

# Not Man's Gospel

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- [ 0 : 0 0 ]     This morning I want to begin by recommending a book to you. It's this little book titled What is the Gospel? It's a book by Greg Gilbert.
- It is in the bookstore. And like all of our other books in the bookstore, it is at the U.S. list price. And I think you would find it to be a very helpful resource in clarifying and understanding what the gospel is.
- But in this book, in the introduction to it, Greg Gilbert writes the following. Ask any hundred self-professed evangelical Christians what the good news of Jesus is, and you're likely to get about 60 different answers.
- Listen to evangelical preaching, read evangelical books, log on to evangelical websites, and you will find one description after another of the gospel, many of them mutually exclusive.
- And by mutually exclusive, he means the descriptions of the gospel that people give have nothing in common with the others, just separate and apart.
- [ 1 : 2 7 ]     And then Gilbert goes on to actually list a sampling of the responses that he received to the question, what is the gospel? I imagine that he did this survey in the United States, but I think if the survey were done here in the Bahamas, we would have very similar results.
- We would have people who profess to be Christians who would answer this question, what is the gospel, in a variety of different ways, some of them contradicting the others, and some of them very unique in and of themselves.
- But last week, as we considered verses 6 through 10 of Galatians, we considered Paul's point that there is only one gospel.
- And it is an unchanging gospel, he tells us. And Paul says, if anyone preaches another gospel, then that person is to be accursed.
- So the question is, how is it that there is only one gospel, but people have different and even contradictory descriptions of what the gospel is?
- [ 2 : 5 1 ]     Now, in our case, if we're going to be on safe and sound ground regarding the gospel that we've received and believe and preach, then we need to be sure that it is the one and only gospel, the gospel that is found in the pages of Holy Scripture.
- And one of those places is in the letter of Galatians, to which we come once again this morning as we continue our sermon series in Galatians.
- Now, there's a reality when we consider these words this morning. We're no different from the Galatians in terms of how the gospel came to us.
- The gospel came to them through the Apostle Paul, and the gospel has come to us through some human being. So there's really no difference in that regard.
- We did not get the gospel directly. We received it through some human being. But there is a slight difference in the sense that in the case of the Galatians, when they received the gospel from Paul, Paul preached the gospel to them.

- [ 4 : 12 ] When he moved off the scene, false teachers came in and began to proclaim another gospel, began to say to them, you cannot be saved unless you keep the law of Moses.
- And they didn't have a Bible to turn to. They didn't have a Bible with gospels and letters, like the letter of Galatians, to turn to. But we do.
- They didn't, but we do. And so the Apostle Paul had to go to great lengths and really to great pain to show them the origins of his gospel.
- He needed to establish for them that his gospel was not what they were saying that it was, that it was just really another view, that it was just his gospel, and that he really was not an apostle after all.
- And that is what the Apostle Paul does in verses 11 through 24, to which we have come this morning. He seeks to prove the origins of the gospel that he preached to the Galatians, and he does it because he recognizes the importance of doing so.
- [ 5 : 24 ] They needed to have certainty that the gospel they had received was not man's gospel, but that it was God's gospel.
- And this is also important for us. What Paul does for the Galatians helps us to have more faith in what we're reading in these pages because he fills in some details to give us a history of how he received the gospel.
- So let us consider this one in the case that the Apostle Paul makes in Galatians chapter 1, beginning in verse 11. Galatians 1, starting in verse 11.
- Please follow along as I read. I'm reading from the English Standard Version translation. If you have another translation, yours will read slightly differently.
- Paul writes, For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel.
- [ 6 : 36 ] For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it.
- And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people. So extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers.
- But when he who had set me apart before I was born and who called me by his grace was pleased to reveal his son to me in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me.
- But I ran away into Arabia and returned again to Damascus. And after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and remained with him 15 days.
- But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother. And what I'm writing to you before God, I do not lie. Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia.
- [ 8 : 07 ] And I was still unknown in person to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. They were only hearing it said, he who used to persecute us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy.
- And they glorified God because of me. Let's pray together. Father, we're so grateful this morning that we are able to gather in this place, lift our voices in song, lift our voices in prayer to you and now to be able to sit under the preaching of your word.
- Lord, we pause because we know that we need your help. We ask that you would open the eyes of our hearts. We ask that you would cause us to hear and that you would grant illumination in your word through your Holy Spirit.

