

How the Gospel Changes How We View Ourselves

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 20 July 2014

Preacher: Seth Lewis

[0 : 0 0] Great to be here. We've been wanting to come to this church for quite some time, and it's great to be here. I get to be here on a Sunday. Just a bit of background. My name is Seth, as I said. My wife is in the back. She's Jessica, and we've got a little two-year-old girl back there.

She just turned two, Rebecca, and two boys, Daniel and David, as well. So, yeah, we both, as you can probably tell, are from America, but we've been living in y'all for the last about five and a half years, working to help the team that is working to start that church there from Middleton.

So we did go to Middleton for a while, so we like Middleton. It's a good place. But we also, we love it in y'all. So, what I'm going to just share with you this morning, I think it's something that's maybe familiar, maybe even too familiar.

We've heard it a thousand times, many of us. We've gotten to the point where we can really quite easily recite the main points without even thinking.

And we hear somebody else start talking about it, and we just can tune out because, oh, sure, I know this already. But maybe, maybe we're not really familiar enough.

[1 : 2 3] Maybe it's just words that we're saying, and it's, we've forgotten what they really mean. Maybe the power and the wonder of what we're talking about is lost in familiarity, is lost because it's just so ordinary to us, because we've just heard it too many times.

And that is, of course, the gospel, the good news. The good news that starts with an amazing creator. Like we were reading earlier, I didn't tell you to read it, but it is perfect, because in Psalm 8 it says, When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars which you've ordained, what is man that you are mindful of him?

I want you to catch something in there. He says the heavens, the whole universe, that God didn't even have to use his full strength to create these things.

He was able to make them, it says the picture is, with his fingers. As if the universe is something so small that God had to use his fingers to make it.

This is how big a God we are talking about. A God that is so big that the universe to him is something small that he makes with his fingers.

[2 : 4 3] This is the same God who knits us together before we're born. This is the God who is the perfection and the definition of everything good, of everything wonderful.

This is God. But this is the God that we ignore. This is the God that we decided wasn't really worth listening to, wasn't really worth our time or our attention.

This is the God that we decided doesn't really have a clue about what's best for me. So I'm going to take matters into my own little tiny hands that can't create universes.

They can only take what God's already created and make different things out of them. We're going to take matters into our own tiny little fingers and try to sort things out and say, Well, God, you know what?

Leave me alone because I'm going to handle my own little universe myself. Thank you very much. And in so doing, we have made ourselves worthy of the wrath of this God.

- [3 : 49] And yet the gospel, the good news, is that this is the same God, the one that we rebelled against, is the same God who didn't leave us to rot in our rebellion.
- This is the God who died to take the punishment so that we, the tiny little specks of dust who hated him, wouldn't have to take the punishment that we deserved.
- And this is the God who defeated death once and for all so that he could give life and change treasonous rebels like us into his adopted children.
- That's good news. And this is the God who no longer condemns his children, but works all things together for good. That's the gospel.
- That's good news. It's not some feel-good fairy story. It's not a hopeful fiction. It's not some little thing that's written in an old book.
- [4 : 51] It's the foundation of reality. And it's the foundation of our lives. I want you to turn to, if you've got one of the church Bibles, it's 1161.
- It's 2 Corinthians, chapter 5, page 1161. And we'll start in verse 14, just read a few verses.
- So 2 Corinthians 5, 14 says, So from now on, we regard no one from a worldly point of view.
- Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has gone.
- The new has come. And we were singing about that earlier. The old has gone. The new has come. A new creation. The new has come. Everything is made new.
- [6 : 08] The gospel changes everything. Like he was saying earlier, that it's the news that changes the whole thing.
- That changes everything about everything. It's more essential, and I'd say it permeates the world more completely than the air that we breathe. And it affects everything.
- So what we're going to do is this week, we'll look at how does the gospel change, how does it change my perspective on myself? Because it says here, we should no longer live for ourselves, but for him who dies.
- It also says, we regard no one from a worldly point of view. That if anyone is in Christ, he's a new creation. It changes everything. So what we're going to focus on this week is to say, how does the gospel change how I view myself?
- My perspective on myself. And then next week, we'll look more into how does the gospel change my view of others, and how I relate to others. What does it mean to not regard them from a worldly point of view, and how does the gospel change my view of them?
- [7 : 17] But the first, for this week, we'll say, how does the gospel change my perspective of myself? And I think the first thing we can say about it, if we're looking at God, and how great and big God is, then the gospel really exposes who I really am.
- It changes my view of myself because it exposes who I really am. The first thing it shows us is that compared to God, I'm pretty small. Understatement of the century.
- But compared to God, my fingers are small fingers. They can't do very much. The picture in Psalm 8 is that God's fingers create universes.
- So I'm pretty small compared to that. Another thing that we see when we look at the gospel is that my sin is extremely serious.
- It's not something I can brush aside. It's not something, it doesn't really matter. It's very serious because I've rejected my creator, and I've rebelled against my rightful king.
- [8 : 22] And this is serious. Because of who God is, my sin is serious. And I fully deserve his wrath. But the gospel also shows us that God, well, like the song was saying, I'm special because God has loved me.

