

Good News Incarnate

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[0 : 00] Okay, so today I'm going to talk to you about good news or the gospel. That's what the gospel means, good news, incarnate or in the flesh.

I'm excited to talk about the gospel this morning. A little backdrop. Last week I was not excited about the gospel. Shocker.

But I say that, all chugging aside, to say that we have sin and we're sinners.

So we need to be saved. And the gospel is the good news that even when we don't desire God, God gives us himself as true food to nourish us.

So I'm going to talk about the gospel today. It's not going to be anything new. You all have heard it. Some of you might honestly not be excited about it, but my prayer is that you would be this morning.

[1 : 00] So it's kind of a festive thing because Christmas is in a couple days. And we remember what happened on Christmas, on the night Jesus was born.

He came into the world. That was the inauguration, the first step of the good news in action. It's him actually condescending. And so it's a festive message, but it's not just for Christmas.

Obviously, this is for every single day of the year, every waking moment of a believer's life. We need the gospel. And so I'm going to first start out by talking about what the gospel is.

And as you guys listen, my prayer is that from the inward parts of you, you would be drawn to Christ.

So Romans 1.16 says, For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also the Greek.

[2 : 08] For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith. So right here, Paul says that the gospel is the power of God. Or that the gospel, the object of the gospel, the object of the good news is the power of God more specifically.

What I mean by that is the gospel is just a message. It's good news, right? So if you tell somebody just a bunch of words, that's not the thing ultimately that saves them. But it's the object of the message, right?

It's what the message teaches that saves. So God, in Christ Jesus, is the power that saves. Jesus Christ.

And we proclaim that message. And so, he is both, Jesus is both the prophet of God, the one who speaks the words of God, and the Bible actually calls him the word made flesh.

So he's both the prophet who speaks for God, but he is also the very word of God in the flesh, incarnate. It's important for us to know that because throughout a Christian's life, there's a lot of words that you hear.

[3 : 25] You know what I'm saying? And they can get old. Kind of like I mentioned before, we've all kind of heard this thing over and over again. But there is a difference between experiencing a flesh and body word, or something that you can actually see and feel, that I believe that the Lord wants us to experience.

Like Seth was talking about food, I believe that God doesn't give food that doesn't nourish. You know, I believe that he does give food that actually does fill us.

So, in the gospel is where we get that food. So, the gospel begins with God.

You all know that God made man and creation perfect and good in the garden. And in Eden, there was a perfect relationship with creation, with the land, and with the creator of that creation, with God.

And when man ate of the tree that God told him not to, it severed the relationship with God and with creation. So, ever since the garden, man has been trying to regain that relationship with God, either on his own terms or in his own strength.

[4 : 52] And so, there's been this striving in the hearts of man because of sin, because we broke God's commandment. Do not eat of the tree that I have told you not to.

So, this has never been, you know, something that, since the beginning of time, has ever been ached, you know, on our own terms, in our own strength.

No one has really got there. And if anyone confesses that they have, it would be a true form of self-righteousness. So, a practical example of maybe climbing the ladder of morality and trying to get to God, to regain fellowship, a practical example of this that I was listening to or reading about was when the Russians first put a man in outer space.

And upon returning from the mission, there was a remark, I can't remember if it was the cosmonaut himself said this, or Russia kind of remarked that, they said that, we've been to outer space, and we didn't find God or heaven there.

And C.S. Lewis actually responded to this remark by saying, this is like Hamlet, a character in Shakespeare's play, looking for Shakespeare in the attic of his home.

[6 : 18] Pretty true. C.S. Lewis says that in order for Hamlet to have a relationship with Shakespeare, Shakespeare would literally have to write himself into his own story.

Okay, so that's the gospel in a very simple form. That God, the author of our story of humanity and creation, although man has permanently severed the relationship with God, God has taken it upon himself to do something.

In spite of man's attempts, God has written himself into our story, not in vain and not to no avail, but to much.

And that is the good news. So, a little bit more about the story. You guys know it, but here's a refresher. So, almost 2,000 years ago, the Bible teaches that in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, Jesus was born of a virgin, the Virgin Mary.

