

Remember the Resurrection

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[0 : 00] Well, please turn with me, if you would, to the Gospel of Mark, the book of Mark, chapter 16.

We have been working our way through the book of 2 Peter. But we'll take just a brief break away from 2 Peter for me to speak a little more directly and purposely about this good news that we've been mentioning this morning and that we've been singing about together.

The title of my message for this morning for us, Remember the Resurrection. And that's a little bit of a nod to 2 Peter, where we are being told to remember the important things.

And the most important thing Peter wants us to remember is the Gospel. The good news, the good news that Jesus was crucified for us and raised again for us.

So remember the resurrection. If you'll look with me at Mark 16, we'll begin in verse 1. Let me read down through verse 8 to give us more of the context of what we'll be talking about.

[1 : 25] When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Salome bought spices so that they might come and anoint him. Him is Jesus.

Jesus has been in the tomb now, and they want to come and anoint his body in keeping with the traditions of Jewish burials. Very early on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen.

They were saying to one another, Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb? There was a great, great big stone, very, very heavy, large mammoth stone that the soldiers had rolled across the entrance to the grave and then sealed it so that no one could move it or grave rob.

Well, as they were saying to each other, Who's going to roll that stone away from us? It's on verse 4. Looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away, although it was extremely large.

Entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting at the right wearing a white robe, and they were amazed. And he said to them, Do not be amazed.

[2 : 44] You are looking for Jesus, the Nazarene, who has been crucified. He has risen. He is not here. Behold, here is the place where they laid him.

But go, tell his disciples and Peter. He is going ahead of you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.

Well, they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had gripped them. And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

So this unnerved these women. This was a miracle, and they didn't understand it. They didn't know how to comprehend what they were seeing. Is it real?

Can it be real? And it's hard to fathom that for us, as we look back on this incident and recognize that these women were with Jesus for a number of years, listening to him tell them this very thing would happen.

- [3 : 47] And that he would be raised from the dead. But they're still having a difficult time with it. Pastor John MacArthur has said this.
- I want you to look up here with me for this quote. There is virtue in repeating basics that shouldn't be forgotten. He went on to add this.
- The resurrection is not simply a component of the gospel. It's the main event. It is the glorious centerpiece of divine redemption.
- The cornerstone of gospel promise and the guarantee of eternal life for those who believe. The resurrection is not the epilogue or postscript to the life of Christ.
- It is the culminating climax of his atoning work. Now, the question that I want to put to us this morning as we try to, again, labor to make this personal.
- [4 : 47] That the pastor isn't up here preaching a message to everybody else. This is a message being sent from the Lord through this fleshly body to you.
- As you sit here this morning. Here's the question. How often and to what degree do you allow the resurrection to affect the way you think and behave each day?
- How often do you remember the resurrection in your daily life? In the way that you parent your children? In the way that you are married to your spouse? In the way that you go about your jobs?
- In every area and aspect of your life? How aware are you of the resurrection and its defining influence on who you are and what you do in your life?
- Think of it this way, my friends. Where would you be without the resurrection of Jesus Christ? One place that I would be and you would be is we would have no hope.
- [6 : 01] We are right and good to remember and to speak of the cross of Jesus. That's what's hanging on the wall behind me here.
- But if we stop there at the cross itself, we have no hope for our future with God.
- Why? Well, commentator D. Edmund Hebert observed this in answer to that question. The narrative of Jesus' resurrection forms the grand climax of the story of Jesus Christ in all four of the Gospels.
- Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. It is the keystone to the Christian message. Without his resurrection, there never would have been any preaching of the good news of salvation in him.
- That's how important and critical this particular message is. It's a message that we try in some way or another to preach every single time we gather as Grace Church Williamsburg.
- [7 : 07] Because we recognize this keystone element of the Gospel. This heart of the truth element of what we call the good news of Jesus.
- Let me take you to another place in Scripture, 2 Peter 1. This was an opportunity for me to help tie together some of what we're looking at in 2 Peter with what I'm speaking about today in the way of the Gospel.
- This is 2 Peter 1, all the way toward the back of the Bible. And this passage that I'm reading now is the passage that was the heart of the message from last Sunday.
- We'll pick it up in verse 12. Therefore, I will always, Peter says, I will always, always be ready to remind you of these things.
- These things cast our eyes back up into the previous context of everything that he said from verse 3 down through verse 11. And that is the content of this good news.
- [8 : 12] That Jesus has saved us and given us his precious promises to help us navigate life in a holy way. Holy unto God. Therefore, I will always be ready to remind you of these things.

Even though you already know them. And have been established in the truth which is present with you. I consider it right as long as I am in this earthly dwelling to stir you up by way of what?

