

What is a gospel church?

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[0:00] In this world where there are many voices, we ask that our ears might hear the voice of the Good Shepherd, and that hearing Him, we believe Him, rejoice in Him, and follow Him.

We might hear the very voice of Almighty God speaking to us as we consider these things. So help hearer and speaker alike, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Amen. Excuse me a sec. So we're thinking about this matter of what is a gospel church.

So in these next four Sundays, I'd like us to think we're looking forward about what sort of church we are and what sort of church we want to be in the future, and what is essential.

We can be flexible in lots of things, but what's essential that we want to really hang on to with every ounce of strength that we have. That's what I'd like us to be thinking about.

[1:21] And I want to say, what is a gospel church? So you know that if you walk around, you see different churches with different things written on the outside of them. They have different labels.

Catholic, Protestant, Pentecostal, Baptist, Charismatic, Anglican, Methodist, all different sorts of churches.

And for most people, they would say, well, you know, what does it matter? They're all churches. They're all much the same, aren't they?

They might think they're much the same in a good way, or they might think they're much the same in a fairly relevant way. And sort of wisdom might say, well, you know, there's so few Christians these days, why don't they just all band together and become all together, all of them?

I mean, what's the downside to that? Isn't it wrong to be divisive? And then we might say, well, where does Calvary Evangelical Church fit into this?

[2:23] So I've given it the full name, Calvary Evangelical Church. I don't always do that because I think the word evangelical is not always understood. And I don't want people misunderstanding.

But anyway, I'm giving it the full title today, Calvary Evangelical Church. And as we go forward, should we be the slightest bit bothered? Should we be the slightest bit bothered about this business of being a gospel church?

And I think the answer to that lies in what does God say about this? What does God the Father, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Spirit of Jesus have to say in this matter?

So what is a gospel church? So first let me do something with words. You know that I like words. You have to bear with me if you're not a words person. So let's think of this about evangelical. Evangelical.

Think, what is evangelical? An evangelical church. An evangelical person. What is that? So in ordinary language, people mistake this and they say, he has evangelical zeal about eating pork pies or something like that.

[3:37] Meaning pushy. Meaning keen. You know, it's very evangelical about, oh I don't know, you know, something that people get keen on.

Eating vegetables, for example. And then when you think of Christians, evangelical Christians, it actually, even Christians think along, it's what you sing.

So putting it in a rather cruel way, they like to sing mindless Christian songs. So the typical caricature of an evangelical is somebody who sings kumbaya. Do you remember kumbaya? Kumbaya, my Lord. Kumbaya. What does it mean? I don't know. There's a nice song though. And we've got a set of similar words like evangelism, evangelistic, and you can just have the word evangel by itself.

So what does it mean? So this is the foreign language bit. The ev usually means good. So a eulogy, E-U-L-O-G-Y, is a good word.

[4:44] The logi is the logos and the ev or the E-U is the good bit. So good and angel is usually to do with messenger, because that's what an angel is, a messenger.

So evangel is a good message. It just means good news. Evangel means good news. And it's like the word gospel. Gospel is, this is sort of coming from Greek.

This is coming from a European language like German. And it's, this bit is from the goo, is good, and the spell is good news.

And I think, is spiel, does that mean talk in German? No. Does it? Oh, okay, right. Is it?

I think it's Yiddish. Okay, right. Okay, well, good, whatever it is in modern language. It used to mean good news. So gospel and evangel, same thing, come from two different roots into our language.

[5:49] So an evangelical is somebody who believes in, is keen on, the good news. An evangelical church is a good news church.

Evangelical people are good news people. They're gospel people, gospel churches. It means the same sort of thing. So it's to do with good news. Christian, but of course, when we talk about in terms of churches, it's Christian good news.

The good news about Jesus Christ. So that's what we're talking about. Evangel, evangelistic, is all to do with the good news. And for Christians, it's the good news of Jesus Christ. So let's look at this in three ways and say, first of all, what is the good news that we're talking about?

Number two, why is it important? And number three, what obligation does it bring? So number one, what is this good news? Number two, why is it important?

And number three, what obligation does it bring? So let's look at what is this good news. So good news is, if it's news, it's something you haven't heard before, isn't it?

[6:56] It's something that comes to you fresh. News, something you hadn't heard before. So that's the news bit. And the good means it's something that's good. So that's what it means in ordinary language.