Isaiah 7 is the prophecy that fulfills that. And Matthew tells us that he comes into this world conceived of the Holy Spirit. He began his public ministry at the age of 30, and he accumulated followers, and for three years he healed, he taught, and he made bold claims that he was the only way.

[7 : 48] There was no other way to God. Okay, so think about, you know, from the beginning, this chasm between man and God. You know, man in his own strength has tried to figure out ways to get back to God, and then Jesus comes along and says, I'm the only way.

There's only one way back to God. It's me. Okay? Very bold claims. The religious leaders didn't like his teaching, so they joined together, formed a, they invoked a riot, and brought false accusations against Jesus.

And this ultimately led to a trial, a sentencing of death by Roman crucifixion. The Bible says that while Jesus hung on the cross, Jesus became the curse of sin for us.

And that God placed all of the sin of all mankind onto Jesus. And when they took Jesus down from the cross, they put him in a tomb with a stone sealing the entrance, with Roman soldiers keeping guard over the tomb so that no one would come and take his body.

But according to the scripture, on the third day he rose from the dead. And after appearing to many eyewitnesses and instructing his disciples, he ascended into heaven where he is seated at the right hand of God and serves as our advocate.

[9 : 18] So, again, you guys have heard this, but what does this have to do with you? You know, all these words that I'm saying. This happened. It's a fact, you know.

Many major world religions dispute the details of the facts, but pretty much everyone confesses that Jesus did live. He did die.

Some don't think he didn't rise. You know, I think it's the Jews saying that he died but did not rise. The Muslims say he didn't die. And the Christians confess that he indeed died and indeed did rise. But no one disputes that Jesus didn't live. It's part of history. So it happened. So what does this have to do with us? You know, all the way many years later. Well, the Bible says that we all have sinned and fallen short of God's perfect standard.

And there's nothing in us, no good thing in us that can commend us to God. All of our efforts, all of our righteous deeds fall short of God's perfect standard.

[10 : 29] There's nothing that we can do that can fix what our sins have broken. The Bible says that the wages for sin or the payment for our sins is death.

What we deserve for falling short of God's standard is death. Not just death of an immediate kind, but an everlasting death. We deserve that.

And God calls men everywhere to repent of their sin and trusting Christ to be saved and to live a righteous life. And if we trust Christ like this, the Bible says we have peace with God.

Now, peace is the main thing that is propagated in the world today as either a nice goal or the ultimate end. You know, you might ask somebody like, what do you want?

You know, if you could wish for anything. People kind of just, you know, flagrant and say, world peace. You know, that wars would cease. That's a good thing to wish for.

[11 : 32] But unfortunately, the world does not know how God himself has wrought peace to come about. Romans 5 says that through Christ we have peace with God.

Okay, so, if anyone comes to any solution for peace that doesn't involve Christ, it is not true peace. It's a counterfeit peace. It's a aesthetic peace. You know, the only true peace ultimately comes through the gospel. And whether we believe that or not, the day will disclose it.

What I mean by that is one day, God will come again and make all things right. But it will not be for a second gospel preaching so as to save those who are lost.

He came once to deal with sin and he's coming a second time to judge. And this is a sobering thing. This is a sobering thing for us who are alive now and who have his first coming.

[12 : 39] So, the gospel is very important. It's not just a one and done deal. You're not just baptized and that seals you. You get to do whatever you want. You know, the gospel is, like I said in the beginning, nourishment that carries you along.

I talked a little bit, I just mentioned some major world religions, but I was kind of studying about why people arrive to certain religions that they do and why, you know, Christianity is so cool and unique, you know.

and it is unique. It doesn't seem to be cool in many respects, but it is unique and unlike any other religion.

And if I can dare say that Christianity is actually not a religion, I'll explain why compared to the other ones, specifically because of how we understand religion as a whole.

So, if you did a survey of all religions of the world, you'd probably find, you know, the first thing is some type of initiation, some type of, you know, entrance to the religion, something, set of beliefs, maybe something you have to put behind, something that initiates you.