Reminder. Knowing that the laying aside of my earthly dwelling is imminent. Peter is about to die. As our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. And I will also be diligent that at any time after my departure, my death, you will be able to call these things to mind.

That is Peter's great concern for these brothers and sisters in Christ scattered around what was modern Turkey. That they would stand fast in the good news that Jesus has purchased life for them by being crucified for them and raised again.

Whatever you're going to remember about the Christian life. Whatever you're going to focus on about Christian living. Let it be this good news. That has been made personal for you.

[9 : 42] And don't miss it. Friends, I want to appeal to you over and over again. Please do not leave here today allowing what you hear from the Bible to be a generic truth.

In other words, not allowing it to sink into your soul and challenge your heart with the reality of what you hear. Let it be personal. Let it be personal.

Let it be personal. Because it is. If it makes you uncomfortable as you hear this, be uncomfortable. You won't have to stay that way. We'll give you the hope toward the end about what you can do in that condition.

For those of you who feel confident in your faith and in your trust in Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins. So that you are 100% certain that if you died on the way home today.

God forbid if you died and you went to heaven and stood before God. And he said, why should I let you into my heaven? You would have a 100% confidence in the answer that you would give him.

[10 : 48] And that he would receive that answer. And if that answer is anything short of, I have trusted in your holy son, Jesus Christ alone. For the forgiveness of my sins and to make me right before you.

Anything short of that. And a life lived in proof of that reality in your heart. And you get an eternity in a devil's hell. We don't want that.

So listen. Hearken unto the message of hope that you'll receive. If you're thinking in your mind right now.

Boy, see this is what preachers always do. They get up there and they bang the pulpit. And they talk about hell. That's why people don't want to come to church. Okay. Hang on.

I'll get to the good part. I won't leave you hanging. I promise. Will you be in prayer about that? With me? All right. Well, let's see what we're going to deal with then. If you and I are going to remember and rehearse anything then about our Christian life and Christian teaching.

[11 : 53] It must be that Jesus was raised on the third day and appeared to many people as proof. In our passage, let me draw your attention to what happens next.

If you'll pick it up with me in verse 9. Now, after he had risen early on the first day of the week, he first appeared to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons.

She went. And what did she do? She reported to those who had been with him while they were mourning and weeping. And when they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they refused to believe it.

These are the disciples. And after that, he appeared in a different form to two of them while they were walking along on their way to the country.

These are the two men on the Emmaus Road. They went. Those two men went away and reported it to the others. Disciples. But they did not believe them either.

[13 : 01] Can you number yourself with the disciples? Can you see some hardheadedness and stubbornness and lack of faith here? This is the weakness of man and this is why we need grace.

We need the divine favor of God to do what we can't do for ourselves. What I can't do for you. As well-meaning as I would intend to be toward you. I cannot open your eyes to see the truth of what I'm preaching today.

That is the work of the Holy Spirit. And that's why we pray. Because we are needy. We need God to do a work in us that only God in his power can do.

If you and I had any chance or opportunity at all to save ourselves in the slightest little bitty way, then this would not have been necessary. The cross.

We could have been our own savior. But we're not, are we? And that's why we need to pay close attention to the provision that God has made in his son for what we cannot provide for ourselves, friends.

[14 : 04] And that's what we're looking at. If you look back then at the passage I just read from verse 9 on, just rehearse it with me. In verse 9, Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene.

In verse 10, she tells the disciples. Verse 11, the disciples do not believe her. Verse 12, Jesus appeared to two men. And in verse 13, they told the disciples.

But the disciples didn't believe them either. Finally, in verse 14, Jesus appears to the 11 disciples and rebukes them for not believing the testimonies of the witnesses he provided for them about his resurrection.

So what I'd like to do is look a little more closely now at what we have as the overview of how the passage breaks down. So I'm going to pick it back up again in verse 9, and I'm going to read down through verse 20.

After he had risen on the first day of the week, he appeared to Mary Magdalene. He'd cast out seven demons from her. She goes and reports to the disciples who'd been with him as they were mourning and weeping and grieving over the death of Jesus.

[15 : 19] When they heard it, they didn't believe her. He appeared to a couple of men in verse 12. They were walking along. They went and reported what Jesus had personally told to these two men.

The disciples still didn't believe. Jesus comes in verse 14 and rebukes them because they didn't believe the witnesses that he'd sent. And in verse 15, These signs will accompany those who have believed.

In my name they will cast out demons. They will speak with new tongues. They will pick up serpents. And if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them. They will lay hands on the sick and they will recover.

So then when the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. This is where our Lord is to this day, isn't He?

Sitting at the right hand of the Father in the authority and glory that is due His name. Verse 20, And they went out. What did they do? Preached everywhere while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the word by the signs that followed.

