



What is the Gospel?

September 2014

The Gospel of Grace

“The truth of the gospel is the principle article of all Christian doctrine ... Most necessary is that we know this article well, teach it to others, and beat it into their heads continually.”

- Martin Luther, Preface to Galatians

At Life Journey Church you'll hear us talk a lot about the gospel. We want to be a grace-driven, gospel-centered church; a community of people daily applying the gospel to our lives and committed to taking the gospel into our city and around the world. But to do this, we must have a firm grasp of what we mean when we say, “the gospel”; what the gospel is, what it isn't, and what that means for us.

COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS OF THE GOSPEL

Morality code, ethical example; be a better person

Social justice; help others

Prosperity Gospel –health and wealth

Any mixture of grace and law

WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

The Gospel is the Good News!

The word Gospel comes from the Greek word *euangelion*:

- “eu” meaning “good”,

- “angelion” meaning “message”.

It is a good news about something that has happened. What has happened?

THE GOOD NEWS STARTED BEFORE THE WORLD EVEN BEGAN.

In eternity past God decided to reveal the full measure of who He is by creating all that is. While creation in itself is beyond amazing, God's desire wasn't simply to walk with His creation as in the garden, but to be joined to His creation demonstrating the fullness of Himself.

God certainly revealed His power and might in the creation of the universe, but He revealed the depth of His justice, mercy, love, and grace by redeeming man from sin. So when God created man, His plan was not complete. His plan wasn't to walk beside him, but in fact to dwell inside him.

THE GOOD NEWS WAS PROMISED THROUGHOUT THE OLD COVENANT.

Most of the time when we think of the gospel we think of the New Covenant, and there's good reason for that, but the good news of God's grace didn't show up for the first time in the New Covenant. It was promised all throughout the Old Covenant.

The Old Covenant would be the time from creation through the cross. It is all the books of the Old Testament and the vast majority of the first four books of the New Testament. Simply put, the Old Covenant was marked by behavior. Behavior was thought to be the basis of appeasing God. This was true in the garden of Eden. As long as Adam and Eve didn't sin, they would walk with the Lord. If they sinned they would be rejected and die. The Old Covenant is also called "The Covenant of Works". What a terrible way to live! Your everything was dependent up on your ability to live perfectly. Good luck, right!

During this time of the Old Covenant, God gave Moses what we call the Mosaic Law. It was a collection of 613 laws starting with the famous 10 Commandments. God gave these to Moses for a clear purpose: to increase sinning and to show the need for salvation. (*Romans 5:20 "Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more."*)

The promise of a coming New Covenant marked by grace and not by behavior was made throughout the Old Covenant. Look at some of the following examples:

1. Genesis 3:15 - Immediately following the very first sin of Adam and Eve.
2. Deuteronomy 30:6 - Even during the giving of the Law, Grace was promised.
3. Jeremiah 31:31-37 - In Israel's darkest moment the promise was made of a New Covenant not based on behavior, but on God's Grace.
4. Ezekiel 36:22-32 - God promises life will replace death. Grace will replace Law.

THE GOOD NEWS WAS HIDDEN IN THE OLD COVENANT BUT IS NOW REVEALED IN THE NEW.

In Colossians 1:24-29 Paul says that his mission was to make Christ known to everyone. He says that Christ (the Word of God) was *“the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints.”* Jesus Christ was hidden all throughout the Old Covenant so that, when the time was perfect, He would be revealed to the world, specifically to those who would trust in Him for salvation.

The good news of Grace didn't just show up on day in Bethlehem. Everything in the Old Covenant (Genesis through His death) was a shadow of Him. Every law, every dealing of God, every event, all of it were shadows of Jesus. Some examples:

1. The Ark of Genesis' Flood - All in Christ are safe from God's judgment.
2. The Fire & Smoke in the center of the Nation of Israel - Christ now in us surrounded by our flesh.
3. The manna from heaven - Christ is our sustenance.
4. David killing Goliath - Christ has slain the enemy and we now walk in His victory.

THE GOOD NEWS SHOWS THE “MANIFOLD WISDOM OF GOD”.

We must see that the good news is more about God than it is about us, and that's good news! The good news of God's grace was and is God's way of showing off to all who would see the incredible wisdom of God.

In Ephesians 3:1-13, Paul is again talking about his mission. He says his mission was to, *“to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things, so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him.”*

Paul is saying that the eternal purpose of God was to hide the reality of Christ in order to reveal Him at a certain time, creating the church which demonstrates *“the manifold wisdom of God.”* It's as if all the demons of hell (rulers and authorities) thought they had won! They had deceived the human race and sin had destroyed everything. There was no apparent way out for God. But God had an Ace up His sleeve that no one new about—Jesus!

THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT JESUS TOTALLY SATISFIED THE WRATH OF GOD AGAINST OUR SIN.