In the Old Testament, let's see an example of this. We're going to go to Isaiah chapter 40. Let me give you a little mental picture. I would have drawn it, but I didn't really have much time to do drawing yesterday.

But you can imagine this. So over here is a distant battle. And the king, with his army, is fighting a battle over here. And he wins out.

And then that was a distant place. And we've got mountains and things all the way back to the home territory over here. And the king, when he's won, he says to the messengers, go and tell them at home, I've won.

They're free. We don't have to fear our enemies anymore. So off goes the messenger, da-da-da-da-da-da-da, over the mountain, down. And when he sees the people in the village at home, he says, the king's won the victory.

[7:59] And everybody goes, yeah, yeah, good news. Okay? A distant battle. Victory for the king. Carry the news back home. Stand on the hill and shout. The citizens hear and rejoice.

The rebels, if there are rebels there, they go, oh dear, I was not counting on that. And they get out of the way because they're on the losing side. And here in Isaiah 40 verse 9, you get that sort of picture.

You who bring good tidings to Zion, go up on a high mountain. Oh, tidings means news. I should have said that, shouldn't I?

You who bring good news to Zion, go up on a high mountain. You who bring good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with a shout. Lift it up. Do not be afraid.

Say to the towns of Judah, here is your God. See, the sovereign Lord comes with power. His arm rules for him. His reward is with him. His recompense accompanies him.

[8:56] And this great God has won his victory and is bringing all the rewards with him. And that's a sort of little glimpse into the Old Testament of the idea of good news and how beautiful on the feet, sorry, how beautiful on the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news.

Because he runs up and says, good news. Okay, and that carries over into the New Testament, that idea. But there it is in the Old Testament. I'm just doing a whistle stop here. Let's whiz forward to the coming of Jesus in, I think I'm in Matthew.

I haven't quite got there yet, but let's see whether Matthew was what I chose. In the New Testament, when the time of Jesus, the time of John the Baptist, we have a slightly different situation.

There isn't a battle going on, but the people are in the land. They are under Roman occupation, of course, so the land isn't free. There isn't a proper king. Although they're in the land, things are not right.

Their hearts are still as hard and bad as ever. And so, in a sense, they're still in slavery. So, the idea of the people still enslaved and needing the king to come and say, I've won the victory, you're free.

[10:12] And to demonstrate that. And in Matthew 4, 23 to 25, we've got a little snapshot here.

Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom. And he was healing every disease and sickness among the people.

And news about him spread all over Syria. And people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, the paralyzed. And he healed them. And large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and the region across Jordan followed him. So, here is Jesus who preaches the good news of the kingdom. He's saying the king is here. The king in his power. The king with his liberating power is here. And he preaches this. And, of course, he demonstrates it, doesn't he?

[11:08] By sort of rolling back the curse that has afflicted humankind since the beginning. And you see people being healed. And you see Satan being sent packing.

And you see the paralyzed walking. And people who couldn't see and hear can see and hear. So, all these signs of the king's victory and the king's power.

And it's said that he preached the good news of the kingdom. And if you've ever read that and thought, but the good news is about the atonement doctrines, how could he be preaching that then? This is the explanation, isn't it? That it's in this wider context of the good news of the power of the king. And then, after Christ has died on the cross and been risen from the dead, there is a clearer focus on the nature of the victory of the king.

And a clearer focus on what this means. So, that's why you get 1 Corinthians 15, 7, where the apostle Paul can say, we've got a very clear focus of what this good news is.

[12:20] And in 1 Corinthians 15, he says, Brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel, the good news I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand.

By this gospel you are saved if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you, otherwise you have believed in vain. So, he says, it's very important that you hold to this gospel.

And the bare bones of this, as he spells it out here, as follows. For what I received, I passed on to you as of first importance, that Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures.

That he was buried, that he was raised on the third day, according to the scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter and the twelve, and so on and so on.

So, there is, he's boiled it down to the very, very bare bones of the core of it. It's about Christ, it's about his death on the cross, about his resurrection.

[13:29] He truly died, he truly rose. So, there's some history there, he says, that actually happened. You know, think of this victory. He actually won something. And there's an interpretation.

It wasn't just somebody dying, and just somebody rising from the dead, as if, you know, weird things happen. But he died for our sins.

There's a specific meaning to it. There's an interpretation. He died for our sins, and he was raised for us. And he will go on in other places to say he was raised for our vindication.

But there's an interpretation, you see, and there's an implied challenge in this. You need to believe it. This is the gospel we preach. We proclaim it.