[16 : 56] I have a scriptural notation then after verse 20 in brackets. And they promptly reported all these instructions to Peter and his companions. And after that, Jesus Himself sent out through them from east to west the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation.

The things that you see mentioned here in verse 7 about poisons and serpents and all this kind of thing, those were elements that were part of the message going out initially and the apostles writing this down so that you and I would have the record of the truth of what's been going on in the life of Jesus.

So these miracles that are mentioned were attestations. They were attesting to the reality that the message of the apostles was genuine and that the apostles themselves were genuine.

Sent by Jesus to bring this message. So why don't I have you bring rattlesnakes in here today and throw them down on the floor and let me walk along them and get them all riled up and then let them bite me everywhere.

And then me tell you, see, no worries. Why don't I do that? There's a really good reason for that beyond the fact I'm terrified of rattlesnakes. The real reason is this.

[18 : 20] I'm not an apostle. We don't have any apostles anymore. And I'm not writing the Bible. The Bible's been written. And so all the proofs that attended the apostles and the writing of scripture have been completed.

And we have this word, this prophetic word, made more sure, made more certain for us. We don't need those proofs.

We have all the proof we need in the resurrection and the truth of scripture's testimony to us. That's what we need. That's what we stand on. So you don't need me up here doing a dog and pony show to convince you.

Remember what I said? I can't do that. The Holy Spirit is the one who uses the truth to bring that truth to your heart and open the eyes of your heart to see your need for Jesus. That's the way it works.

That's what happens. And I'm glad for it because I'm not going to handle snakes. It's just not going to happen. The verses that I've just read for you then concern the resurrection of Jesus and these verses need to be understood in that light.

[19 : 30] Don't miss the context. As we enter the teaching here this morning, you and I then need to interpret and apply all that we've been saying in relation to the good news of Jesus' resurrection from the dead.

Now, a moment ago, a moment ago, I asked, how often and to what degree do you allow the resurrection to affect the way that you think and behave each day of your life?

Jesus Christ is alive. But don't stop even there. Listen to this. If you are a Christian, you need to say, Jesus is alive and he's living in me.

What a miracle. Jesus is alive and he is living in me. Jesus is God's gift of life.

He is the way, the truth, and the life. Did you hear me? So I am preaching a message to you this morning with words, but that message is a message about a person and he is life.

[20 : 48] To possess him is to possess life. Not to possess an ideal, an ideology, a concept, but to possess him and him living in you.

Is that personal enough for us? Amen. Thank God that that is the way God the Father designed the Son to work in our lives.

That truth, all of that I just said, that should define you and that should make the difference in the way that you get up and live each and every day.

The resurrection is not just an aspect of theology. It's not just a good idea. It's not something that we just kick around lightly. The resurrection is about new life for us.

So could someone then, friends, could someone closest to you look at your life and say, there, there is someone who has abandoned his or her life to Jesus Christ and his mission.

[21 : 59] Could the people closest to you say that about you? If, if some news team showed up and interviewed the people that are closest to you, that know you best, that are around you most often, and they had one primary question, they stuck the microphone in each of their faces and said, tell me, what is the single greatest thing that defines your friend?

What would you say? Given the life that they live, what is it? What would they say? What we would want them to say is the love that he or she has for Jesus.

I can't think of anything stronger or more evident than that in this person's life. That's what we're called to.

That's what being a Christian is. We miss that. We miss Christianity. We miss the cross. We miss the resurrection.

And all it is is religion. Religion won't get you an eternity with God. So please don't think I'm up here preaching a religion or a denomination.

[23 : 13] I'm preaching Jesus and him crucified and raised again for you. You come to Christ. You come to Christ and know the freedom and forgiveness from your sins.

It's God's only way. There is no other way, no other greater way. We need no other way. That's what we're talking about this morning.

The first thing that then I want to mention to you in the way of zeroing in now on just a portion of the passages that I've been reading is this. Let's talk about the commission of the good news real quickly.

I have an entire message on this from verse 15 and I'm just going to hit a highlight with you. Verse 15 says, and then after rebuking them in verse 14, Jesus turns to the disciples and says, go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.

So this is a commission. It's a directive. This is their commanded mission. That's why we call it a commission.

[24 : 25] Commission. It's for Jesus followers and Jesus followers alone to fulfill. Jesus Christ is speaking directly to the 11 disciples and his commanded mission has two primary parts with one primary objective.

Two parts, one goal. The first part is this. Go into, if you look at your text, go into all the world.

Go into all the world. That's our mandate. The disciples and Mark's original readers are being shown that the gospel, God's offer to forgive sins through faith in his son, Jesus Christ, that's the gospel, is to be preached to all creation.

