

## **4. God is the Gospel**

Brief review of wk 2.

- that the Gospel is of first importance and this week is continuing to work out and apply the Gospel
- not moving on to something new

Brief review of wk. 3

- that the Gospel is the Gospel of God's gracious rule in Christ being worked out in all history
- that the work of Christ in our life is already AND not yet
- that justification is a one time settled issue
- that sanctification is a one time settled issue AND an ongoing battle in which we must participate

Transition - This week we will focus on the ultimate meaning and goal of the Gospel and the Kingdom.

What is it that makes this ultimately good news? What is it that makes heaven to be paradise? What is the ultimate reason for God sending His Son?

Piper's summary of the Gospel: "The Son of God expressing the love of God to save us from the wrath of God so we could enjoy the presence of God."

### **4.1 God is the Goal of the Gospel**

*For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the Spirit . . . I Pet 3:18*

"There is something even better than the good news, and that something is God. The good news of the gospel is that God has opened up the dynamics of his triune life and given us a share in that fellowship." - Fred Sanders, *The Deep Things of God*, 62

2 Peter 1:3-4

"God draws near to us in such a way as to draw us near to himself within the circle of his knowing of himself." - Thomas Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives*

"And here is the Gospel: The God who is love draws near to me, a sinful, mere mortal, to draw me near to himself, in order to draw me within the circle of Lover, Beloved and

Love itself. I become a co-lover with God! It is the very reason for my existence. And for yours. And for every other person who lives or has ever lived on this planet.” - Darrell Johnson

I Tim 1:11 . . . *the glorious gospel of the blessed God* . . .

God Who is to be desired, and loved and known, etc. taste of Who God is and pursuing

## **4.2 We See God at the Cross**

Hebrews 9:11-14; 10:19-25

1 John 1:9

Romans 4:4-5 (contra Proverbs 17:15)

“In his response to sin we see deeper than ever into the very being of God.” Michael Reeves  
→ 1 John 4:8-10

“Without the cross, we could never have imagined the depth and seriousness of what it means to say that God is love. . . . Through the cross we see a God who delights to give Himself.” - Michael Reeves

Hebrews 12:2

Alistair McGrath: “For Luther, Christian thinking about God comes to an abrupt halt at the foot of the cross. The Christian is forced, by the very existence of the crucified Christ, to make a momentous decision. Either he will seek God elsewhere, or he will make the cross itself the foundation and criterion of his thought about God.”

“It is at the cross that we see God most clearly. If history were the vastness of space, the cross would be its brightest star. We see the fullness of God’s being most clearly at the cross. We see the fullness of His active purposes most clearly at the cross.” - Chris Tomlinson

At the cross...

...We see God’s sovereignty—reigning with absolute control over humanity’s greatest sin.

... We see God’s purpose—making known the mystery of His will prepared before time.

... We see God’s plan—to unite all things, on heaven and on earth, in Him.

... We see God's judgment—requiring recompense for guilt.

... We see God's holiness—demanding the perfect sacrifice.

...We see God's power—crushing the Son of God according to the purpose of His will.

...We see God's wrath—punishing the wretchedness of sin.

...We see God's sorrow—wailing as only a forsaken son can.

...We see God's mystery—the Son, as God, separated from the Father, committing His Spirit to God.

...We see God's compassion—pleading to the Father to forgive the ignorant.

...We see God's gift—His one and only Son, bruised and broken on our behalf.

...We see God's mercy—making unrighteous sinners righteous.

...We see God's love—Christ dying for sinners.

...We see God's rescue operation—delivering us from the domain of darkness to the kingdom of His Son.

...We see God's proposal—pledging Himself to His bride forever.

...We see God's revelation—the Word of God speaking His last so He might speak on behalf of many.

...We see God's victory—disarming His enemies, putting them to shame, and triumphing over them.

...We see God's glory—the name of the Father being magnified for the sake of all peoples."