Father, would you speak into this moment and say, let there be light that we may see light in the light of your word. I pray, Lord, that you would cause our certainty to grow that the gospel that we have received, the gospel that tells us that men and women and boys and girls can be saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone.

Cause us, Lord, to grow in our faith that that is indeed your gospel. Father, we ask that you would watch over this time of the preaching of your word.

[ 10 : 06 ] I pray that you would grant me grace and unction to be a faithful servant. Handling your word this morning.

So we entrust ourselves to you. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. But in these verses that we have just read, the Apostle Paul makes an important point about the origins of his gospel.

And the point might seem simple, but it is quite profound in terms of what the implications are or the meaning of it.

The point that the Apostle Paul makes in these verses is this. The gospel originated from God, not from man.

Again, very simple, but very profound. Because if the gospel has one source, then there is only one gospel. Or to put it another way, since the gospel only has one true source, there is only one true gospel.

[ 11 : 27 ] But even though there is only one true gospel, we live in a world where there are multiple false gospels. But thankfully we can open our Bibles to confirm or to refute any gospel that we hear.

But again, the Galatians did not have that ability. They didn't have the New Testament like we do this morning.

All they had was the Old Testament. The false teachers were saying to them, see, it's in the Old Testament. It's in the Bible. It's in your Bible. You are to keep the laws of Moses.

And if you don't keep them, then you cannot be saved. So in this passage, the Apostle Paul is making the case that the gospel that he preached to the Galatians is the gospel that they should believe because it's God's gospel.

And he sets out to the Galatians why and how his gospel is God's gospel by sharing with them his personal testimony.

[ 12 : 40 ] Another way that we can look at this passage is the Apostle Paul is giving the Galatians proof. He's giving them evidence that his gospel came from God.

And his point again is, the gospel I preached to you is not mine's gospel. This evidence that Paul gives in these verses that we have just read can be divided into three parts.

And the first is evidence before conversion. Paul provides this evidence in verses 13 and 14 before his conversion.

But before giving that bit of evidence in verses 11 and 12, Paul clearly and plainly tells the Galatians that the gospel he preached to them is not man's gospel.

He stresses that he didn't receive it from any man, nor was he taught it by any man, but it came by a revelation from Jesus Christ. And then he proceeds with his personal testimony to help them to see how he received this revelation.

[ 13 : 59 ] And he starts with his former life before his conversion. The Apostle Paul was an undisputed, committed Pharisee.

Look at what he says again in verses 13 and 14. He reminds the Galatians that they had heard. He said, You have heard of my former life in Judaism. How I violently persecuted the church of God.

And I was trying to destroy it. You have heard of that. And his point is clear. I was opposed to the church. I was opposed to what it stood for.

I was opposed to the gospel. And Paul says, Not only that, I was also advancing in Judaism. Among my peers, I had no equal.

I was well ahead of them for my age. He was a radical adherent to the traditions of the fathers.

[ 15 : 00 ] And Luke, the gospel writer, gives us some accounts of the Apostle Paul's life in the book of Acts. At the end of Acts, chapter 7, for example, and then going into chapter 8, Luke gives us this account of Saul being at the stoning of Stephen, the first model we have recorded in Scripture.

Luke tells us that Saul was there holding the clothes of those who were stoning Stephen. He watched it all. He heard Stephen's message.

Stephen began with Abraham and he preaches this long message ending with the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. And Saul stood there as Stephen fell to his knees as he was dying, crying out, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.

And Saul saw it all. And yet, in Acts 9, verses 1 through 2, we read, but Saul, this is a continuation from 7 and 8, but Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus so that if he found any belonging to the way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

Saul was not satisfied with confining his zealous activities to Jerusalem, but he now goes to a foreign country, he goes to Damascus. He's getting letters to go there.