[14 : 02] And then, and then in the middle, when you get going, there's a, there's, you know, stipulations of the religion that you have to follow. There's a way. Each religion has a way. And then at the end, you might call it, you know, a gate, you know, some, of some kind of pass through, the final test or the final judgment.

You know, each religion kind of has those things. And if you kept the way well enough, then you might have a chance about getting into heaven or nirvana or whatever, you know, the, that end gate is.

And so, many people believe that their good deeds, their following the way, will maybe guarantee access through that final gate.

Maybe they'll, maybe they'll escape judgment. Maybe if my good deeds outweigh my bad deeds, you know, I'll be accepted. But this, in fact, is not how Christianity is.

That's not what I believe Christianity says. This is actually how many Christians do believe in their hearts. if I just clean myself up, maybe I'll be accepted through that last and final gate.

[15 : 25] But there's this struggle inside of, well, I hope that I'll be accepted, you know, but there's no assurance. There's no guarantee. And what I see, the beautiful thing about Christianity is that the acceptance does not come at the end.

we're not held in derision our whole lives wondering, do I, will I, if I do enough, if I'm clean enough, will I be accepted?

You know, there's not this doubt. But the thing about religion is that the acceptance comes at the beginning. And that's not to say that there is not a way or there isn't requirements, but the fundamental drawing to the way is that you get acceptance at the beginning.

The good news of the gospel is that instead of having a merit-based religion depending upon our merits, those things are hidden because of the merits of Christ.

Because Christ worked on our behalf, because Christ is the way, right, then he guarantees assurance to us so that we can have confidence that that final gate, that we will indeed be accepted

not on the basis of our own works, but on his own righteousness.

[16:52] Okay? This is why the gospel is good news. Because many people live in dread not knowing. They don't have peace with God. They strive to have peace with their deeds, but they don't have peace with God in the ultimate sense, which permeates a clean conscience, which makes you free in your heart and in your mind.

This is true of many people, Christians included, if you can call them Christians. This is why the gospel is good news, because he guaranteed the acceptance and we get it at the beginning as assurance.

The Bible says that the Holy Spirit seals us when we're saved. That's pretty, that's like guaranteed language right there. John Lennox, a famous mathematician, tells a story about his wife, wanting to marry his wife on the subject.

I think it's kind of funny, but cool, because he was in Cambridge and he says, suppose I see this lady and I get to know her and eventually ask her to marry me and I say, Sally, I think this is his wife's name, Sally, I'd like to marry you, but I've got a cookbook here and it's got a lot of rules in it, inside of it, and if you follow the rules of the cookbook for our meals, you know, say for 40 years, very carefully, I will think about accepting me.

And, how ridiculous is that, you know? But it's not, it's not that we think upon the obedience or adherence to the rules that the acceptance comes, but it's actually at the beginning that both of you in the marriage come together for acceptance, saying whatever comes, you know, whoever, you know, the terms of the covenant, if they're violated, I will remain faithful, you are accepted to me.

[19:07] That's how we treat one another in an actual marriage, but that's a reflection of how God treats us in Christ. Is it, is actually the acceptance happens at the beginning because, because she does, because Sally doesn't have to keep the rules of the cookbook, it actually gives her the, it frees her to keep the rules and to learn how to cook.

You see, if we're guaranteed at the beginning that God would accept us, then it sets us free to actually learn to obey God versus being condemned under the law as we likely should be, God in Christ Jesus meets all the demands for us.

This is really important. So, if it's not, if it doesn't set you free to obey, listen to me carefully, if it doesn't set you free to obey God, it's not the gospel.

the gospel sets you free to obey God because it's not resting on our works, it's not resting on our obedience or adherence, but it rests on God himself.

And that transforms you from the inside out. That, indeed, is good news. Okay? And as we enter to Christmas, I pray that this is the light and true meaning of Christmas, that we see what Christ did by condescending is he inaugurated for humanity a better way through himself.

[20:41] So, we celebrate the arrival of Jesus and the preaching of the good news. We don't celebrate the gifts, we celebrate the giver, right?

