand- he says the gospel is the power of God for salvation. That is a great comfort.

On the other hand- Paul says “I’m not ashamed” of the gospel- which means- if it takes courage to say “I’m not ashamed” there must be something about the gospel that people take offense to.

Indeed- the very comforts of the gospel...often start with offenses. Let me give you 4 of those now.

**Back to 2)**

- 1) The gospel tells us that our salvation is free and undeserved- that is insulting. This offense of the gospel tells you that you are such a spiritual failure that the only way to gain salvation is for it to be a complete gift. This offends every person that thinks of themselves as moral or religious that thinks their human decency gives them an advantage over people that look at as less moral.

Jesus dealt with this all the time with the Pharisees. BTW, that’s exactly what Paul- who is writing this letter- was. A Pharisee. That was killing Christians because he so hated the idea that people were claiming there was a way to know God that bypassed his morality. You know how deeply offended you have to be to murder?

Right now- can you think of a category of person- who it would make you nervous for them- even having been saved and submitted themselves to the same Jesus you do... that you put them in a sub-category because you feel like you have at least a slight moral advantage over them.

Where does it offend you that someone else gets the same status as you in the church of Jesus and the Kingdom of our Lord?

- 2) The gospel insults us by telling us that Jesus had to die for us. That we are so wicked that only the death of God’s own son could save us. This is incredibly offensive to anyone who believes that your life mission is that you are basically good...and that your life mission is to be authentic self and express that innate goodness to others.

You cannot be a part of the cult of expressive individualism...that says to the world “KING ME!” at the same time a servant in the in Kingdom of our Lord Jesus.

3) The gospel- when it tells us that the only way to come to God- to be a part of the Kingdom of God is to come through faith in Jesus- his death and resurrection- that offends the notion that any nice and sincere person can find God “in their own way”.

The gospel is incredibly inclusive- Greeks and Barbarians. Jews and Gentiles. Wise and Foolish. ...but it is also exclusive- there is only ONE gospel...and only ONE way to be saved...in Jesus our King.

4) The gospel tells us that God was glorified and Jesus saved us through suffering and serving, not conquering and destroying- which means to follow Jesus also means to suffer and serve with him. This is offensive to anyone who wants to follow Jesus into an easy life of domination and opulence. of Riches and fame. OF safety and comfort.

There is no believing the gospel while you make your life mission to be safe and comfortable. OR, parents- while you make it your life mission to make your kids safe and comfortable.

### **3) The gospel frees us from doing anything...and sends us to do a lot of things.**

Remember the 2 stories of the 2 Kings I told you about to start us out today?

The message of both those Kings was- “I have done something for you, that you couldn’t do yourselves.”

One King fought a battle that his subjects could not fight for themselves. He won a victory that they could not have won for themselves.

The other King- forgave a debt that his servant could not pay.

In both those stories- the message of the gospel is- YOU CAN REST. YOU CAN STOP WORRYING ABOUT PAYING BACK A DEBT YOU OWE TO GOD. HE HAS FORGIVEN YOU.

YOU CAN REST. BECAUSE OF JESUS- THE CONDEMNATION YOU WERE UNDER FOR YOUR SIN- HAS BEEN ABSORBED AND PAID FOR BY JESUS. YOU DON’T HAVE TO FIGHT A BATTLE TO PROVE YOURSELF OR FIGHT A BATTLE TO SAVE THE WORLD FROM ITSELF. Celebrate! Rejoice! Jesus has done everything so you don’t have to do anything.

But don’t you see? Freedom never means the absence of responsibility. It never means the absence of purpose or mission.

Just ask any person that retires- 5 years into retirement. Most people will not tell you that the ideal life is abandoning all responsibility and sitting around all day doing nothing...or even playing golf or traveling.

Ever notice how often when people retire- they end up working a job. Maybe a volunteer position, maybe paid. Doesn't matter.

Most retired people are not doing that because they need the money. They are doing it because they know...and feel in their bones...that a life of flourishing and beauty is never just about consuming- its always about cultivating.

In fact, research shows that there is a sharp correlation between retirement and a degenerating mind. People that actively engage in meaningful work beyond 65 stay mentally and socially sharper than those that don't.

In a way- the question we all must answer when we believe the gospel is this- "Now that you don't HAVE to work to earn your salvation- WHAT are you going to do?"

As the late Xian philosopher Dallas Willard said,

**"Grace is opposed to earning, not effort."- Dallas Willard**

Thats why there are implications of the gospel...that the gospel motivates us to live in.

Yes- one of those is joyfully celebrating and worshipping Jesus, our King.

But there are many, many more.

**12:1**

Look what Paul writes later in Romans. The expected response to God's mercy- is that our entire lives are lived as a sacrifice to God. Holy (or set apart) and pleasing to him.

It makes no sense that Jesus frees us from our sin- which is NOT honoring God as our creator and Father.

So that we can...what...keep on NOT honoring him as our creator and Father?

**2 Corinthians 5:19-21**

**That is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and he has committed the message of reconciliation to us.**

**20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us. We plead on Christ's behalf, "Be reconciled to God."**

Paul describes our role now, having believed the gospel as Ambassadors. You know what an ambassador is?

Represents a country, or kingdom, by taking the culture of that Kingdom to another country to say- this is what our country is like. This is what our king is like. Taste and see that he is Good.

### **Romans 1:13**

Paul says he wants to have a fruitful ministry among the people of Rome.

In other words- I want to bring to Rome some of the fruits from the Kingdom of Christ.

### **v 14-15**

He says he is both obligated...and eager...to preach the gospel to everyone.

Think about that. Obligate and eager. That's a sense of duty...and a sense of positive expectation.

Remember the servant that was forgiven the debt...and then went and choked the guy that owed him a lot less?

He completely missed both the obligation and eagerness to be an ambassador for the King that forgave him his debt.

First- He didn't think through- wow- I have been forgiven so much. In receiving this kings forgiveness- I have forfeited my RIGHT to hold others in debt.

He also forgot the JOY he felt when he was forgiven. Because when you are forgiven that much...you want to share that joy.

If you've ever seen any version of "A Christmas Carol" you know what happens to Ebenezer Scrooge when he is given his life back. He immediately overflows to share life with others. He sees what he has been forgiven...that though death had a claim on his life...he now lives. He is born again. And those he used to hold in contempt for what they owed him...he now not only forgives their debt..but overflows his gifts to Tiny Tim.

Because...God has blessed us every one.

### **Back to 3)**

1 Have you received this individually from Jesus?

2) City Church- are you ready to fully embrace our joyful and eager obligation to preach the gospel to this city?