They must go in order to do that. Proclaim it to all the people everywhere, among all the nations, around the entire world. Show no prejudice, no bias. Take this wonderful message to the world and beg them to come to Christ.

Christ. The second part, the second aspect, go into all the world, to all creation, to do what? What I just mentioned.

[25 : 42] Preach the gospel. Spreading God's gospel message is the second part of this divinely commanded mission that every Christian is mandated to fulfill.

Proclaim, proclaim. That asserts a binding duty on you as a follower of Jesus. It's a privilege. It's also a responsibility.

Proclaim means herald, announce, declare, reveal. And so what we see in that is this. I'm not the only one commissioned to proclaim the gospel, am I?

I'm up here in the privileged place of doing that right now as you listen. But all of us as Christians are mandated to go into our world, all the world, and herald this message, proclaim this message.

Now, are we doing that? We have to use words to do that. You say, well, I live the gospel. Great! You must do that.

[26 : 45] Or it invalidates the message, doesn't it? But we have to speak. We have to be willing to tell people, Jesus is risen out there where they do this.

What? Or, yeah, right. Woo-hoo! See, in here, I say, Jesus is risen.

Yes, he is risen indeed. Woo! Out there, not so much. You ready for that? You ready to love them through that?

When they punch you, make fun of you, ridicule you, walk away from you, count you as nothing, call you a fool, an idiot, a clown, you will be persecuted for being faithful to he is risen.

You say it, and you live it, and they'll hate you for it. Then why do it? Wait just a minute. Let me go back and read verse 15 again. I think I said that that was a command.

[27 : 56] And he said to them, go, imperative, into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. That's why we do it. Because he said to do it. We don't need any more reason than that.

Because your Lord and Savior who gave his life for you said, go do this. So we do it, don't we? And we seek to be faithful in it.

Those are the two parts. Your commission shared with your brothers and sisters is to prayerfully bring the truth of God to others in order to make them disciples for Jesus.

And then, to help them grow as disciples for Jesus. So, combining the two parts, it's go and spread good news in your world.

Preaching this good news to anyone who will listen. Now, let me challenge each one of us a little further at this point. We need to evaluate.

[28 : 59] We need to ask ourselves at this juncture, does what you know about God, the Bible, and truth inform the way you follow Jesus each day?

It's just a little bit of a nuance of what I asked you earlier. Does what you know of the gospel help you deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Jesus more faithfully?

If you say, well, I'm a Christian, well then, does the gospel help you serve others more humbly and sacrificially? Does the gospel help define why you do what you do?

Where you put the priority where you put it in your life? How you understand who you are? Do you know why you get up every day? And do you live in that commission every day?

It's a challenging thing because all of us, including your pastor, would say, well, not perfectly. Not as honestly and genuinely as I should at times.

[30 : 02] Do you think God understands that about us? He knows our frame and he knows we're but dust. And this is why he calls us to be a prayerful people. Well, let's get our bearings for where we are before I march into verse 16 with you.

Let's get our bearings. Look at this. Every Christian is on a daily mission to serve and represent Jesus. That's one of the things that I've been saying. Number two, how we fulfill this mission matters to God.

It matters how we live. God has defined what this mission involves and how to accomplish it for him. So we don't have to make it up.

We don't have to guess. We just turn to the scriptures and we see how God wants us to do this, including pastors, shepherding a church of people. It's all there.

It matters to God how you and I live our Christian lives. Why? Because, because what we believe and how we behave are what we make disciples from.