We don't celebrate the day ultimately, although we do, not demonizing the day, but we celebrate the object of the day, which is Jesus. We celebrate the moment when light broke into our darkness, which indeed there was darkness.

Don't be deceived that this world was all light. Christ has dawned by being born into our darkness and that's reason to rejoice.

This is a quote from the song Joy to the World, which kind of spoke to me earlier this week. It says, No more let sins and sorrows grow, nor thorns infest the ground.

He comes to make his blessings flow far as the curse is found. Far as the curse is found. Galatians 3.10 says, Cursed be anyone or everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law and do them.

[21:59] Cursed be that man who does not obey. Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for the righteous shall live by faith. But the law is not of faith, rather the one who does them shall live by them.

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us. For it is written, Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree, so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles so that we might receive the promised spirit through faith.

Cursed be the person who doesn't obey. That's all of us. All of us have come under the curse of sin, have followed in the footsteps of Adam, like Adam and Eve did in the garden.

but we must look to the object of our faith who redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming that curse. This is the saturation that believers need to have.

We need to look to God not just as you know Jesus died for my sins you know I know it's fine you know I've heard that a thousand times like I know he died for my sins but there's a difference between knowing what Jesus did through dying for our sins deep down in our hearts knowing that we were condemned under the law that we were not sick and approaching death but actually already dead.

[23 : 41] Not spiritually sick but spiritually dead in our sins and that we needed resurrection and that God himself did that for us in Christ. This is the type of saturation that makes you worship that makes you come to a gathering like this and lift your hands you know even if the worship is spotty you know sometimes you have a scraggly voice and that's okay but we don't worship good music we worship God who in Christ has reconciled the world to himself the Bible says and so I hope that as you guys gather with your families and celebrate Christmas that this is the thing that you do you live in worship that you live whatever you do you don't worship the thing you don't worship family ultimately but you worship God you say God what you have done in Christ for me is worthy of praise for my inward man you know and so let that be a worship of Christ church

I pray that Christ church does that that we would be true to our name Christ church we would exalt him and it would be worship so that's my exhortation for I have five points to end the sermon but my exhortation is to treat Christmas as going to the new year your relationship with God as worship through the gospel let it be worship whatever event that you go to don't don't look at whatever's out here your circumstances the people you interact with as the means for life what determines how you are what feeds you but from the inside is where you get life the Lord said I will put my spirit within you right so God is dwelling in us we don't look to outward things to satisfy us we don't look for peace out here we look for peace in here if

God has deposited himself in us then we are free from the confines of whatever happens on the outside so let it be worship this season so I've just got five points they're less of exhortations and more of kind of confessions about who Jesus is and what I mean by that is Jesus has many attributes to himself I've chosen five that I think if you dwell on these it will make you worship so the first point of Jesus identity I think it's important to dwell on is him as priest he is the high priest of God the Bible said he's made like us in every respect Hebrews 6 says that you might say why couldn't God just drop down and do the deed die on the cross rise again three days it'll be done why do he have to be born why do he have to live 30 years before he started his ministry because he had to be made

Hebrews says that he sympathizes with our weakness Hebrews 4 says since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens Jesus the son of God let us hold fast our confession for we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are yet without sin let us then with confidence drawn near to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace in the time of need he's our high priest who sympathizes with us in Hebrews 5 it talks about how the priest doesn't he has to offer sacrifices for his own sins since he is beset with weakness he offers for the sins of the people on their behalf but he has to do his own because he's a weak vessel as well so

Jesus is the high priest of God Hebrews 7 says that he always lives to make intercession for them this is this is the intercession is a priestly function we see that in John 17 when Jesus prays his prayer for his disciples famously called the high priestly prayer Jesus is the high priest because he administers the sacrifice of God through his own blood which brings me to my next point point number two Jesus is the scapegoat and the Passover lamb Leviticus 16 21 says that Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat and confess over it all the iniquities of the people of Israel and all their transgressions and all their sins and he shall put them on the head of the goat and send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a man who is in readiness this is a picture of what has been done to

[29 : 19] Jesus Jesus is our scapegoat he most definitely had brutal hands laid on him and he was sent out outside the gate outside the camp and he died outside the city he was lifted up as our Passover lamb on that day as a perfect sacrifice for sins so Christ church in the same way let us hold fast to that confession that Jesus it is indeed the final Passover lamb no sacrifices need to be offered not even in our hearts but they were offered once scripture say one time my next point number three is Jesus is I mentioned this before but Jesus is the prophet and the word he is the

word made flesh John 12 49 says that

Jesus says that in John 12 he says I only speak what the father tells me that's a prophet but he himself is called the word he himself is the person to be followed you know old prophets we wouldn't necessarily follow but we would adhere to the word Jesus is the example of that word he's the word made flesh he's the stone that the builders rejected and the prophetic word that speaks better than the blood of Abel the word of Abel the word of Abel cries out for vengeance and recompense but the word of Christ cries out for mercy having met the recompense through his own blood!

Fourth number four attribute of Jesus that I think is precious to dwell on and we must dwell on is that he is king Jesus is king Revelation 19 13 says he is clothed in a robe dipped in blood and the name by which he is called is the word of God on his robe and on his thigh he has a name written king of kings and lord of lords that's his name king of all kings highest king every other king is under him again he says in John 18 my kingdom is not he's a king but not without a kingdom he rules and we if we are in Christ are part of that kingdom Peter says in Acts 2 36 let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ both king and savior right so that goes against you know the hyper grace people that's like he saved me he saved me I don't have to do anything it's like hang on it says Lord and Christ you have to follow him you have to obey him he is indeed savior which sets you free to obey him as king right he he both king and savior!

last point the identity of Jesus to dwell in his worship in our hearts is he he is our friend possibly one of the most moving things the almighty God can say is to call us friends think of the highest king you know on earth you know and regard the lowest person as a friend much more God the creator regards us as friends he says in John to his disciples on his last night with them no longer do I call you servants but I call you friends someone mentioned that this actually must have been deeply moving to his disciples because at that point I think only Moses and Abraham in scripture were called God's friends

[33 : 53] God spoke to Moses as someone would speak with a friend Abraham is called the friend of God so when Jesus kind of moved from servants to friends I can imagine maybe what they felt on that night especially before he went to the cross but this is how we need to understand how God speaks with us he doesn't deal with us just as his servants right although we do serve him but he deals with us as friends through Jesus Christ so we so we know that the relationship that we have with God is not one of master slave alone in fact it isn't slavery but freedom in friendship he calls his friends so God is the high priest he's the high priest of God who intercedes for us he's the

Passover lamb who was sacrificed for us he's the prophet and the word made flesh who has dwelt among us he's the king who rules and a rope dipped in blood and he's our friend these are five things that nourished me as I was preparing for this I think that it should nourish us as well as body we should dwell on it we should let it saturate into us we did not die on that cross God did he was sacrificed let us give him the reward of his suffering with our lives so as I close recalling those five things I would just ask a simple question which is does your life long to be transformed by the gospel and do you believe the gospel does it make its home in you does God reside deep down so as to feed you us as believers we need that we need to come to God

Jesus said if anyone thirsts let him come to me you know you can't come to him if you're not thirsty that's a good prayer to pray Lord make me thirsty for you forgive me for seeking out other things going after other gods however great however small that might be let us worship him let us give him the reward of his suffering and be infused by the very life of God from our inward man living out as he has deposited it in us this is from the Christmas hand let all mortal flesh keep silent speaking of worship it says rank on rank the hosts of heaven spread their vanguard through the sky veil their faces to the presence as with ceaseless voice they cry hallelujah lord most I let that come from our hearts as we worship one last thing this is a quote from

Augustine and then I'll pray it says man's maker was made man that he ruler of the stars might nurse at his mother's breast that the bread might hunger the fountain thirst the light sleep the way be tired on its journey that truth might be accused of false witness the teacher be beaten with whips the foundation be suspended on wood that strength might grow weak and that the healer might be wounded that life might die this is God who came down in the flesh became like us in every respect he says intercedes for us now in heaven on our behalf and one day we will meet him let it not be for judgment but for salvation on the last day when he comes again him