We pin it on people. We say, this is important. This is the way you are saved. If you don't have this, you're not saved. If you have this, you are saved. Do you see what I mean?

[14:27] So there's a history. These are the things that happened. There's an interpretation. This is why it happened. This is what it means for our sins. And it's also, he tells us how we can interpret that way.

It's according to the Scriptures. And I want to come to that bit about being evangelical next week. Because why do we believe these things? Because of the Scriptures. But I'm just talking about the gospel this morning.

And there is this implied challenge. So this is good news. That Christ has fought for us. Won a victory. And that his heralds can go around and say, The king has triumphed.

And he freely offers you the riches of forgiveness and new life and so on, as we shall come to see in a moment. So this is good news.

It's good news about the king. He's won. There's good news about him. And it's good news for us. Because our sins. My sin, oh the bliss of this glorious thought.

[15:29] My sin, not in part, but the whole. Is nailed to his cross. And I bear it no more. Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord. Oh my soul. Our sins, though as red as scarlet, are made as white as wool.

Every single thing that we've written into our CV of sin and selfishness and greed obliterated by the blood of Christ. Amen. And this good news says it saves us.

And he does say if you believe it. It doesn't save us whether or not we respond or react. It's a personal thing. It demands a personal response.

And he says, by this gospel you are saved if you hold firmly to the word I preach to you. So there's Paul talking about the gospel in its essentials.

So evangelical people, gospel people, a gospel church has a message, believes a message, and tells a message. Now, Paul boiled it down into just a couple of sentences there.

[16:44] But in those sentences they need a bit of unpacking. You know, what is sin? Why are we sinners? What sort of world are we in that somebody should come?

Who is this person who died on the cross? And we can enlarge it. And we need to enlarge it, really, because those few words, although they're true and they're correct, in order to make sense of them, we really need to unpack them a bit.

And so this is what the church, the gospel churches have done over the centuries and said, in each historical context, what do we need to unpack so that people today can understand this?

And it's a matter of sort of spiritual judgment, how big you make the package when you've unpacked it. I mean, you could put in loads of detail. But I'm just going to try and say what the essential things are this morning.

So essential number one, we'd have to say we believe about God. And we believe that God is the creator. And as I read from Romans earlier, you know, if we don't have this, then sin doesn't make sense.

[17:58] Who is God? He is the creator of the ends of the earth. And he deserves our thanks and our praise. He deserves to be glorified and thanked. But the problem with human beings is they don't do that.

There's a deep instinct against that. So let's first of all say we need to say we believe in God. And if we'd said the Apostles' Creed, is it the Apostles' Creed?

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. And does it say, well, does a bit about the Holy Spirit come? I can't remember it. I should have thought of that before I started.

But we believe in a triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, an eternal God, the creator of everything. So we need to say that. That's something we firmly believe and hold to in the gospel.

And then we need to say something about sin. That human beings are in a state of rebellion.

Naturally speaking, human beings are born in a state of rebellion.

[18:59] A deep, deep rejection of God as God. There's something in the human heart that says, I will not allow God to be God.

I won't own his authority over me. I won't worship him. I reject him. And this can be done very politely, and it can be done very religiously.

It can be done via idolatry or via atheism. But this is the state of human beings that they are in what we would call sin.

We're born there. The same way that if your parents had emigrated to Australia, you would have been born in Australia. Adam emigrated to sin, and all his children are born in sin.

Sin has many aspects to it. It begins with our ruptured relationship with God, and that has so many knock-on effects.

[19:58] It affects our relationship with fellow human beings. So, as Paul, in his list of sins that follow on, he would say they become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed, and depravity, full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, and malice.

They're gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant, and boastful. They invent ways of doing evil. They disobey their parents. They're senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless.

And he gives this devastating analysis of what human nature is really like. You can put a lovely veneer over the top of it. People can be politely ruthless and respectably greedy.

But underneath, that's what the human heart is like. And it's a sad thing. It's a humiliating thing. And it would be a controversial thing to say.

Because the standard understanding of human nature is we're all basically good. But we're not. The Bible says we're not. And I'm sorry, I just should have said one other thing here.

[21:06] This messes up our relationship with other human beings. It messes up our relationship with the world, as Steve so helpfully reminded us and prayed for us. And it messes up our relationship with ourselves.

That we don't really understand ourselves. We're not at peace with ourselves. We hate ourselves or idolize ourselves or whatever. And it just messes up everything sin does.

