

What is the Gospel?

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[0:00] All right. So, last session of our series went quickly.

! For good reason, in some instance, because, well, I only was with you for three sessions.! But tonight, what I want to talk about, what is the gospel?

And how does God bring about our salvation? How does that all work? Well, I'm going to rely on the Catechism, the ACNA Catechism, on the question of what is the gospel, because it asks it directly. It gives what I think is a pretty good answer.

So, the gospel is the good news of God-loving and saving lost mankind through the ministry in word and deed of His Son, Jesus Christ. Now, it does kind of give the standard Sunday school answer to that question. What is the gospel? Uh, Jesus? Yeah, that's what the Catechism does, basically. But, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, and what He accomplished, is at the very center of the gospel. Now, we talked about that a little bit last week, when we talked about who Christ is, and what His death accomplished, and what His resurrection accomplished. But, we're going to go into that in a little more detail, uh, this week. So, if the gospel is about God-loving and saving lost mankind, we have to ask, given that definition, well, why are we lost, and why do we need to be saved? Well, fortunately, the Catechism addresses that question, too.

So, Catechism says, um, citing scripture, the universal human condition is that though we were made for fellowship with our Creator, we have been cut off from Him, by self-centered rebellion against Him, leading to guilt, shame, and fear of death and judgment. This is the state of sin.

[2:26] Well, then you find yourself saying, yeah, that's pretty bad. What can I do about that? Well, shortly after that, uh, the Catechism gives what, at first, looks like a really, uh, unhappy answer in some ways, when it asks, can you mend your broken relationship with God? No. I have no power to save myself. For sin has corrupted my conscience and captured my will. Only God can save me.

And it cites Ephesians 2, John 14, and Titus 3, in support. Now, what does that tell us? We can't save ourselves. Not only can we not save ourselves, we can't even make a good beginning at saving ourselves.

Why? Because our wills and our consciences are enslaved to sin. That's bad. That's really bad. So, we're in such bad shape that we can't even make that first step of faith and repentance to be saved of our own power. You know, sin, we, we tend to think of sin, I think, um, in a, in a limited sort of way, because we think about it as sort of breaking the rules, which is part of the equation. But it's also a disease, right, that infects all of us, and, and without exception. So, it affects every person who's born into this world. We see the guilt of it. We're guilty, liable to God's judgment against sin. We're all going to die, which is a consequence of sin. And our wills are captured so that we desire sin and act accordingly. Now, how does the gospel affect that reality?

Well, jumping from the catechism, which I hope everyone checks out at some point, because it's pretty, pretty awesome, to the articles of religion, the articles talk about what we as Anglicans believe about Christ rescuing us from the guilt of our sin.

[4:48] The articles say, the offering of Christ once made is that perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual.

And there is no other satisfaction for sin but that alone. Redemption, propitiation, satisfaction. What do all those things mean? Well, let's break it down. What is redemption? What does it mean to be redeemed?

Bought back. Exactly. I mean, I think of like bottles and cans even. Yeah, right. You're being purchased back if you were being redeemed.

Just like your bottles and cans are. Right. Perfect example. So, who are we being brought back for?

[5:51] And what are we being brought back from? Yes. So, if because of our sin, we are living in our natural state, so to speak, under the reign of sin, death, and the devil, then if Jesus is our redemption, it means that he has rescued us from the stuff that we were under the authority of

before.

That was so awful. Jesus bought us back through his blood. When we talk about redemption, that's what we mean.

Now, what is propitiation? Anyone? The appeasement of wrath. Yes. Yay.

And you only had to study theology at the graduate level to learn that, right? No, it's the 1928 prayer book. Ah. Say it all the time. Indeed.

So, yeah. So, propitiation is kind of like appeasement or turning away of wrath. Now, remember last week when we talked about God's holiness?

[7:12] We have to stop and consider, if God is holy, what that means if we're sinful. If God is holy and we are rebellious sinners, then we're under God's righteous wrath, rightly.