Chris Tomlinson

### **4.3 God-Centered vs. Man-Centered**

the danger of seeking God in a self-centered or man-centered way - trying to make God the means to my ends rather than joyfully becoming a means to accomplish His ends (Ephesians 1:3-14)

“The acid test of biblical God-centeredness -- and faithfulness to the gospel -- is this: Do you feel more loved because God makes much of you, or because, at the cost of his Son, he enables you to enjoy making much of him forever?” - John Piper, God is the Gospel, 11

“From the first sin in the Garden of Eden to the final judgment of the great white throne, human beings will continue to embrace the love of God as the gift of everything but himself. Indeed there are ten thousand gifts that flow from the love of God. The gospel of Christ proclaims the news that he has purchased by his death ten thousand blessings for his bride. But none of these gifts will lead to final joy if they have not first led to God. And not one gospel blessing will be enjoyed by anyone for whom the gospel’s greatest gift was not the Lord himself.” - John Piper, God is the Gospel, 12

Godly vs worldly sorrow for sin (2 Corinthians 7:10)

"Imagine you're in an orchestra and you begin to play, but the sound is horrific because the instruments are out of tune. The problem can't be fixed by simply tuning them to each other. It won't help for each person to get in tune to the person next to her because each person will be tuning to something different. No, they will all need to be tuned properly to one source of pitch. Often we go about trying to tune ourselves to the sound of everything else in our lives. We often hear this described as 'getting balance.' But the questions that need to be asked are these: 'Balanced to what?' 'Tuned to what?' The gospel does not begin by tuning us in relation to our particular problems and surroundings; it first re-tunes us to God."

Michael Thate, quoted by Tim Keller in Center Church, 36

## **4.4 Loving God**

Matthew 22:37-39

How can God command love?

Our love for Him is a response of His love for us (1 John 4:19) revealed through the cross.

“Love for God is commanded in Scripture, but the command can only be fulfilled as our eyes are opened to see God’s beauty revealed in the gospel. The Spirit of God uses the beauty of the gospel to awaken in our hearts a desire for God.” J. D. Greer, Gospel, 11

“A Christianity that does not have as its primary focus the deepening of passions for God is a false Christianity.” - J. D. Greer, Gospel, 10

We find our “worth” not through God making much of us but in freeing us to make much of Him (Piper paraphrase).

“The worth and excellency of a soul is to be measured by the object of its love.” Henry Scougal

“Jesus’ followers are to be *alive* with a love for God.” J. D. Greer, Gospel, 11

Tozer: “To have found God and still to pursue Him is the soul’s paradox of love . . .”

consider what Einstein said about the preaching of the churches in his day (see Piper, Let the Nations Be Glad)

## 4.5 God vs Idolatry

see Matt 6:19-24

“If the extent of your Christianity is achieving the right behavioral standard, you are setting yourself up for disaster. You are laying religion onto a heart that loves other things. And, whether you ever articulate it or not, you will resent God holding you captive to do stuff you wouldn’t otherwise be doing if He weren’t threatening damnation.” - J. D. Greer, Gospel, 26

We worship that which we deem most essential for life and happiness.

What are we “putting on” to make us feel worthy, acceptable, good enough, righteous?

see Philippians 3:2-11, 12-16

those things we look to and trust in to establish our sense of worthiness are our “functional saviours”

“Religious change targets the acts of sin without addressing the idolatry that prompted that sin in the first place.” - Greer, 30 The danger of focusing on “discipleship” without addressing our desires.

religion or discipleship can just become another way of serving our idols:

“Tim Keller tells of a notoriously sexually promiscuous kid he knew in college. The young man’s sexual prowess was about more than lust, however. Gaining ‘notches on his bed post’ was a source of identity to him -- it proved he was a man, gained the admiration of his peers, and gave him a sense of power over women.

During his junior year this guy got involved with a campus ministry and ‘got saved.’ He quickly got ‘on fire for Jesus’ and gave an inspiring, bold testimony of his new commitment to Christ.

However, Keller says, there was still something 'off' about this guy. He was not a very enjoyable person to be around. If you were in a discussion with him, he had to show why he was right and you were wrong. In a small group he wanted you to recognize *his* opinions as insightful. He always wanted the positions of prominence.