- [31 : 09] What you tell people as the message and how the people see you living it out is what we win them to. That's a lot of responsibility, isn't it?
- It's very sobering. And now finally, look at this. the bottom of the screen. And all of this helps us remember, remember to remain prayerfully aware of making disciples in the image of our Savior and not of ourselves or our society.
- Mark 16, 15 then gives us the co-mission of this good news. You and I need to speak Jesus to our world. verse 16 informs us about the condition of the good news, the gospel.
- So look at verse 16 with me again. He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved, but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.
- The condition of the good news concerns believing and baptism, and we need to deal with that. So here's the condition of the good news.
- [32 : 29] The question that I'm going to put on the table from verse 16 is this. How does anyone become a follower of Jesus? The good news that we each proclaim says, be saved from your sins.
- When Christians talk about getting saved or being saved, we need to ask from what? from sin and death. That's what Jesus saves us from.
- We are saved by believing, trusting, and following Jesus. But then, but then look at this. What is the condition attached to that response?
- If we're called to respond to Jesus in this proclamation of the gospel, come and believe in Jesus, what are the conditions attached attached to that response?
- And the answer is this. It's going to surprise you, maybe. It says it right there in the text. Believing and baptism. Uh-oh.
- [33 : 33] Each of those conditions have to be understood from God's perspective. Friends, look, bottom line, it's not okay for you to believe whatever you want to believe about Jesus.
- It's not okay. Not with God. whatever I think is immaterial. What does God say? He tells us that what we believe about Jesus is something very specific and life-changing, life-giving.
- And what we believe about baptism is very important in relationship to what we believe. Now, why would it be important for us to see God's perspective from this about believing in baptism?
- Here's one of the reasons, because it seems like, on the front end of it, it just seems like this verse teaches that both believing and baptism are necessary for salvation from sins.
- You read a verse like this, and you can see why certain denominations, certain faiths, believe that you have to be baptized to be saved from your sins. But is that really what the Bible's teaching?
- [34 : 42] That's what we need to ask and answer, because eternal life hinges on the answer to that question. We need Scripture to help us see this from both sides of the commission.
- So we have those who proclaim, and we have those who hear the proclamation. On the side of Christians proclaiming, the responsibility is to go and prayerfully tell.
- That's our responsibility. We're not responsible to get anyone saved. We are responsible to go and to tell. All right?
- But then we have the other side of the equation. On the receiving side of the commission, we have those who hear what we tell them.
- What is their responsibility? To believe and to be baptized. baptized. That's what this text tells us. Now notice how 15 and 16 read together.
- [35 : 46] If you just skim over it, it's basically go, proclaim, believe, be baptized. And then notice what the last half of verse 16 says, and does not say.

What it does say is that he who has disbelieved shall be condemned. Did you notice that? What's absent?

It doesn't say that whoever doesn't get baptized will be condemned, does it? That's very important. Why? Well, the answer is tied up in the gospel, the good news, as it defines the difference between will be saved and will be condemned.

What's the line that separates people who will be saved from those who will be condemned? What is it? That's right. What will save you and what will condemn you?

The gospel tells us what's at stake here. Let me throw this up here for you to consider. Christians take the gospel to their world and the people who hear respond in hearing, not just hear it and go, oh yeah, that's nice.

[37 : 07] Hearing here is receiving, heeding and taking it in. People who hear will be saved or will be condemned if they don't heed.

It depends on the response that they make to the gospel message being brought to them. So here's what we need to ask. What is the gospel? What is believing?

And what is baptism? As they each relate to being saved or being condemned in the greater context of scripture. So I want to deal with that just for a few minutes.

What is the gospel? Here's why I'm doing this. We're going to read a number of passages in a few minutes and I'm going to show you what the Bible says in just a few places about the gospel.

Here's why. I don't want to assume that you know this and that these realities are fixed in your heart and mind. I don't want to do that friends. What a disservice I would do to you.

[38 : 06] I want you to know for certain before you leave this room what the Bible says about what it means to be saved. What the cross and the resurrection have to do with you personally and why God has made it an issue of being personal to you.

Whether you want to receive it or not. I want to help you with that. So what is the gospel? Well the first thing that I want to be clear about is that it is good news about a person.

As I've mentioned the person is Jesus Christ the son of God. The gospel is a message but but the message isn't what saves you is it?

Jesus saves. So let's say a few things about what the gospel is not first of all to help us clarify then what it is.

And I've just chosen three. There's I don't even know how many but these are three that are so prominent so popular. Here's the first item that the gospel is not.

[39 : 12] This is not the gospel. Here it is. The gospel is not Jesus is Lord. Now you might be surprised to hear that but just hear me out.

Is that a true statement? Whether we recognize him as Lord or not. Is he Lord? Amen. He's Lord over all creation. That's true. Praise the Lord.

Jesus is Lord. That's a critical part of the gospel but it's not the gospel. Jesus is Lord means that he is king.

You might say he's the boss of what? Everything. He, listen to this part, he is the just judge over you as you stand sinfully guilty before him and deserving death.

When you die, friends, and take your last breath on this earth, your soul will survive this earth and you will stand in that form before the just judge of the universe.

[40 : 19] You won't stand before me or your friends or another pastor or anybody else that's human. You will stand before the just judge of the universe to give an account for your life.

It's him you'll stand before. As Lord, you will answer to him for your sinful rebellion against him and his kingdom. Now that's not good news for you, is it?

If you remain in sinful rebellion against God through unbelief toward Jesus, then you will die in that rebellion before God and be sentenced for all eternity and separated from God.

All right? The gospel is not God will remake this fallen world. That's not the gospel. Oh, we have hope in Christ. We have hope in a new world.

God will remake this fallen world is a true statement. It's another statement of fact. We'll get to that, God willing, in 2 Peter in just a little while in chapter 3 where that will become an important reality about how we look to the future in hope.