But, God is pleased with the perfect death and life of his son, Jesus Christ. So, when we say that Christ is our propitiation, what we mean is that if we are in Christ, God treats us as those with whom he is well pleased.

Because of what Christ has done, the wrath of God is turned away from those who have faith in Christ. So, that's what propitiation means.

Now, what is satisfaction? And everyone's going to be thinking of the Rolling Stones song now, right? Rolling Stones song? Yeah. Well, in this sense, it's meant a little differently than what the Rolling Stones meant by it, I think.

But, um... Completing? Yeah, kind of. So, satisfaction is a word that can have multiple meanings.

[8:32] kind of to illustrate what is meant here by when we talk about Christ's death as satisfaction. Our liturgy talks about that, too, our Holy Communion service.

Well, think about it this way. A debt is owed. Satisfying the debt means paying the debt, right? So, as God's creatures, we have the duty, the obligation, to give love, give God our love and obedience. We owe that to Him as our Creator. Well, guess what? We fell short and couldn't pay the bill, so to speak. So, what happens? Jesus takes that debt on Himself, on our behalf, He satisfies that through His perfect obedience even unto death, so that what?

If we are in Christ, our debt has been paid in full by Him. Now, what does that mean for us?

It means, as the Scriptures tell us, that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because He's taking care of that.

[9:56] Now, His resurrection also means that even though we were under the dominion of death, subject to death, which is the consequence of sin, through His resurrection, we have the promise of eternal life as well.

So, forgiveness, promise of eternal life in Christ. we are going to boil it, you know, the question of what the gospel is down to its essence.

I think that's where we would end up. So, this is what Christ has done for us. Now, how do we receive the benefits of that?

Well, as Anglicans, we believe in the doctrine of justification by faith alone. Now, what does justification mean?

Yeah, I'm, uh, putting the quizzes to everyone tonight. I've heard it likened to, like, a judge who, um, does or does not pronounce sentence.

[11:03] Mm-hmm. So, in this case, justified would be, you know, the sentence is no longer there or because he's unsatisfied. Exactly.

So, it takes you in a circle back to your satisfaction. It does, but that's okay because it's related.

Okay. So, yeah. Is it the same as a quiddle? More than a quiddle.

How would you, Raymond, how would you, uh, regard that analogy? No, quiddle is a legal term that means that they haven't proven your guilt. And the, that wouldn't work here real well because it's relatively easy to prove the guilt of anybody to sin.

Yes. Probably over and over and over again. Most of the sentence has already been made. It's just being served been served by someone else. Yeah, so, so imagine, imagine you're taken to court because you owe a debt that you can't pay.

And you get there and you show up, right? And you, you get there to find that someone else has opted to pay your debt on your behalf.

[12:17] Or to, to kind of, um, go back to the analogy that you were using, Debbie, um, it's, it's basically like going from not guilty to guilty.

From God treating you as guilty to God treating you as not guilty because of what Christ has done in taking his sins, taking our sins on himself.

So, why do we Anglicans believe in this justification by faith alone thing? Well, it's what we see in the New Testament.

Ephesians 2, 8 through 9. For by grace you have been saved through faith and that is not your own doing, it is the gift of God. Not a result of works so that no one may boast. So, we talked a little bit about what justification is.

what do we mean by faith? Well, what we don't mean is just intellectual assent.

[13:28] As in, you know, in my mind I believe that these, this list of propositions is true. Faith is something more than that. Faith is trust in the promises of God.

Trusting God. And that, of course, implies a relationship. God is in an abstract list of propositions. He is a person. And we have faith in Him. So, saved by grace alone through faith alone means we have faith in what Christ has accomplished.

as our redemption, as our satisfaction, as our propitiation. And through that faith, God forgives us our sins and sets us in right relationship with Him.