The guy had all the external signs of love for Jesus. He had repented of his sexual promiscuity. He went to lots of Bible studies and witnesses boldly for Jesus. However, it was apparent that he had simply traded sex for religion as the outer manifestation of his true desire. What he really wanted -- his 'root idol' -- was power over others.

This is not conversion to Christ. This is a new means of pursuing an old idol." J. D. Greer, Gospel, 30-31

"True worship is obedience to God for no other reason than that you delight in God." Greer, 31

When our acceptance is based on our performance, we exacerbate two root sins in our heart: pride and fear." Greer, 33

- Chariots of Fire illustration

"The insecurity of always wondering if we've done enough to be accepted causes resentment of God, not love for Him." - Greer, 34

"True love for God cannot grow when we are unsure about His feelings for us. All of our service for God will be done with an eye to elevating our status before Him. Ultimately, this is not love for God -- it's love for ourselves." - Greer, 35

"Once upon a time, a very poor carrot farmer lived on a small farm in rural England. During one harvesting season, he unearthed the largest carrot he had ever seen. He thought, 'Now that is a carrot that befits a king.' So he traveled to the king's palace, obtained an audience, and laid the carrot joyfully at the king's feet. 'Oh king,' he said, 'you have always been such a wonderful, fair and gracious king to me, and I love you very much. As a token of my love for you, I want you to have this carrot. It is a gift which you truly deserve.' The king, touched by this man's simple offering, responded, 'Thank you for this gift. I happen to own the farmland that surrounds your farm and I would like to give you that land as a gift. Please know that it also is a small token of the affection I have for you, my son.'

One of the king's noblemen, standing in the court that day, thought, 'Wow! If the king would give all that farmland in response to a carrot, imagine what he would give for a real gift.' So the nobleman went that night and found the most majestic horse he'd ever seen and brought it to the king the next day. The crafty nobleman said, 'King, you are a wonderful and a worthy king. As a token of my love for you, I want you to have this horse as a gift.'

The king, being very wise, saw through the ruse, and said to the nobleman, 'Yesterday the poor man was giving the carrot to me. But today, you are giving the horse to yourself.'" C. H. Spurgeon, quoted by Greer, 35-36

"Everybody worships. The only choice we get is what to worship. And the compelling reason for maybe choosing some sort of god or spiritual-type thing to worship . . . is that pretty much anything else you worship will eat you alive. If you worship money and things, if they are where you tap real meaning in life, then you will never have enough, never feel you have enough . . . Worship your body and beauty and sexual allure and will always feel ugly. And when time and age start showing, you will die a million deaths before they finally grieve you . . . Worship power, you will end up feeling weak and afraid, and you will need even more power over others to numb you to your own fear. Worship your intellect, being seen as smart, you will end up feeling stupid, a fraud, always on the verge of being found out. But the insidious thing about these forms of worship is . . . they're unconscious. They are default settings."

- David Foster Wallace (award winning American novelist), taken from his 2005 commencement address at Kenyon College - Wallace committed suicide in 2008), quoted by Tim Keller in Center Church, 34

"We were not designed to settle for personal survival, temporal happiness, or individual success. We were created to find our meaning, identity, and purpose in the existence, character, and plan of God. Our identity was meant to be rooted in his love. Our hope was designed to be tied to his grace. Our potential was meant to be connected to his power. Our purpose was meant to be structured by his will. Our joy was meant to be wed to his glory. In every way, our vision of what is necessary, true, worthy, and meaningful was meant to be rooted in a functional worship of him. We were created for the dignity of living large and meaningful lives -- lives that literally are connected to things before the creation of the world and extending far into eternity." Paul David Tripp, A Quest for More, 90

#### 4.6 Flee Idolatry - Pursue God

- what is/are your functional saviours/gods - how can we discern them in our lives?

alternative goals and desires to comfort/security/happiness

Christianity vs. spirituality

don't look for God inside (mysticism), but look to God outward in Christ

addressing affections

The Expulsive power of a new affection

#### 4.7 Regeneration - New life, New Affections

regeneration as HS imparting experience of God and renewed affections

outward vs. inward

The Need for Regeneration

The Work of Regeneration