Not because of something I've done, but because God has loved me. And he has been willing to give himself, to die my death, because I had no strength or ability to do it.

So the gospel shows us that basically God didn't, God couldn't just tell us, you know, 10 steps to get to heaven or something, and we could just sort it out on our own. There was no ability in us.

We couldn't do it ourselves. My view of myself changes because I, I have no ability to make it back to God. But he had to die for me to do that.

But he was willing to do it. Which shows both that I am totally unable to save myself, and also that God loves me very much, and values me, and wants to. So all of these things, I think, have an effect on us.

[9 : 28] And the fact, the first effect, I think, would be, it just has to kill our pride. There's no room for pride in the gospel. I mean, what good can we claim in comparison to God's good?

What accomplishments can we claim in comparison to God's accomplishments? And, I mean, it's laughable, but what moral superiority could we ever claim when our sin had to be paid for by Christ's death?

We have no pride. We have no space for pride. And Ralph was reading earlier, when Paul said, you know, whatever was gained to me, I consider loss for the sake of Christ.

And what is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things, and consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ, and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness that comes from God.

So even the good that we have was not a good that we could create ourselves. Even the good that we have is a good that we were given from God. So Paul says, everything that he was proud of, everything that he valued before, is a loss to him compared to the treasure that he's found in Christ, and having Christ's righteousness.

[10 : 53] So there's just absolutely no room for pride in the gospel. No room for it at all. But on the other hand, humility grows very well.

Humility grows very well in the soil of the gospel. But I don't want you to misunderstand me because humility is not just talking badly about myself. That's not necessarily humility at all.

Because whether we're talking good about ourselves, building ourselves up, or whether we're downing ourselves and talking badly about ourselves, a lot of times, they have something in common.

In both of those cases, really the focus is ourselves. So whether we're talking ourselves up or we're talking ourselves down, we're still talking about ourselves.

We're still putting ourselves in the spotlight. We're still putting ourselves in the center. And the gospel has the effect of taking us out of the center.

[11 : 56] C.S. Lewis says it this way, that humility is not thinking less of yourself. It's thinking of yourself less. It's keeping ourselves in proper perspective.

It's realizing that we really are not the center of the universe. And it was a shocker. It's hard for us to remember. It's hard for us to keep that. Even though we may know it's true, it's hard to actually live that way.

Because we tend to look out for number one. And we tend to look out for number one because we feel like nobody else is going to do it as well as we will. We tend to think that if we don't look out for ourselves, who else is going to do it?

We don't really trust that God is going to, really has our best interest in mind. But what does the gospel do to this? The gospel proves, without a shadow of a doubt, that God is better at looking out for our best interest than we are.

Much better. Much better than we are. So it frees us. It frees us to take ourselves out of the spotlight and to put God there.

[13 : 10] And it proves that I don't deserve my own devotion. I don't deserve my own love as much as God does. Really, He's the one that's worthy of my love, worthy of my total commitment, that I'm not the one that's worthy of those things.

So humility grows well in the gospel. And it frees us from our constant obsession with ourselves. It frees us to look to God.

To put Him in the center where He belongs. Which is a very, very freeing thing when it comes to daily life. So the gospel shows who I am. That's the first thing.

It puts me in perspective by showing me really who God is and how I relate to Him. But it does more than that. It changes my view of myself not only by showing me who I am but also by freeing me from the power of sin.