[41 : 31] Hope. It's part of the gospel again. Even if we go so far as to say that God is redeeming, freeing a people for himself and will remake the world by his grace, we still have not told the gospel.

You see? And then finally, number three, the gospel is not God wants to transform our culture. Now, just stay with me on this one. I'm going to sound unpatriotic.

I don't mean to be. I'm just trying to put the emphasis where scripture does. I just America, the United States is not in scripture. You're not going to find it. So listen to what I have to say here, please.

the point of the gospel is not God's work to reform or redeem our society or a culture.

And the idea that if we live in a certain way, we will change the world, that is not the gospel. Getting prayer back in schools and taking back America for God are not the gospel.

[42 : 42] It's not. We could pray that way. We can ask God to use us to help make a difference in America and in Williamsburg, to bring the light and hope of Jesus to people who are in darkness.

Absolutely. But please understand as much as I love our country and appreciate the men and women who sacrifice themselves daily to preserve our freedoms, taking back America for God is not the gospel.

It's not. In each of these examples then, friends, think of it this way. In each of these examples, something critical is missing.

So that its absence keeps these notions from being the message of the gospel. Now please keep in mind what we said earlier.

Please keep in mind the two sides of our commission from Jesus. Go tell, hear, respond. Now here's the question. In these examples that I've just given you, what are you telling and what are you calling people to respond to?

[43 : 55] If all I tell them is that God wants to transform our culture and that's the message, then what am I asking them to respond to? go out and help do whatever you can do politically to help make that happen or whatever?

What's missing? Do you love Jesus? Do you trust Jesus? Have you given your heart and soul to Jesus? Is everything about your life defined by your love for him and your understanding of the sacrifice he's made for you?

Because when you get to heaven and stand before the Lord, God's not going to ask you how many things did you do to help transform the culture? How many things did you do to win America back to God?

It's going to be about belief or unbelief in his son who went to the cross for you and was raised again for you.

Folks, do your business there and then trust that God will give you wisdom about how to live that life before your unbelieving culture. don't get the cart before the horse.

[45 : 07] And don't make one more important than the other so that you miss the main thing. What's the main thing, Jeff? It's a person. It's Jesus. Don't miss Jesus.

My gospel, my preaching, and my ministry are empty and avail nothing apart from Jesus Christ and him crucified and raised again.

Paul said, that's all I wanted to know among you. That's it. Don't miss the main thing. I continue to be amazed.

I shouldn't be. In my ministry, as I deal with people on a very, very personal level, as I try to shepherd them and speak the truth of God into their lives in love, how often there is a very shallow or non-existent understanding of the gospel from people who make a profession that they're a Christian and possibly have been walking with God in that profession for maybe 20 years or more.

And yet they cannot tell me what is the gospel and what is the gospel in your life. they struggle with that. But that's the one thing that we need to be crystal clear on, isn't it?

[46 : 35] So let me give you some help in all of this. Here is the biblical gospel as the scripture says it to you. Now, will you just please allow me as a preacher of the good news to turn to the one place that we can trust to tell us what the gospel is?

I could stand up here and say a bunch of statements to you, but you need to see it for yourselves. So I'm going to give you a number of scripture passages and we're just going to read them together.

What better exercise could we do in church than read the scripture together and see what God says about it? So let's look into the power of that gospel as it's written in God's word.

Would you turn with me first of all to 1 Corinthians chapter 1. This will be an exercise in you learning to use your Bible if nothing else. 1 Corinthians chapter 1 and we'll look at verses 17 through 31.

Paul is now speaking to the Christians in the city of Corinth and this is what he wants them to remember as he begins his letter. Verse 17, for Christ did not send me to baptize.

[47 : 52] Now did you mark that? Right off the bat. Let's put it in perspective. Christ didn't send me to baptize but to preach the gospel. Not in cleverness of speech so that the cross of Christ would not be made void.

For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing. But to us, to us, what? Who are being saved.

It is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise and the cleverness of the clever I will set aside.

Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God, the world through its wisdom did not come to know God.

God was well pleased then through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For indeed, Jews ask for signs.

[49 : 02] Greeks search for wisdom. But we preach Christ crucified. To Jews, a stumbling block. To Gentiles, foolishness.

Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

Consider your calling, brethren, your salvation. That there were not many wise according to the flesh, the world. There weren't many that were mighty or many who were noble.

But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise. God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong.

And the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen. Aren't you glad? The things that are not so that he may nullify the things that are.

[50 : 07] So that why? No man may boast before God, but by God's doing you are in Christ Jesus who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness, sanctification and redemption.

So that just as it is written, let him who boasts, boast in the Lord. That's our boast. That's our hope.