When Jesus entered the world through the womb of a virgin, the secret was out. One of the first things that the devil did was to tempt Jesus to abandon His mission and follow him (Matthew 4). But Jesus knew the plan of God and, empowered by the Spirit of God, resisted all temptation and began His ministry.

Central to the message of Jesus was “REPENTANCE”. Repentance is a big, mostly incorrectly used word, meaning “change your mind”. Jesus was calling the people of Israel to change their minds regarding what it took to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Up to this point the understanding of what it took was all based on behavior. But Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection would usher in the New Covenant, which is also based on behavior, but not the behavior of mankind, but the behavior of Jesus Christ Himself.

Jesus lived a perfect life, perfectly fulfilling every single last requirement of the law. Upon being falsely accused, Jesus suffered an excruciating death on a Roman cross. In the six hours on the cross the full cup of God’s wrath was poured out on Jesus. Wave after wave of righteous wrath against our sin that was placed into Jesus. The cup of wrath poured out until ultimately the cup was empty and Jesus released His spirit and died. In His death, He totally removed God’s wrath against our sin. He was buried. Three days later He rose from the dead having now conquered death itself.

THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT JESUS REVERSED THE CURSE.

Jesus undid what was done in Genesis 3. When Adam and Eve disobeyed, sin, like a parasite, entered into the human race. As a result, death entered into the human race. Romans 6 and 7 teach us that because of sin in us at birth our spirit is dead. Sin has entangled our dead spirit and our sinful flesh by the power of the law.

Jesus reversed that! By becoming a curse for us, He actually reversed the curse on us. When someone trusts in the work of Jesus, the dead inner spirit (inner man) and the flesh are separated. The old man is buried like Christ was buried, and a new inner man is given. This new man is also called the New Creation. It’s created by God. It’s what Jesus tells Nicodemus in John 3 must happen in order to enter the Kingdom of God. It’s what Jeremiah 31 and Ezekiel 36 spoke about. A new heart!

But the new heart is only as good as the new life. The new life that we are given in the new creation is not our old life improved. It is actually the life of Christ! Read Galatians 2:20, “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And

the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

The death of Jesus has defeated the death we deserve. In fact, when we believe in Jesus, we died, were buried and even raised with Jesus. Because Christ's life is now our new life, we are perfectly accepted by the Father! There's no way to improve the life of Christ! His life is our life if we have repented and placed our faith in Jesus—that is if we have changed our minds, if we have transferred our trust from our selves to Jesus.

THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT SINNING ISN'T COUNTED AGAINST US ANY LONGER.

While Sin has ended in the new creation, we certainly still sin. But the good news is that the sinning that happens in our flesh is not counted against us any more. Jeremiah 31:34 says, *"for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."* In counting all our sins against Jesus, the Father counts them no longer against us. In order for the Father to count our sins against us, Jesus would have had to of failed at what He did on the cross. If Jesus failed in any way on the cross, then we are hopeless as our hope lies in the resurrection of Jesus. The resurrection shows us that the cross worked. Romans 4:25 *"Jesus was delivered up because of our trespasses and raised because of our justification."*

Further, 2 Corinthians 5:19 says, *"God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them."* The whole purpose of the cross was for the Father to put our sin on Jesus so that in crushing Jesus, the Father crushed our sins.

THE GOOD NEWS IN CHRIST WE ARE NOW BLAMELESS.

Matthew 12:1-6 *"At that time Jesus went through the grain-fields on the Sabbath, and His disciples became hungry and began to pick the heads of grain and eat. 2 But when the Pharisees saw this, they said to Him, "Look, Your disciples do what is not lawful to do on a Sabbath." 3 But He said to them, "Have you not read what David did when he became hungry, he and his companions, 4 how he entered the house of God, and they ate the consecrated bread, which was not lawful for him to eat nor for those with him, but for the priests alone? 5 Or have you not read in the Law, that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple break the Sabbath and are innocent? 6 But I say to you that something greater than the temple is here."*

As the One greater than the temple and the temple bread, all those who are in Jesus and Jesus in them are now blameless. Everything about Jesus is now ours if we believe in Him. His life is our life. His righteousness is our righteousness. His sonship is our sonship. His

glory is our glory. His sanctification is our sanctification. His perfection is our perfection. His obedience is our obedience. His light is our light. His fruit is our fruit.

SO WHAT'S LEFT FOR US TO DO?

Colossians 1:12-14 *“giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”*

Jesus has done everything to join us to the Father. We are complete in Jesus. There's nothing left for us to do to improve that! Can our works improve Christ? Can our sins disqualify Christ? Christ is our righteousness now! Our joy is now to say “THANK YOU”! As what has happened inwardly in our hearts starts making it to our heads—the renewal of the mind—Christ's very life begins to manifest through us. The fruit of Christ's Spirit is *“love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.”*