Paul said in Romans 8, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. So the gospel frees me from the power of sin by freeing me from the guilt of sin.

[14 : 17] Because of what Christ has done, God does not condemn. Forgiveness is offered, forgiveness is given and it is complete. And that's extremely, extremely important for us to remember in our daily lives.

1 John says that if we confess our sins, He is faithful to forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. So we don't have to live in the muck of guilt.

We don't have to live with this weight of condemnation over our heads. We're free. We really are free. And even though we may feel guilty, we have, the Bible says, the accuser that tries to accuse us before God.

The devil tries to make us feel guilty. But you know, even he doesn't really believe it. I mean, he doesn't care if we follow God's law. He'd rather we didn't.

But he does care if he can drive a wedge between us and God and our guilt when it's already been paid for. feeling guilty after we're not is a wedge that is driven between us and God.

[15 : 22] So if we, as God's children, if we really are God's children, if we're not, then yes, we are guilty. But if we really are God's children and Christ has really paid for our sin, then we're not guilty.

God doesn't see us that way. Not even, the devil doesn't even see us that way because he doesn't, he doesn't want us to obey God. So really, we'd be the only ones that would see ourselves as guilty if we're in Christ.

And the cure for that is to trust God and believe what he says. That it really is true that he has taken all of our guilt. That he really means what he says and that his forgiveness is real.

And that he really can cleanse us from all unrighteousness. So if we look at ourselves, it's easy to despair because we see all the reasons that we would be guilty.

But if we look to Christ, we see that our sin really is paid for. And we have to trust, trust him that he really is saying the truth. But the gospel goes further in freeing us from sin.

[16 : 31] Not only does, not only does God declare us not guilty because of Jesus, but he also fills us full of himself. Paul prayed to the Ephesians, he prayed for the Ephesians that they would be filled up to the fullness of God.

Jesus also promised that he who comes to me will not hunger, he who believes in me will not thirst. See, the power, the draw of sin is that it promises to fill us.

It promises to fill those places in us where we are longing for satisfaction. We're longing for something to fill our hungry, our empty places.

And sin makes all these promises that yes, it can fill us. Of course it lies. It can't. It doesn't deliver on the promises. It leaves us more empty than before.

But the draw of sin is that it promises all of these things and it promises to fill a hunger that really is there. We are hungry for satisfaction. But what if we were full?

[17 : 39] What if we were already full of the goodness of God? What if we were full of real satisfaction? What would that do to sin's draw for us? Proverbs says it this way, One who is full loathes honey from the comb, but to the hungry even what is bitter tastes sweet.

That when we're full, even things that look sweet, we don't want them because we're already full. So the pull of sin, the power of sin to draw us and attract us is disarmed when we're full of God's goodness.

If we stay close to Him, then sin actually loses its power to attract us because we already have the real thing. We already have real satisfaction and all those empty promises start to lose their power.

So the gospel, it shows me who I am, but it also grants me the freedom to pursue real joy and real satisfaction in God without the burden of trying to appease Him or trying to pay for the debt that we've owed Him because He's already done that.

So it frees us up to fill ourselves full of God's goodness without having to try to earn that. So it frees us from sin, from the guilt of sin and from the power of sin.

[18 : 59] But even that, that's not all because the gospel also gives us a confident hope for the future. We already said the gospel proves without a doubt that God has our best interest in mind.

I mean, it's obvious that God is willing to do whatever it takes to secure our goods in His glory. So, I mean, what we can say is that, you know, like Paul said, He who spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not also with Him freely give us all things?

God was willing to do the ultimate thing to save us. So, how can we not trust Him for all of the smaller things as well? Paul says that all things work together for good.

We've said it a few times today. All things work together for good for those who love God and are called according to His purpose. He even said that we can exalt in our tribulations, in the hard things, because they make us more like Christ.

There's a guy called Milton Vincent. He wrote a great little book called The Gospel Primer for Christians. I got some of the ideas for the sermon from that book, actually. I highly recommend it. But he said it this way.

[20 : 16] He said, The Gospel is not just one piece of good news that fits into my life somewhere among all the bad things. The Gospel actually makes genuinely good news out of every other aspect of my life, including my severest trials.

The good news about my trials is that God is forcing them to bow to His Gospel purpose and to do good unto me by improving my character and making me more conformed to the image of Christ.

And Paul says it this way, Our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So God has promised us that He will work all things and He means all things for good, for those who love Him.

He's promised us a future, He's promised us an inheritance for those who are in Him that is beyond anything that we can imagine and makes all the troubles of this life seem light and momentary in comparison.

And He's done more than enough to prove that He is able to keep His promises and that He really does mean what He says. Peter says in His great mercy He's given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade which is kept in heaven for you.

[21 : 44] So the gospel changes how I view myself because it changes, it shows me really who I am in comparison to who God is.

It puts me in perspective but it also frees me from guilt which would be natural if it was just, if the gospel only showed me myself in comparison to God, it would make me despair.

But the gospel frees me from the guilt of my sin and lets me pursue joy in God and real satisfaction and real life in God and lets me go after that freely to a God who is happy to give and wants to give life to us.

and it gives me this confident hope for the future that no matter what tomorrow brings, no matter what the future brings while I'm here on earth, that I have this confident hope that God is working, He is forcing all things to work for my good.

So what is our response to all of this? Well, I think there's a few things. Obviously, we've talked about it already, but one is that just, we're humble, we're humbled because we recognize that God is ultimate.

[23 : 07] He's the one in the center stage. He's the one that the universe is about. So we are humbled, we are put in our place, but not devalued because God has shown great value for us and that He loved us and was willing to give His Son for us.

So yes, humility is one response, but also obedience. And I think obedience because we recognize that God's commands, they're coming from this God who loved us and was willing to do anything, so much to save us.

So these commands are coming from this God who has proven that He wants what's best for us. So our obedience, even when we don't see clearly why it would be best for us, we can recognize that it's coming from a God who does know and does do what is best for us.

And so we delight to obey because of the commands, where the commands are coming from and because they bring us closer to Him. I think also all of this makes us thankful.

Basically, we deserved a cup full of God's wrath. We deserved, you know, a cup that just all the way full of God's wrath for our sin.

[24 : 25] and yet Jesus drank all of that wrath for us. But He didn't just leave it empty. If He had left it empty with no wrath, that would be something to be amazed at.

But He didn't. He didn't leave it empty. He filled it again. The Bible says He's given us every spiritual blessing. That He's filled us to overflowing with His blessings.

So, not only has Jesus drained every drop of God's wrath against us, there's none of it left. But He's also filled us so full that we are overflowing with God's blessings.

That should make us overflow with thankfulness forever. Also, it results in our ability to love.

The Bible says we love because He first loved us. He's shown us, He's proved to us what love really is. He's defined love for us. And He's given us the ability, by Him loving us, He's given us the ability to love Him in return and to even show that love to others, which we'll talk about more next week.

[25 : 34] But also, He's given us access to Him at all times. The Bible says that we can come boldly, we can come confidently before the throne of grace because there's nothing standing in the way because of what Jesus has done.

Our sin is paid for. We can come boldly before God at any time and approach Him in prayer as we would approach our Father because He is our adopted Father who loves to hear and loves to answer the prayers of His children.

So we have this access to God. But also, I think that all of this makes us, gives us the ability to really just forget ourselves because our lives we're free to actually focus on the one who is really worthy of all of our love, all of our devotion, and all of the glory and honor and praise forever.

And there's a huge amount of freedom in just being able to look outside of ourselves and not be so consumed with myself and all the things about me and trying to force everything to fit into what I want and to actually live with an outward focus and with a God focus.

So there's a huge amount of freedom in just self-forgetfulness. And I think we could go on and on. This gospel, like I said, it's more essential and it permeates the world much more than the air that we breathe.

[27 : 03] The implications reach into everything, literally everything. But these are a few things, that it changes the way that I view myself, that it changes my standing before God, it takes care of my guilt, makes me free to pursue Him and joy in Him and it also gives me this confident hope for the future.

But I think we can constantly just live our lives out of the overflow of all the amazing things that the gospel teaches us about God and about ourselves because it just changes everything.

So, yeah, next week we'll continue by just seeing how this truth of the gospel changes our relationships with others.

So, I hope to see you then. just do now. I do thing