[ 16 : 43 ] And why does he do this? Why does Saul persecute the church in such a way? Why does he stand at the death of Stephen? And the next thing we read about him is that he is going to a foreign country to bring men and women bound back to Jerusalem who believe in Jesus Christ?

Well, it's because he thought he was doing God a favor. He thought he was doing the right thing and there's no one more dangerous than a person who believes that what they're doing, God has told them to do it.

Because rightly so, if you really believe that, then you need to obey. But something happened on the road to Damascus. Saul had an encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ.

And he refers to this encounter in verses 15 and 16, which brings me to the second point, evidence about Paul's conversion.

Evidence about his conversion. Look again in verse 15.

[ 18 : 02 ] We read, But when he who had set me apart before I was born and who called me by his grace was pleased to reveal in his, was pleased to reveal his son to me in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone.

Here in these two verses, the Apostle Paul shares three important insights about his conversion that are true for all who experience genuine conversion.

Now notice what Paul is doing. Paul is trying to help them to appreciate how he came from being this persecuting, zealous Pharisee to this one who preaches the gospel and who is now saying the gospel I preach to you, I received that from God.

I didn't get it from man, didn't get it from myself, I received it from God. Paul is giving the reason behind what happened to him.

and what happened to Paul, although it's not true for us in the exact same experience because experiences are different, the conversion that Paul experienced is true for every single person who has ever been converted, whoever will be converted to Christ.

[ 19 : 33 ] There are three particular elements that the Apostle Paul highlights, that though we experience it differently, we all experience when we come to Christ.

The first thing that Paul says is in verse 15, he says that God set him apart before he was born. He says God set him apart before he was born.

Paul is making the point that both his salvation and his calling as an apostle are as a result of God setting him apart by his sovereign choice and had nothing to do with him.

He wasn't even born yet. Paul is helping them to see I didn't wake up one day and just decide to change my mind. But God set me apart before I was born.

In every case of every person who has ever been saved and whoever will be saved God set them apart for salvation before they were born.

[ 20 : 47 ] It is without a doubt that Paul is primarily addressing his call as an apostle to the Galatians. But before he would be called as an apostle he would be called as a believer.

He would be called to have faith in the one whose gospel he is going to preach. In Ephesians chapter 1 verses 3 through 5 Paul states this point broadly for all believers when he writes blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless before him in love he predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ according to the purpose of his will to the praise of his glorious grace which he has blessed us with which he has blessed us in the beloved.

Paul is talking about God choosing us before the foundation of the world and then predestining us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ.

In other words every person whom God saves he decided to save before the world began which was long before they were ever born.

And this is a sobering reality that God for his own sovereign purpose and will chose to save some people but not all people.

[ 22 : 40 ] And the only reason that people are saved is because God chose to save them and had he not chosen to save them no one would be saved. Theologians refer to this as the doctrine of divine election.

election. And here's how Wayne Grudem defines election. He defines it this way. An act of God before creation in which he chooses some people to be saved not on account of any foreseen merit in them but only because of his sovereign good pleasure.

Now this is a difficult doctrine for some people to accept because it seems unfair. But when we think about the doctrine of election the doctrine of election may seem unfair but it is not unfair because what we're dealing with is we're dealing with God giving grace to those who didn't deserve it.

And when it is a matter of grace the issue of fairness or unfairness doesn't arise. Let me try to explain it this way. Imagine a business owner who has many customers who owe him money.

If that business owner decides that he is going to forgive the debt of some of his customers but not all of his customers can the ones whose debt he did not forgive legitimately complain that he was unfair.

[ 24 : 27 ] They can complain but not legitimately because they owed the debt. Even after he decided to forgive some the debt that they owed they would be thankful because he did it for his own reasons but those who are not forgiven the debt can complain.

you may be aware of this but in case you're not aware do you know that our constitution allows the governor general to pardon any convicted person in our prison.

The governor general can decide to go into the prison and to pardon and forgive particular convicted prisoners and not do the same for others.