So, by grace you've been saved through faith. That's not your own doing. It's the gift of God, not a result of works. grace. So, we believe that we are saved by grace alone through faith alone, and that even our faith itself is a gift, something that God gives to us.

[14:53] Now, why is that important? Well, if, where we first started, right, our consciences and our wills are under the dominion of sin, making the decision to have faith before God gives you the grace to have faith, isn't something you can do.

So, grace precedes faith. It's a gift. Now, historically, how did Anglicans come to believe this thing? Well, here's what the English reformers were reacting against, right? this kind of approach to salvation that says, well, God gives us grace, so that then we can have faith and do good works, and through our good works we can merit salvation.

And the English reformers rightly said, wait a minute, that does not seem right. So they said, no. not so much. Instead, if you were to kind of break down into a sort of equation what they were arguing for about how salvation works, they'd say, no, through God's grace we're given faith, faith unites us to Christ, and that it's only through what Christ has done, through Christ's merits, not our own, that we are given salvation freely as a gift.

[16:28] from the beginning to the end, as Anglicans we believe that salvation is a free gift of the grace of God.

Now what does that mean for the Christian life? well, any thoughts? You want to expand on that a little bit?

no. Well, it's a continual repentance. Mm-hmm. Yeah, not once, you know.

Yeah, exactly, and it's repentance of a different sort of than, like, I need to, oh man, I did something wrong and God is going to zap me if I don't say I'm sorry quickly enough.

because if you look at the model that the English reformers were reacting against, there's this kind of constant anxiety of, have I really done a good enough job?

[17:42] And you're pulling your hair out, right, because it's so agonizing. If, on the other hand, our salvation is through what Christ has done, when we repent, we're repenting not to a distant God who is looking to zap us, but to a loving Father who wants to heal us from the wounds that our sin has caused us.

So one thing that thinking about salvation in this way means for the Christian life is that we have the assurance, right, that our salvation depends on God.

So that agony, that worrying, that pressure, not so much. It also teaches us to rely on God and not ourselves.

I think that anyone who has been a Christian for any length of time knows that relying on your own strength never really works out very well.

Usually, when you try that, God will show you that that's not a good idea, so it's better not to try that. But the last thing I want to point out about what it means for the attitude with which we approach our lives in Christ means thankfulness, right, because we were lost, we were a mess.

[19:17] C.S. Lewis says, you know, that we were rebels, right, that's more than just being lost and being far from God, that means an act of opposition, and God sent his son to die for us, and sent his Holy Spirit to, by grace, give us faith in Christ.

That is awesome. So, we're justified, made right with God, forgiven, go from not guilty to guilty by God's grace alone through faith alone.

Now, how does God work to give us faith and increase our faith? So, faith is the thing, how do we get it?

Well, as Anglicans, we believe that ordinarily God works to give and increase our faith through what we call the means of grace. faith. Now, what does that include?

What might that include? Thoughts? Guesses? Yeah. So, talking about the, the sort of channels, so to speak, through which God works to give us faith and increase our faith.

[20 : 39] What do you think those things might be? Okay. Yes. So, what are some ways that God would work to even get us to the point where we ask for it?

Scripture? The Word of God. Yes. The Scriptures. The Word of God. Trials. Trials?

Yeah. And that, you know, the only reason I wouldn't throw them in this category is that trials I would tend to consider extraordinary rather than ordinary, especially when you're going through one.

It sure doesn't seem like an ordinary thing. But in particular, the gospel rightly preached. It's a means through which God works to give and increase faith.

Secondly, the sacraments, particularly baptism in the Eucharist. Now, going back to those delightful articles of religion again, they say, the sacraments ordained of Christ be not only badges or tokens of Christian men's profession, but rather they be certain sure witnesses and effectual signs of grace and God's good will toward us by which he doth work invisibly in us, doth not only quicken but also strengthen and confirm our faith in him.