So we would say, he died for our sins. What is sin? That's the sort of thing sin is. You could enlarge upon it. But if we're a gospel people, we believe that we're sinners. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

And then Christ died for our sins. And we'd say, who is this person? Who do we mean by Christ?

It's not just a made-up figure. It's the real person. Jesus Christ.

Jesus of Nazareth. Who entered the world to be our Savior. And we start to think, now, who is he?

Because he's clearly a human being. He walks, you know, like a human being.

[22:06] He eats. He sleeps. He's certainly human. But he's more than that. Because as this person enters the world, God enters the world. As this person walks the streets of Nazareth, God walks the streets of Nazareth.

As this person touches the blind man and opens his eyes, that is the power of God himself. And as Jesus speaks, the words that he speaks are not his own, but they're the words of the Father.

And if you look at him, you see the Father. So there is a very wonderful and deep identity between Jesus Christ and God.

He is not the Father. He is the Son. But he is the Son incarnate as human. So we think, if we were going to enlarge this, we'd say we believe in the incarnation.

Incarnation, not milk, but the carn bit is to do with flesh, like carnal, carnivore. So Jesus became flesh.

[23:11] He got this stuff. He had this stuff. This skin and bone and hair and everything that makes human beings flesh. God became a man.

And then we would believe in the atonement. So, again, another word. I think a made-up English word meaning at-one-ment. To make God and man one by an enormous act of something, which is actually an act of sacrifice.

We believe that Jesus, when Jesus died on the cross, it was an atoning act. An act that brought God and man together.

Having this relationship, having been ruptured and torn. What Christ does on the cross has this colossal effect of bringing together God and man.

And how does he do it? Well, we could say a lot about that. But I think at least we can say that the wrath of God that is justly and rightly upon sinners actually fell on Christ.

[24:21] And Christ, as it were, pushed us out of the way and said, I will stand there and let this wrath fall on me instead of you. I bear the

penalty. You go free. And that is the work of Calvary.

He receives the punishment due to himself. Punishment, penalty, penal, substitution. He pushed us out of the way and stood there himself.

Penal, substitution. He bore the penalty that we deserved. And then we would say that it didn't just stay there, did he? He didn't just stay dead. That wasn't all there was to it.

It is inextricably linked to what happened next, which the church over the years has called his exaltation. He came down low and he goes up high.

He's humiliated and exalted. And his exaltation consists, first of all, in his resurrection. As Paul said, he was raised on the third day. We saw him.

[25:23] If there's no resurrection, then everything falls to pieces. There is no guarantee that this atoning sacrifice worked. It just seems incomplete and unsatisfactory.

And Paul says, it is not incomplete and unsatisfactory. He rose from the dead. If he didn't rise from the dead, our preaching is in vain. Our faith is in vain.

The problem of sin is still undealt with. We're still in our sins. But Christ is risen from the dead. And the resurrection overturns the guilty verdict. So he died on the cross as if guilty.

And God says, that guilty verdict will not stand. Because I will raise him up and say, not guilty. Innocent. Glorious.

And Christ is vindicated in his resurrection. He's pronounced just, glorious, deathless. He moves from the sphere of sin and death into the sphere of deathlessness.

[26:25] Death cannot touch him. He's defeated death. That's where he is at the moment. And that's where he will bring us. It gives him the place of preeminence.

He's declared with power to be the Son of God through his resurrection from the dead. And the resurrection just seals everything. It says, he is who he says he was. All of that was true.

And was just the tip of the iceberg. And here is the risen Christ. Triumphant as Savior. Triumphant over sin and death and hell. Raised to the right hand of God the Father Almighty.

Seated at the right hand of God. Yeah. Amen to that. And his exaltation is not just his resurrection but his ascension.

So the human Christ is no longer here on earth. He is in heaven. And he is seated at the right hand of God. The place of almighty power. So we have a Savior on the throne.

[27:23] The Lamb is on the throne. We have a high priest at the right hand of almighty God. Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet. That's where Jesus is now.

And we proclaim him as the risen Savior. And not only so but we look forward because the present period of time is a sort of tension thing.

Like a spring wound up waiting to be released. And a clock is ticking. And at some point inevitably it will have to be that the work of Christ is finally fulfilled.

When he saves his people. Raises them up on the last day. Judges all his enemies. And makes a new heaven and a new earth. And that is the promise that is bound up in him.

And that will be the completion of his work as we see it from our side of things. The future is in his hand. Heaven and hell are in the hands of Jesus.

[28:22] He has the last word on history. He has the last word on the life of each one of us. And if he says to us, depart from me who work as of iniquity.

There's no appeal to that. If he says come and enter into the joy of the Lord.

Come and take the kingdom that the Father has prepared for you from before all eternity. If he says that about us, no one can take it away. He has the last word on us as well as on history.

He's the judge of the living and the dead. As it says in the creed. Does it say? I should have thought of this before I started it. He's the judge of the living and the dead.

And the one who makes all things new. Behold I make all things new. This is the work of Jesus Christ. The risen saviour. So we could spin out or unpack a little bit of what Paul says is the gospel.

[29:27] We unpack it in terms of who God is, what sin is, who Jesus Christ is. And we would also, evangelicals would also think it's very important to spell out how you get in that right relationship with Jesus

Christ.

How do you close a deal with him so that what is in him is yours? Because all the while he remains at a distance, all his benefits and blessings remain outside of us and are no use to us.

Just sort of theoretical. So how do we close with the saviour and make these blessings ours? So evangelicals, gospel people, evangelical churches, gospel churches would insist on saying, you must be born again.

So how does this come to me? I must be born again. A change. And I would spin that out a little bit and say, the new birth is something that God does to me.

But there's a human side to this. Nothing happens to me, but God makes me born again and that's all there is to it. There's a human responsibility. And the human responsibility is for us to turn.

[30:51] Turn, turn. Why will you die, says God? Turn. Change. Turn back. You're going the wrong way. Turn back. And the turning is accompanied by trusting.

You know, you would never turn back if you didn't trust where you were going to, would you?

Repentance and faith are... Repentance is always trusting repentance. And faith is always repenting faith.

True faith is always repenting faith. So evangelicals would be saying you close with Christ through repenting. And you close with Christ through trusting.

Repentance and trust. And you would also say that there's something we could add about faith. The action of faith. The action of faith.

Union with Christ. Which in our side of it comes through faith. brings us into a situation of being right with Christ.

[31:52] Right with God. Called justification. And I'm not going to go into a lot of detail about justification. But it's to do with being right with God. And it says...

Which Catholicism doesn't say. I'm right with God the moment I trust in Him. That's what the promise says. In our evangelical old-fashioned hymns it would say...

The vilest offender who truly believes... That moment a pardon from Jesus receives. And it doesn't say...

Okay, you can start there but you've really got to try hard. And then maybe you might get pardoned. It says... That moment a pardon from Jesus receives.

The vilest offender who truly believes... That moment a pardon from Jesus receives. So this is... Faith brings us into this state.

[32:50] We talked about it the other week. I think Jerome mentioned this. A state of grace. A state of standing somewhere. Where am I standing? I'm standing in God's favor. I don't deserve this.

Am I really standing here? Yes, you are. That's what faith brings us into. Can I believe it? Hardly that I should be under God's favor through what Jesus Christ has done as I trust in Him.

Amazing. And we might say something about the underlying factors in this which are union with Christ.

I am the vine. You are the branches, says Jesus. Anybody who abide in me. There is a mystery here in the sense that it's a sort of thing you can't completely explain.

But the Christian is in Christ. The Christian is sort of so linked up with Him that the blessings and status of Christ sort of become ours.

[33:56] We're linked up with Christ. And we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. If we belong to Christ, we have the Holy Spirit. We don't have to wait for a second blessing.

If we don't have the Holy Spirit, we don't belong to Christ. If we belong to Christ, we have the Holy Spirit. We're complete in Him. And the Holy Spirit brings the gifts and the life of the risen Christ into our human lives.

And you think, wow, that's something. And there's some secrets here of the Christian life, aren't there? That we're not what we used to be.

We're not what we're going to be. By the grace of God, we are what we are. And we live in this sort of intervening time, don't we? Where we already have the life of God within us, but we're not yet what we should be.

And the experience of the Christian is this ongoing conflict, really, between our sin, which is still with us, and the work of the Holy Spirit. And day by day, by the Spirit, we put to death the misdeeds of the body.

[35:10] And that's how we live. And it's a fight for every Christian, every day of his or her life. Is it not? Yeah, I think it is. And we can also say about this closing.

Do you understand what I mean by closing with Christ, don't you? I mean sort of grasping him. I'm doing it with my hands. That. That's what I mean by closing with Christ. And that we add to that the future fulfillment of this on the last day, that we will see him as he is.

We will be with him forever. Jesus said, in my Father's house and many rooms, if it wasn't so, I would have told you, I want you to be with me where I am and see my glory.

And the fulfillment of this closing with Christ is that we will be with him forever. Which Paul says, to depart, you know, what's better, to stay here in this life, which will be fruitful, or to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.

So, I've just tried to itemize something of the fact of what Christ did. And evangelicals will say, there is a way of appropriating that.

[36:28] There is a way of closing with that, which is not by taking sacraments. It's not by trying harder. It's by faith, which turns to him in repentance. And that's how we have the Lord Jesus.

So, what's this good news? It would have statements about God, statements about sin, statements about Jesus Christ, statements about what it is to close with Christ personally and to live for him.

And you could sort of enlarge those statements or sort of boil them down. And I've just sort of done a boiled down version this morning. And the one thing which I haven't touched on is what evangelicals would be very keen to say.

Why do we believe this? Where do we get it from? And the answer is the Bible. And so, I'd like to, that's a subject enough to take another morning. So, I'll do that, God willing, next Sunday morning. Evangelicals are people who believe the Bible to be God's infallible and inerrant word. If what the Bible says, God says. And I'll come to that next time.

[37:33] But here I asked what is the good news. And I've tried to sort of unpack that a little bit, as I've already said. So, the second thing I wanted to say is why is it important?

Why is it important? And, you know, with the climate change, why are churches like ours bothering with the Bible?

Why don't we just deal with the main issue of the day, which is climate change? Why don't we get on with that? Why isn't that what we're evangelically keen on?

And people would say that's what you should be keen on. You're missing the point if you're not keen on that. Well, why not be looking for the homeless? I mean, goodness me, we live in Brighton and Hove and there's enough homeless, troubled people.

Why we could spend all our energy on that and we still wouldn't have scratched the surface. So, why not goodwill towards the homeless? Why not action on climate change? So, we need a little bit of a careful answer, which says these things are worthy.

[38:39] I'm not going to say that's rubbish and nonsense. So, those are worthy things to do. And hopefully, we can have a both and. We'll say we have, we do want to care about homeless people.

We do want to care about the state of our city. We do want to care about climate change as a group and as individuals. We do want to be responsible and do what we can for our world, which God has given us to live in.

But there's a question of priority. The priority of the gospel. Because it says, by this gospel you are saved.

That's what it said, wasn't it? By this gospel you are saved. And do you think it makes sense to have put all our efforts into reducing our carbon footprint and looking after the homeless, but never paying any attention to people being saved?

Do you think that even makes sense? The politicians aren't going to care about people being saved. That's our job.

[40:00] It's the church's job to say, this is how you can be saved. So, why is it important? Well, it's important from the point of view of present peace and joy.

Because there is a joy in sins forgiven, isn't there? We go around bearing the burden of our sin and it's miserable and horrible. And, you know, if it's at its worst it sort of sends us to hell already. And to have the sins forgiven is fantastic, isn't it? The joy of sins forgiven. Conscience cleansed. It's in one of the songs, isn't it? So, I'm going to say it's important because it gives us that. And as Jerome was saying, we stand in a relationship of peace with God, which to one degree or another permeates into our consciousness of peace.

Perhaps not as much as it should. But we stand in peace with God. So, present peace and joy. That's why it's... Excuse me, I think I've clicked it wrong.

[41:03] Let's go back. No. So, present peace and joy. That's why it's important. But even perhaps more important is what happens on the last day.

Because I'm sure there are plenty of sinners who have a lot of peace and are quite happy. But what will happen to them on the last day when they meet God and have to explain to Him why God didn't figure in their thinking at all.

They were just happy and peaceful and joyful without Him. What will happen on the last day? How will they be saved on the last day?

So, perhaps even more... Make it even more important than how you feel at the present is how it's going to end up. You know, we know people who say, I respect you Christian people, you're good people, but I have no need of what you offer.

I'm fine without it. Which is a short-sighted answer. Because it doesn't take into account the last day. You know, you're happy now, but what are you going to do then?

[42:25] And then will be for eternity. It doesn't bear thinking about, does it? What will happen on that last day?

The wrath of God on the last day. Why is it important? Because Jesus said, You must be born again. Jesus said, You must be born again.

Now, folks, I don't know every single person in this room, but Jesus says to you, You must be born again. Are you born again? He says, You must be.

Are you going to leave this room this morning contradicting Jesus? Jesus. You're going to leave this room saying, Well, I don't believe in that. I don't have to do that. That doesn't have to happen to me. Because Jesus said it. You're arguing with him. He said, You must be born again. How dare you leave this room this morning without sorting this out? Because you must be born again.

[43:27] Acts 17, 30. God, this is Paul talking in Athens, God commands all men everywhere to repent. Why is it important?

Because God commands it. Almighty God says, You should repent. Have you repented? Have you turned around in your life towards God?

Have you confessed your sins and sorted it out with him that the direction of your life is no longer what it was, but what it ought to be? Because he commands you to do that. And you're going to leave this room this morning saying, I'm not going to take any notice of that.

I'm not that bothered. God commands you to repent. In Acts 4, 12, it says, Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.

That was in the song, wasn't it? There is no alternative to this. There is no alternative to Jesus Christ. Don't you dare, watching at home or listening or watching on YouTube, say, ah, well, I've got my own way of salvation.

[44:34] You know, I can do this by meditation. You can't. I'll do it through Buddha or one of the Hindu gods. You can't. There is no other way.

There's no one else who died on the cross for sins and for sinners. There's no one else where God poured out the wrath that's due to you. There's nowhere else.

There's no one else who was risen from the dead for your salvation. Only him. There is no alternative. That's why it's important. And I ask, are you in obedience this morning or disobedience? Are you saying to God, yeah, I need to get this right. I'm a bit stuck on how to do it. Please help me to do it because it's so important because you're telling me I need to do this.

I need to be this. Are you saying that? Are you saying, I'm not that bothered. I'm a good person anyway. I don't really need this, you know, any forgiveness. How stupid.

[45:34] How stupid. God commands you to repent. Jesus says, you must be born again. What are you waiting for? Why are you messing about? Why are you putting this off?

Thirdly, what obligation does it bring? What obligation does it bring? I remember hearing Jeff Thomas, wonderful Welsh preacher. I don't know, he must be quite old by now, but I remember him. He's very descriptive. He says, he uses his hands, he says, there's this cafe, and a man is sitting there drinking coffee, and he looks across, and he sees the back of the person next to him, and he looks inside the back, and he can see sticks of dynamite, and a ticking clock.

It's a bomb in the back of the person next to him. And what does he do? He did it much better than I do.

And he said, and this man quietly leaves the crowd and slips out of the door. What a monster. Who would do that?

[46:55] You see everybody in danger, and you just think, I can save my skin. I won't make a fuss. I'll just tip her out and leave the bomb ticking away there.

Who would do that? He had an obligation to say something, didn't he? He should have said, there's a bomb!

Get out! The gospel carries an obligation. It carries a number of obligations, but it has at least this obligation to tell it.

Otherwise, we're like the people who see the bomb in the cafe and don't bother to tell anybody about it. I was trying to, I was looking, trying to find the correct terminology for this, and I don't think this is quite right what I meant, but professional negligence will do.

If you were a lawyer and you fail to inform your client correctly about the danger that they're in, you would be sued for professional negligence, and that would be a bad thing.

[48:02] You know, if you're an architect and you failed to say, oh, you need a metal beam across there, otherwise the roof will fall in, you'd be sued for professional negligence. And this is the situation, isn't it?

People on the last day, we really don't want them to say to us, you knew there was a problem for me on the last day, but you never bothered to tell me anything about it.

You know, I'll sue you for professional negligence. You never said a thing about my danger. You never made any effort. You never told me. And I take this very seriously.

You know, woe to the minister of the gospel who fails to tell people of their danger and fails to show them Jesus Christ and fails to call them to repentance and faith.

And I think, woe to the church which blunts or mangles the message or just doesn't do anything with it. So I think about these houses around here and I think the shops and the people who go around here and I think, I really don't want them to turn around on the last day and say, you had a church around the corner.

[49:16] You never made any effort to tell us anything. Why didn't you? You never invited us to anything. You never made any sort of proclamation about it.

You never said anything about it. I really don't want us to be a church like that. Do you? I'm sure you don't. I mean, we think, well, they might not respond very much, but at least we want to tell them. So I mean, go out on the book table and maybe people don't respond, but at least they were there.

You could say, well, we stood in the, we stood in the main thoroughfare and tried to tell you about this. No, we put notices up on the, on the notice board here.

We put things on YouTube, put things through your doors. Every Christmas we invited you to come. You didn't come, that's your lookout, but we told you, we offered, we made that invitation, we prayed for you.