If you look at chapter two, beginning in verse one, when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom proclaiming to you the testimony of God.

No. What did he say? I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. Oh, I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling in my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit and of power.

Why would that be so important? So that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of almighty God. Isn't that beautiful?

[51 : 20] That's why we preach from scripture that your faith won't rest on what Jeff says. Your faith will rest in what God says, what Christ says. That's the biblical gospel.

If you look at chapter 15 in first Corinthians. Very, very specific here. Beginning in verse one.

Now I make known to you brethren, the gospel, which I preached to you, which also you received in which also you stand by which also you are saved.

If you hold fast the word, which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain for I delivered to you as a first importance. What I also received that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures and that he was buried and that he was raised on the third day according to the scriptures and that he appeared to Peter, Cephas, then to the 12.

We just read about that. After that, he appeared to more than 500 brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have died or fallen asleep.

[52 : 45] Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. And last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared to me also in his resurrection glory.

For I am the least of the apostles and not fit to be called one because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God, I am what I am. And his grace toward me did not prove vain, but I labored even more than all of them.

Yet not I, but the grace of God within me. Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believe. Now, if Christ is preached that he has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?

But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain and your faith is also vain.

And then verse 20. But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead.

[54 : 00] For is in Adam all die. So also in Christ all will be made alive. Second Corinthians chapter five.

Beginning in verse 14. For the love of Christ controls us.

Having concluded this one died for all. Therefore, all died and he died for all so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for him who died and rose again on their behalf.

Therefore, from now on, we recognize no one according to the flesh, even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know him in this way no longer.

Therefore, if anyone is this new creature, this new person in Christ, old things are passed away. New things have come. And now look, verse 18.

[55 : 07] All these things are from God. Who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation. Namely, what is that?

That God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them. And he has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ as though God were making an appeal through us. We beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

Here's the message. He made him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf so that we might become the righteousness of God in him.

Do you hear that? That's the gospel. That's the good news. That's the hope. Let me give you just a couple more. Look at Galatians 2 20, where Paul succinctly tells us what the gospel is and how personal it is to him and can be for us.

[56 : 18] Galatians 2 20. My goodness, how personal is this? I have been crucified with Christ and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me and the life which I now live in the flesh.

I live by faith in the son of God who loved me and gave himself up for me. Gospel. Turn a couple of more books back and you see the book of Colossians.

Look at what he says here in Colossians chapter one. Verse 13. For he rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved son in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Then it goes. He goes on to trumpet the wonderful beauty and supremacy of Jesus. As our Lord and as our Savior. And then in first Thessalonians, a couple of more books back still.

First Thessalonians chapter one. In verse nine. For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you and how you turn to God from idols to serve a living and true God and to wait for his son from heaven whom he raised from the dead.

[58 : 01] That is Jesus who rescues up us from the wrath to come. What a beautiful testimony of the truth of God. And then the final one is in the book of Titus.

Turn a few more books toward the back of the Bible past first and second Timothy. Finally to Titus chapter three. Just a few verses. We'll begin in verse three.

For we also once were foolish ourselves. We were disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.

But verse four. But when the kindness of God, our Savior and his love for mankind appeared, he saved us. He didn't save us on the basis of deeds, which we've done in righteousness.

No. But according to his mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom God poured out upon us richly.

[59 : 10] How? Through Jesus Christ, our Savior. Verse seven. So that being justified by his grace, we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Folks. Whatever that exercise meant or didn't mean to you, that's just a few passages that speak to the gospel. Just a few. This is throughout the New Testament.

It's throughout the Old Testament. This is the biblical gospel. Let me rehearse with you then what it does mean. The biblical gospel says God is holy.

God is each person's creator and judge and each person is separated from God by his sin or his sin nature.

That's the issue. The bad news is our sin separates us from this holy God and we cannot stand before him unless we are made righteous.

[60 : 14] Unless in some way God can declare us righteous. That is right in his eyes. Right with him. But how can God declare people who are truly guilty of sin right with him?

How can he do that? That's the problem that we all face. The gospel tells us also about our sin nature. Our sin nature is expressed in attitudes and actions of self-will and rebellion against God, against his law of life, against other people.

That sin nature produces death in us. You want to know, Jeff, why do people get gray hair and wrinkles? And why, as they get older, why do they start to wear down and wear out?

And why do we ultimately die? The reason that we die, folks, is because of the principle of sin at work in us. Sin is death.

Jesus is life. One more. God sent his son, Jesus Christ, to live and die and live again on behalf of people enslaved to sin.

[61 : 27] So God offers his forgiveness for sins only through his son, Jesus Christ. God forgives those who turn away from their sinful rebellion and in turning away from it, then look to trust in Jesus and in Jesus alone to make them right with God.