And the others who are not pardoned in that way cannot complain legitimately because they're paying for their crimes. They're paying for their sentences. And so the ones who would have been pardoned they are grateful that they received grace.

They're grateful that they were forgiven and didn't have to serve the rest of their sentence but it was an ode to them. And had they not gotten mercy and grace they would have been where they deserved to be with the rest who were living out their sentences.

[ 25 : 52 ] So although this is a difficult doctrine for some to accept on the basis of thinking about it in terms of fairness when we're dealing with grace fairness does not arise.

Fairness arises when there is obligation, when there is right, when you have earned something, and it's being withheld from you. The Apostle Paul in many ways is a trophy of grace.

He's addressing the Galatians and he's now able to say the reason that this blaspheming persecuting sinner was rescued off of his road of destruction is God elected him before he was born.

Before the foundation of the world, God chose him for salvation and to be an apostle. That's the only reason. Otherwise, he would have been relentless in his blaspheming and in his persecution of the church.

That's not all. The second thing that Paul tells us about his conversion is in verse 15. He says, God called me by his grace. He didn't just set me apart, choose me before I was born, but he called me by his grace.

[ 27 : 19 ] I see what God does in time is he brings to pass what he decided in eternity. And so Paul is calling, Paul is referring to this effectual call.

We talked about this a couple of weeks ago. this effectual call that came to him on the road to Damascus. Some theologians refer to it as an irresistible call.

And it's irresistible because when God calls a sinner, that sinner comes to God. When the God of the universe summons a sinner to come to him, that sinner comes to God.

because it's an irresistible call. And the apostle Paul's life is such a vivid example of effectual calling.

Here we see him on the road to Damascus, hell-bent as we would say, to persecute the church, going his own way, doing his own thing. Luke actually gives us the account in Luke 9 verses 1 through 6.

[ 28 : 29 ] You don't need to turn that should be projected for you. Luke writes, But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him, and falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?

And he said, who are you, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting, but rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.

the apostle Paul had heard Stephen preach the gospel, he had witnessed Stephen's death, and seemingly, we say seemingly because we don't know God could have been dealing with him at the time that he was hearing Stephen preach, he could have been dealing with him as he watched Stephen dying and forgiving his, those who were murdering him, but yet, he seemed unaffected by it and ran on his way and he's going to persecute the church in another city and on his way he meets the living Christ.

On his way he has a divine encounter with the living Christ and he turns from a violent persecutor of the church to being a preacher of the gospel.

[ 30 : 20 ] And why does Saul stop dead in his tracks and submits and goes into Damascus as the Lord tells him to do and why does he begin to preach the gospel?

He does so because God irresistibly called him. And he wasn't fighting and see this is the wonder and the beauty of this call that only God can bring to sinners, to undeserving sinners, hardened sinners.

that when he calls us, he affects us. He changes our hearts.

Paul's heart went from being hardened and violent to being softened and to being compliant.

God irresistibly called Paul. Now Paul doesn't account for all of these details in his letter to the Galatians.

[ 31 : 20 ] He doesn't tell them the things that we are considering from the book of Acts. He merely shares with them that God revealed himself through Jesus Christ.

Christ. And we don't know exactly when Paul was converted. We can't say for sure. Again, he could have already been, God could have been dealing with him when he observed the martyrdom of Stephen.

We don't know. But here's what we do know. We do know that he was indeed converted. And for us, I would say the same thing. Many of us don't know the exact moment that we came to Christ.

we don't know it with any precision. And I would argue none of us can know it with any certainty. It's really no different from pregnancy.

No one knows the exact moment of fertilization. Nobody knows the exact moment that conception takes place in the womb. And when Jesus was talking to Nicodemus, he said, Nicodemus, the new birth is like the natural birth.

[ 32 : 37 ] To be born again. But we do know that in some season of time, we don't know the exact moment, God met us.

And God irresistibly called us. And for many of us, we were not violently against God the way Paul was, but what we would say is we weren't really checking for God.

We weren't really looking for God. And to any degree that we were looking for God, any degree that we started to look for God, that's because God began to affect our hearts. That's because God began to draw us and point us to himself.

God will be to see the third thing that the Apostle Paul tells us about his conversion is in verse 16.

He tells us that he was converted when God was pleased to convert him. He says when God was pleased to reveal his son in me in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles.

[ 33 : 54 ] And for us the same is true. We come to Christ when God is pleased to bring us to Christ and to reveal him to us. He does it in his time.

He does it in his way when he is pleased to do it. Why didn't he do it sooner? Why didn't God get before Paul sooner and stop all of the havoc that he wreaked on the churches?

He didn't because he wasn't pleased to do it. He wasn't pleased to do it. He was pleased to do it in that moment when he did it. He saved Paul.

And not only did he save him, he commissioned him to be an apostle to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. Paul's point is that his conversion and his call to be an apostle were both because of God's sovereign choice.

Jesus Christ was divinely revealed to him. He didn't wake up one day and decide I'm going to abandon Judaism. I don't like it anymore. He encountered the living Christ.

[ 35 : 17 ] But that's not enough for Paul. Paul needs to give even further evidence. So he goes further to prove that his gospel originated with God and not from man.

And so after giving evidence of his conversion before his conversion and about his conversion third and finally Paul gives the Galatians evidence after his conversion.

And we see this evidence in verses 16 through 24. Notice again what he says.

The latter part of verse 16 he writes I did not immediately consult with anyone nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who are apostles before me but I went away into Arabia and returned again to Damascus and after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and remained with him 15 days but I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother and what I'm writing to you before God I do not lie then I went to the regions of Syria and Cilicia and I was still unknown in person to the churches of Judea that are in Christ they were only hearing it said he who used to persecute us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy and they glorified God because of me what's

Paul's point for relating these details why is he going to such great length to give this chronology of what happened to him after his conversion Paul's point is that when he encountered Christ after he encountered Christ and received the true revelation of who he is he didn't consult with anyone he didn't go to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before him so that they can verify what he received here he says but instead he went to Arabia doesn't tell us how long he was there but I think the point is Arabia is not the logical place you go to try to get something validated or to get something to be enhanced to have some input into it Paul is trying to argue that his gospel that he received from Christ was not in any way adjusted it was not in any way tampered with and he's basically giving testimony giving his alibi to say this is really what happened interestingly what we find in

[ 38 : 21 ] Luke's account in Luke chapter 20 Luke 9 20 sorry Luke chapter 9 verse 20 Luke tells us that immediately after Paul was converted he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogue saying he is the son of God so this kind of fills in a bit of detail Paul doesn't give this detail to the Galatians and they were amazed to hear him and they said is not this the man who made havoc in Jerusalem of those who called upon this name and has he not come here for this purpose to bring them bound before the chief priests so here the apostle Paul he is converted and he immediately begins to preach he preaches the gospel that he received by revelation and then

Paul says he says after I came from Arabia I went back to Damascus left Damascus went to Arabia then he went back to Damascus and he says and then after three years I went to Jerusalem I stayed there 15 days with Peter I didn't see anyone else except James and the point that Paul seems to be making is I didn't go there for theological discussions I went I met Peter I spent some time with him but I didn't talk to the other apostles they had no input into the gospel that I received and then he says that he went to the regions of Syria and Cilicia and Paul makes the point that because he was only in Jerusalem for a couple of days he says they didn't even know me in Jerusalem I was an unknown person in Jerusalem all they knew about me was what they heard about me they heard that

I was preaching! they heard that I was now no longer persecuting the church I was preaching the gospel he says and what they heard they glorified God because of it Paul is so intent on helping the Galatians to see that he is telling them the truth he swears to them in verse 20 he says what I'm writing before you before God he is invoking God's presence!