[22 : 05] Now, let's break that down a little bit. The sacraments, the articles of religion are saying, aren't just signs or symbols.

They're effectual signs, meaning they actually do something. Through them, God can and does work invisibly in us in ways that we can't perceive to quicken or to stir up faith in him and to strengthen and confirm our faith in him.

So, word, sacrament. The third biggie is going to be prayer, and I think this touches on where you were saying about asking God for his grace and his mercy.

Prayer, our personal relationship with God. God works to strengthen our faith in him through our relationship with him. That's no surprise.

Not a shocker there. prayer. So, what does the overall scheme of salvation look like? Well, there's no perfect system with which to break it down, but the best we got looks like this.

[23 : 24] Justification, which we already talked about, followed by sanctification, followed by glorification. So, justification, what happens there?

Holy Spirit gives us the gift of faith, we come to Christ in faith and repentance, and we're united to Jesus, to his death and resurrection, and we're completely forgiven through him.

Secondly, sanctification, what happens there? Holy Spirit dwells within us to make us holy, to set us apart as God's holy people.

Now, as we grow in our faith, together with one another, through word and sacrament, we grow in prayer, we grow in holiness.

And lastly, glorification. After this life, when we are received into heaven, completely free from both the guilt and the power of sin.

[24 : 29] Because if we are justified, we're free from the guilt of sin already, but we're not free from its power. And won't be completely until this life is over.

But, through the resurrection of Christ, we have the assurance of eternity with God, and we have the assurance that one day, our bodies will be raised, never to die or to sin again.

Justification, sanctification, glorification. Now, as we've talked a little bit about how salvation is worked out, a question that naturally arises is what does that have to do, not just with us as individuals, but as a church.

One thing that comes up, what does a faithful church look like? Well, most fundamentally, we talked about word and sacrament.

Anglicans believe that the church is found where word and sacrament are found. So, where the word of God is rightly preached and where the sacraments are administered to Christ's ordinance.

[25 : 58] You see those things? You see the very basics of what the church is at work. So, word and sacrament, remember if we're looking back, kind of again, at the sort of model the English

reformers were reacting against.

You know, they said we need word and we need sacrament. The model they were reacting against, though, focused on the sacraments to the almost exclusion of the word preached.

It was kind of an afterthought. And they were seeking to restore that balance. So, of course, they would tell us, well, yeah, the sacraments are important, but without the word rightly preached, the church still isn't the church.

Well, why would they boil it down to this? Well, given what we've talked about, about how we believe that faith is given and strengthened, it makes sense.

these are the things that God ordinarily uses to build up faith in the hearts of his people. And word and sacrament, specifically, the word rightly preached, because the word incorrectly preached is of no benefit to anyone.

[27 : 36] But the word rightly preached, and the sacraments rightly administered, that doesn't give us an exhaustive list of everything that a faithful church is and does, but a healthy and faithful church always has the word rightly preached, and the sacraments rightly administered.

Now, as we think about how we're saved, how God works to give his grace to us, another question that arises, all these kids amongst us, how do we raise our children to know the Lord?

Well, as we were talking about the means of grace, if those are the ordinary ways through which God works to impart and increase faith, then exposing our children to the means of grace is a good idea.

With the expectation that God is going to give them faith, so we baptize them, we bring them up under the faithful teaching and preaching of the word, we study the word with them, we teach them the gospel, we teach them to trust in Christ, and we teach them how to pray with the expectation that the Lord has a claim on our children.

God. We've got quite a few of them running around here these days. Praise God. In summary, and I didn't talk as long this time, I don't think, we believe salvation is in Christ alone, by grace alone, through faith alone.

[29 : 48] that's what we see in the scriptures, so that is what we preach and teach. That's even what we see in the hymns we sing.

As one hymn puts it, my hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus' name.

On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand. I couldn't put it any better.

Questions before we move on to discussion?