Woe to the church which blunts or mangles the message. Woe to the church when you go in the door and you listen to what they have to say, you never hear the gospel.

[50:17] Woe to that church. You go in there and you hear something about flowers or you think it's something about, I don't know, you know,

helping mummy in the kitchen or climate change, but they never tell you about Jesus Christ and repentance and faith and salvation in him.

Woe to that church. And woe to the church where sinners come in living in sin and the church just blesses them and pats them on the head and says, all will be well and actually they need to repent. Woe to that church. Woe to that church. Patting sinners on the head and saying all is fine when all the time the sinner is heading for wrath and hell.

What obligation does it bring? It brings an obligation to tell. Now, I don't want to try and pin this on us in the wrong way. I want to try and nuance this. Opportunities to tell come in different shapes and sizes.

So with your family, I think family is sometimes the most difficult people to tell. And, you know, you get an opportunity and they, our family know us, they know the worst things about us, don't they?

[51:35] They know us how we were when we were snappy and impatient and selfish. And they see all of that.

And I think with family, the opportunity to tell comes through long-term consistency where it becomes clear that when we were snappish, it was a blip, but God has actually done something in our lives and we are different people and there is something solid there to tell and there is worth listening to.

With our neighbours and colleagues, you know, sometimes we have to wait for an opportunity, don't we, if we're working with people. It's not our job to be interrupting them all the time and saying, I know we've got this meeting to attend, but first, can I tell you these three points of the gospel?

I mean, it's just not even, it's not treating people with integrity to do that. But sometime, there will be an opportunity where somebody says, did you have a nice weekend?

And you can say, as a matter of fact, I did. I had some really good stuff at church. And you probably say a little bit about it. And they say, what are you doing for your summer holidays? And you say, I don't know, I'm going to a Christian conference or something like that.

[52:51] So little opportunities will come up. Or you say, I've been praying for you, just wanted you to know that. And they might, you know, openings come up.

The Apostle Paul had a gift of making opportunities, didn't he? He went into the marketplace. I don't know how he would have done it. I don't know how he would do it today. But he found ways of talking to people, sort of in public.

Which I think is much more difficult for us to take these days. Because our marketplaces don't really work like that. I commend to you Graham Nichols from Hayworth Heath.

What do we call it? Christchurch Hayworth Heath. Who's done some fantastic podcasts, sort of interacting on radio and TV, telling the gospel.

I think he's done a really brilliant job. Because the Christian church needs to take those opportunities in those spaces. And you think of, who's the guy who does the breakfast thing? Who's on Strictly?

[53:54] Dan Walker. So he's been in the news about not celebrating Halloween, hasn't he? If you see the popular press. Because he's a Christian.

So good for him. Good for him. We need to pray that people like that don't fall into temptation and keep their witness going. Telling it. And not just sort of locally but internationally because the telling involves the whole world.

Jesus said, go and make disciples of all nations. So some of us, you know, maybe God will call us to be missionaries in foreign places.

And some of you have been sent by God to England to be missionaries to us. You know, Joel's been sent to Cambodia. Some of you have been sent here to be missionaries to us.

So I think of Joel and Victor and Judith and Mike Steedman and so on and so on. The obligation to tell. So let's wind this up. Catholic, Pentecostal, Baptist, Methodist, look under the labels.

[54:57] This is the question. If you went there and listened to what they said, would you hear the gospel? That's the question. If you went there and listened to what they're actually saying, would you hear the gospel? That's what matters.

Would you hear about God as creator and judge? Would you hear about the sinfulness of the human heart, human beings as rebellious, lost and guilty? Would you hear about Jesus Christ, the only saviour, the glory of his eternal work as our substitute under God's wrath, his resurrection, enthronement, coming as judge and saviour?

Would you hear about those things? Would it be pressed on you that you need to make that yours, as it were, by turning and believing? Would you be told the blessings of the new life in Christ now and the promises of glory in the world to come?

That would be a gospel church. And we are Calvary Evangelical Church, Calvary Gospel Church. We are a gospel church.

May we continue to be a gospel church. Mrs. George Gates started us off as a gospel church. The Lord has kept us as a gospel church. And we want, do we not, to continue to be a gospel church.

[56:06] We really do want that. We are bothered about that. We do care about that. Because what other church would we dare to be? Let's sing a song.

Let's sing a song. Let's sing a song.

Let's sing a song. Let's sing a song. Let's sing a song. Let's sing a song.