He says! this we after my conversion no human influence no human had input into this gospel that I received I preached it immediately and I preached it independently and the obvious point is this and it hasn't changed what I preached then I'm preaching to you now what I preached then I preached to when I came to you it has not changed



Paul makes a solid case for the gospel that he received I can imagine someone who was perhaps not as violent as Paul someone who was more of a philosopher and just having discussions I could see that person perhaps maybe being convinced over time you know what Judaism is not the right thing I'm just going to do something else but no not with Paul the only thing that explains what happened to Paul is exactly what he said happened on that road to Damascus God intervened and God transformed his heart in his life by giving him a revelation of the one he was truly persecuting Paul's point is it is not man's gospel because it had its origins in

[ 42 : 57 ] God and it didn't change it I want to close with three thoughts for us this morning as we reflect on the evidence that Paul gives to the Galatians Galatians and the first is as we consider this evidence that Paul gives to the Galatians let's remember that when we stay true to this gospel that was revealed to the holy apostles like Paul we have God's gospel not man's see this serves us this morning as well this is the true gospel and any other gospel other than a gospel that is salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone is not the gospel it's not the gospel the prosperity gospel is not the gospel the gospel of self esteem and self empowerment is not the gospel the gospel is the grace of God that comes to undeserving sinners who find salvation through faith in Christ alone that is the gospel and that is what we are called to believe that is what we are called to preach that is what we build our churches on we don't build our churches on anything else and sadly what happens for many of us what has happened to many of us is this amazing grace has become boring grace so we have changed it into something else we've pandered to the world we've pandered to the world that does not want to believe this gospel that this is the way you are reconciled to God and the gospel has been in so many ways deserted and abandoned and sadly in so many pulpits on a morning like this morning if you closed your eyes and if you've listened to

Dr. Phil and listened to Oprah Winfrey you would hear more of that than the gospel that the apostle Paul so ably defended before the Galatians the second thought is as we consider these verses let us be reminded of the amazing grace of God to reach even those who seem unreachable let's remember the amazing grace of God that reaches even those who seem unreachable Paul in his letter to Timothy in 1st Timothy chapter 1 Paul says that God has used him as an example the chief of sinners so that others may have hope and believe in the mercy of God to save praise we consider the apostle

Paul going on his own way doing his own thing and that there was a day that God was pleased to reveal his son in him that we may gain faith for loved ones for children for co-workers and friends who seem so far from God who seem!

like they are on a war path with God that he is able to reach them he is able to cause the light of the gospel to shine through to them and irresistibly call them to himself and like the apostle Paul they will say Lord what would you have me to do because when the God of grace and mercy reveals himself when the God of grace and mercy reveals his son to sinners he not only gives them the faith to believe he enables them to come and to follow him and then third as we consider these verses in which Paul ably defends his gospel that he received let us consider that in the same way that before the foundation of the world

[ 47 : 49 ] God called us to salvation those of us who have trusted Christ he called us to salvation in a very similar way that he also called the apostle Paul to proclaim his word he doesn't call all of us in the same way he doesn't call all of us to some office or some ministry in the way that Paul was called to it doesn't call everyone to be a pastor but nonetheless part of that call to salvation is a call to proclaim his gospel a call to share that gospel in our lives whatever sphere God has given to us whatever opportunities God has given to us whatever circumstances we find ourselves in God calls us to proclaim that gospel and so let us remember as we consider these words in

Paul's defense let us remember the gospel of God it's not man's gospel let us remember the grace of God it reaches the worst sinner I just love the line in Fanny Crosby's song when she writes to God be the glory she writes the vilest offender the vilest offender who truly believes that moment from Jesus a pardon receives and then let us remember the call of God on our lives he didn't just save us to save us he saved us that we likewise will proclaim that good news that came to us that others may hear it and if you hear this morning and you don't know Jesus Christ as Lord and personal Savior I just want you to know that you're not here by accident the Bible says it is

God who works in us and who wills to do his good pleasure in us and yes you made a decision to come to be here but ultimately it was God working in your heart to bring you here to cause you to hear what you're hearing today that there is a God who does not deal with us according to how our sins deserve and what they deserve there's a God who extends mercy and grace to undeserving sinners for his own sovereign will and purposes and I pray today that you will hear and heed the gospel that you would turn from sin you would turn to Christ you would trust in Christ and you see your life transformed by this gospel that is not man's gospel but God's gospel and a gospel that never changes let's pray