What would you say to a person who did not recognize that he had sin in his life without hitting him over the hat?

Don't hit him. Well, the first thing I would do is pray for a really long time before I said anything.

[30 : 52] come across the stereotypical judgmental Christian, be overzealous, and then when they get mad at you, point it out.

There we go. Just to be clear, I was joking about that. So, you know, it depends on where they are. are. One thing that we have to keep in mind, in prior ages in American life where America was culturally Christian, we could assume that if we appealed to the law of God, it would strike people on some level.

We can't really assume that anymore, necessarily. I don't know if you can assume that with the person you're talking about or not. So, the way you have to start there, I think, is try to understand their value system, and ask them about the ways in which they fall short of their own value system. because everyone has some sort of value system, almost everyone.

[32 : 22] There are exceptions, but most people realize that they fall short of the values that they prize, sinfulness.

And that is a foot in the door, I think, in terms of helping people realize their sinfulness. Now, there's a lot of road to travel from there to conviction of sin to repentance, but I think that's where you start.

Thank you. You know, one of the things that resonated with me in your last statement about raising up children, I think one of the things that we see every Sunday is the conspicuous absence of our own children.

And, you know, I think much of what you talked about is very familiar. It resonates very clearly to all of us. And yet again, conspicuously absent are our children.

And you listed those things that we should be impressing upon our kids. I think back to myself, okay, pray with them. In scripture, maybe a little.

[33:36] Where are the things that road map that I wandered off that we could impart as senior Christians, those that have lived our lives, have struggled with all those things, could share with others and say, you know, how do you stay on that road map?

How do you not get so busy that those things start to get lost in the mix of fighting and how the evil one puts so many pressures on us, worldly pressures on us, that those things start to fall away. people. Yeah. So, that's probably the most impressive thing to me was, how do we raise our children?

How do we not make the same mistakes? How do we grow as a church? How do we share those mistakes with others so that they can avoid those pitfalls?

And, again, you have a whole three people that are very senior and very dire in their faith. And, you know, I would say a couple things.

[34:47] I mean, sometimes, from what I've seen, people do everything they can to raise their children to know the Lord, and they still walk away.

If that happens, you've done what you can do, and it's on them, I think. But, if you were to look at this, things are statistically significant.

And, 30 or more of 5% is usually used as a standard significant. So, we have a sample size here. A sample size of Christians that statistically pretty much struck out.

Some of them are going to other churches, and that's great. For many of us, it's a real struggle. Because, what would happen? And, granted, it's easy for me to grasp on that I've done everything that I could, and it gives me some sort of solace and comfort.

But, knowing the society that we're in, knowing that we can no longer rely on Christian ethos as a landmark, that we have to find out where people are coming from, their social wars, and to realize that the Clay Phil is what we know.

[35:58] It's not familiar. Not at all. I think if we were going to look at how we guide each other, help each other, in this environment that we live in now, all you do is watch the election.

It ain't pretty. Yeah, I've been pulling my hair out over the election. wonderful.

Wonderful. You know, it's really hard because the secular world is just grabbing them. Yes. I mean, they're so busy, busy, busy, busy, that they so love their Sunday mornings, sleeping in, or there's some athletic event that they have to go to.

Yeah. Everywhere you go, they're pulling them away from the church. Right. Well, here's the deal. The culture that we live in isn't a passive thing.

It's trying to convert us. Oh, yeah. It really is. It's been going on since the 40s, or maybe even sooner, or early, later. I mean, we used to have blue laws.

[37:07] They're gone. You could never find, back in the 50s, you could not find a sporting event on TV to save your life. We only had three channels.

One o'clock. One o'clock Sunday afternoon. That's right. Nothing in the morning. That's right. I mean, and now, geez, you've got soccer for kids, you've got hockey and football and all that stuff going on, baseball, and they schedule games on Sundays.

I think about my mom and my parents. They converted to Christianity in the very early 70s. They were very involved in the charismatic movement. They did all those things.

We read our Bible every morning and night. We prayed continuously. All of us at some point had wandered, had faltered. I heard prayer by the end of our life.

They think our children would know Christ. That actually did happen the last few years before they got. That was a long prayer cycle for that gift.

[38:14] very long 40 years. So I don't look forward to that. That test of faith. The only thing is, you know, I don't have children, but I'm thinking about my nieces and nephew because I was close when they were growing up.

Even in a family with three children, their temperaments and whatever are so different that the same upbringing can produce three totally different individuals.

We're very familiar with that. The zealous lack thereof or, I don't know, I just look at each one of them and they're so different and the way they do not pursue their faith.

So I can kind of speak to you guys from the vantage point of you know, here is how it seems that in the past the church has been successful.

Yeah, the church around the world has been successful in raising children to know the Lord. And I can talk about how I have done my best thus far to raise my little one to know the Lord.

[39:37] God. But some of you have raised children and have maybe decades of reflection in some cases and have that as a basis to teach me.

So I think on that subject, that's something that we should have an ongoing conversation about in the life of our church. Yeah, seriously, seriously.

And if we're going to grow this church, I think other young Christians that are having starting families or are in the process of that is going, I mean, we are under attack.

Yes. How do I do this thing of being a Christian and raising a family? How is it done? And, you know, I take open dialogue and this is what I did, this is what I didn't do.

you know, just that open dialogue is important and a venue to do that. Yeah. I also have to say, though, as a parent, I feel like the relationship to Christ and encouraging our children to have that relationship is crucial, but also that they see our steadfastness and our faith, no matter what comes in life, that when they look at us, they can see that we are staying the course and we are trying to finish strong.

[41:02] I feel sometimes also that where our children are, and as Deb said, they are so each individually uniquely different, that I'm starting to recognize in my heart, I feel, that each one is called to a different journey, and they have to go astray and have these experiences that they're having for Christ to mold them into the people he would have them to be.

And I just feel like it's a work in progress, and it's so crucially painful at times, because you think some of their mistakes may literally destroy them on some level, but you just have to, as you say, continue to have faith and know that God is working in their lives.

I mean, you know, as believers, we can say, God loves our children, and God has a claim on their lives. And he knows what their future is going to be.

He sure does. And they need to experience a certain thing in order to minister to someone about that in the future. But you know how you watch movie clips, and they kind of give an inkling?

I'd love for him to send me just a movie clip. Just a little, you know. Siskel and Ebert, give it two thumbs up. Just a little bit. You know, if you're showing the end, you just a little, in case you survives the cliffhanger, okay?

[42:36] That's where the faith comes in. Yeah. I have a question. Sure. In some ways, it doesn't apply, because, you know, we don't have kids, but bottom line, where does that come from?

You said it twice now, that you have to believe that God has a claim on your children. Mm-hmm. Is there, where is that coming from?

Just because I'm trying to think the scriptural basis. So, well, think of it this way. That might be an almost counterintuitive way for 21st century Americans to think about it, because we're, like, really individualistic.

But if you look at the Old Testament, we see that God, in redemption, dealt with families.

And we see that same pattern continuing in the New Testament as well, you know, the promises of God being to you and to your children. We see accounts of households come into faith.

[43:48] So, just the realization that God, in redeeming us, deals with families and works through families in ways that we might be kind of apt to forget.

That makes it even more scary for today. Because there's so many broken families. Yeah. And not just, I mean, including the church. Indeed.

I mean, that's, yeah, that's part of why it's so family life and the church supporting families and families in the church supporting one another and the older people supporting the younger people and the people who don't have kids supporting the people who do and the people who do have kids supporting the people who don't.

So on and so on and so on. We've got to be in this together. Because as a body, we're one big family. And God is at work in our lives, not just individually, but together.

any more thoughts or questions before we close?

[45:01] Thank you.