Friends, you and I are to take the initiative to proclaim this message as Christians. So that people will be made right with God.

You and I are to take this to our everyday world. It's personal. Jesus. Sinless for you. Jesus.

Crucified, buried and resurrected for you. Trust this Jesus and turn away. From self and sin.

I want to share one more passage with you before I move to close this out and leave this ringing in your ears, I pray. If you'll just listen to this from the Apostle John.

[62 : 38] Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God. And whoever loves the father loves the child born of him. By this we know that we love the children of God.

When we love God and observe his commandments. For this is the love of God that we keep his commandments and his commandments are not burdensome.

For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world. Our faith. Who is the one who overcomes the world?

But he who believes that Jesus is the son of God. You hear it over and over and over again. You might wonder if anybody has read the Bible.

How do they miss it? Once again, friends. The deceitfulness of sin is a powerful enemy. And that's why we need the truth of God to bust through it. And to give us hope.

[63 : 40] None of these crucial texts of scripture make baptism necessary for God to forgive people for their sins.

Then what are we to do with that? Where does baptism fit into making disciples? Here it is. In a word, baptism follows belief, but it's not a condition for belief.

Is it important? Yes. But you don't have to be baptized to be saved and forgiven for your sins. Don't look to something that we do.

Look to Jesus as he works in your heart to save you. The unseen spiritual work of God to convert the person from within their heart.

To turn their heart from self and sin and turn to Jesus. This is what is pictured in baptism. Baptism. Baptism doesn't create this in their hearts.

[64 : 41] Baptism is an outward sign of this inner work. This spiritual work of conversion to Jesus. So it is personal, isn't it?

You are baptized because you believe Jesus died and was raised for you. You identify yourself with Christ and his death and burial as you're placed under the water.

That's the symbol that's going on here. You go under the water to symbolize that Jesus was buried. He was put in, as it were, the grave. And so under the water, you're represented as someone who's dead and without life.

You were crucified with and died with Jesus as he stood in your place. As he suffered death and then as he was buried to pay the price for your sins.

And then this happened. Believing in Jesus means that you believe that Jesus did all this as your substitute in your place for you on your behalf.

[65 : 44] So you identify yourself with Jesus' resurrection as you're raised up out of the water. Just as God raised Jesus to new life from the grave, trusting in Jesus means God raises you to new life through him.

That's why I get excited about baptism. Because I recognize that as I put people under the water and bring them up, I even say that. Buried in the likeness of Christ.

And then as they come up, raised up to walk in newness of life as a new creature in him. That water did not make them spiritually clean, did it? What made them spiritually clean before they ever got in the water?

Belief in Christ. Amen. That's what makes you clean. Now you're going to ask, well, what's at stake if I don't believe that? Your soul.

Your soul in a devil's hell. I wish I could tell you differently, but that's the truth. I don't know if that scares you or what it does to you.

[66 : 53] What I would hope is this. You would run to Jesus as fast as you can. Not as much because you're afraid of a devil's hell. As much as you've been overwhelmed by the love of God to give his only son in your stead.

As your substitute to free you from your sins. Run to Jesus. God makes you his witness, Christian.

For you. For you. For you. God makes you his witness, Christian. And this is the message that we're mandated to take to our world.

It's your mission. Belongs to you because you belong to Jesus. He loves you and grows you in likeness to himself. And this is the charge that we've been given to take to our world.

Whatever else we do, we can't miss this one, right? Let's pray together. Father, this is, as always, a sobering message of the reality of our need for Christ.

[67 : 58] And so I pray for my fellow partners here, my fellow human beings. I don't know.

Personally, I don't have any idea who sits in this room. As a child of God. And who sits in this room as a child of the devil.

So I pray for them. I pray that you will make evident and clear to them in their life. Where they stand spiritually with you. And I pray that today would be the day that you call.

Some of these precious souls. To come to Jesus Christ and embrace him as their savior and their Lord. To receive the forgiveness of sins that you offer in him and in him alone.

And that they would be made a new creature before you. No longer under the wrath of God. But freed from that condemnation. And justified. Declared righteous.

[68 : 58] By the righteousness of Jesus. Father, if there's anyone in here this morning. Who is suffering in that very need for the gospel to be made personal to their heart and life.

Please motivate them to come up here at the conclusion of our service. And seek out myself or Greg as my fellow pastor. Or someone in this congregation.

Who might sit down with them and talk to them about the reality of making this personal. We love you, Father. And we want to serve you. And we thank you for the gospel message that tenderizes our hearts.

And frees us from the power and the penalty of sin. And gives us hope in Jesus. It's in his name that we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen.