

Easter's Bad News & Good News

Text: 1 Corinthians 15:1–5

Theme: God is on His throne right now being praised and worshiped as He rightly deserves

Introduction — What is the Gospel?

- question getting asked a great deal in last several years
- it's an excellent question, a vitally necessary & important question
- but it's odd that the answers provided by so many are so confusing

Some prominent evangelical leaders ask this question and then deconstruct their faith

- never quite clear what this means
- using blogs, videos, articles, web sites and books they tear things apart
- they end up pulling apart their faith...and never rebuilding it
- wanting to get back to the “genuine” gospel, they abandon anything looking like the gospel
- losing the gospel, they also lose their faith, falling away from true Christianity

Others, remaining anchored to orthodox faith, answer this question well

- using blogs, videos, articles, web sites and books they build up the faith
- the gospel is held up as unchanging, steadfast, and true
- I, for one, am exceedingly thankful for these

The Gospel: original word literally means “good news”

- you got the gospel when your king was victorious in battle
- more good news came when a child was born
- Jesus and His followers used the word to speak of Jesus Himself
- He was the gospel...the good news
- all He taught was good news...the gospel
- and all He did brought this good news to center place in a Christian's life
- but, still haven't answered the question have I?
- what is the gospel?

To understand why it's good news, we have to understand...

I. THE BAD NEWS

- we really do have to hear the bad news before we know why the good news is so good
- we don't like it, but it is vitally necessary; so let's take a look

1. “Birth” of death

- seems ironic to speak of death having a birth, but indeed it did
- I can't pinpoint a calendar date, but I can point to a passage of Scripture
- *So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.*

(Genesis 3:6–7 ESV)

- death came into the world that very day, just as God had told Adam & Eve it would
- *The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”*

(Genesis 2:15–17 ESV)

- and death was born: first, an animal had to die in place of the man & woman to cover their sin
- and eventually, death would come to every human being after Adam
- death had entered the world because of sin

2. Adam & Eve brought this upon themselves

- Bible gives us the way this happened
- story form in Genesis, but biblically, theologically later in James
- *But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.*
(James 1:14–15 ESV)
- the Tempter came and tempted Eve
- and as we just read, seeing that the tree was good for food & a delight to the eyes
- and that it might even make them like God, she took it
- temptation lures the desires, and if not checked, desire conceived gives birth to sin
- sin, that ugly, horrible baby born of acting upon wrongful desires grows up & leads to death
- what makes a desire wrong?
- whatever goes against God and His commands
- okay, so how many do I have to break in order for this terrible judgment to come upon me
- *For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it.*
(James 2:10–11 ESV)
- God gave Adam many positive commands in the Garden of Eden
- work the earth, name the animals & other creatures on the earth, rule over it all
- but He only gave one prohibition; just one: don't eat from that tree

3. Adam & Eve brought all this upon you and me

- *Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—*
(Romans 5:12 ESV)
- since Adam was the first man, he represented all the rest who would follow
- and we don't have to wait long to see this working itself out, do we?
- in the very next chapter of Genesis, chapter 4, Adam & Eve's oldest son kills his younger brother
- temptation came, flashing desire before his eyes, and Cain took it, acted it out, and death came again
- and on and on it goes: read Genesis 5's genealogies
- *Thus all the days that Adam lived were 930 years, and he died.*
(Genesis 5:5 ESV)
- Seth follows: *Thus all the days of Seth were 912 years, and he died.*
(Genesis 5:8 ESV)
- and on and on it goes: his descendant live for so long and he died
- death had come because of sin, and it comes for each of us as well

4. This sounds serious; are you sure I'm included in all this mess?

- you may think: it wasn't my fault Adam & Eve sinned; I wasn't there; I would have stood my ground
- well, let's hear some more bad news from the pages of Scripture
- *as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one."*

*“Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive.” “The venom of asps is under their lips.”
 “Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness.”
 “Their feet are swift to shed blood;
 in their paths are ruin and misery,
 and the way of peace they have not known.”
 “There is no fear of God before their eyes.”*

(Romans 3:10–18 ESV)

- this brings to a verse just down the page
- *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,*

(Romans 3:23 ESV)

- and just to keep pounding the nails on the coffin lid...
- *For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, “Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.”*

(Galatians 3:10–11 ESV)

- and what do we get for all these vain attempts to try to get back to God on our own?
- what comes to no matter what we do or how much we try?
- *For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

(Romans 6:23 ESV)

5. This all sounds so hopeless

- well, not to put too fine an edge on it—it is, as long as we look within
- when we try to “follow our heart” — a horribly unbiblical thought, you know
- *The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*

(Genesis 6:5 ESV)

- *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?*

(Jeremiah 17:9 ESV)

- as Paul said in Romans 7

- *For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.*

(Romans 7:15 ESV)

- Just a couple verses later: *For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out.*

(Romans 7:18 ESV)

- Finally, he laments: *but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?*

(Romans 7:23–24 ESV)

- so, yes; the bad news is really, really bad
- not a gleam of light and hope anywhere within the bad news

But praise the Lord, who was raised from the dead on this very day nearly 2,000 years ago, there is...

II. THE GOOD NEWS

- remember, this is what “gospel” means: *euangelion* = the evangel, the good news
- and this brings me to what was read earlier this morning by Russ
- *Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.*

(1 Corinthians 15:1–2 ESV)

- I want to stand with Paul and remind you of the Good News, the Gospel
- for by this very good news, you can be saved, are being saved, and will be saved

1. Christ died for our sins

- *For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures,*

(1 Corinthians 15:3 ESV)

- God, before the creation of anything at all, planned to redeem His creation
- the Blessed Trinity—Father, Son, and Spirit—determined to create
- and knowing that the apex of their creation—man—would rebel, sin, and bring death
- planned that the Son would come, take on Himself human flesh, suffer & die as a substitute
- death would come...and oh, can you imagine how hungry Death must have been to take Him?
- but like that very first animal slain to cover guilt and shame, Christ did the same
- if you were here Friday evening, you heard all this in great detail
- Just as Moses lifted up a bronze serpent that Israel might be saved by merely looking at it...
- so to the Son of Man would be lifted up on a cross, and all who look to Him will be saved
- *“Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin.”*

(Romans 4:7–8 ESV)

- *The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners...*

(1 Timothy 1:15 ESV)

- this is the gospel, the good news: Christ died in your place, for your sins

2. Praise God for what He has done through Jesus Christ

- yes, there is bad news
- *And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.*

(Ephesians 2:1–3 ESV)

- hearing these words should grieve us, for that was us—or perhaps, sadly, still is for some
- but we had to hear it just one more time in order to truly appreciate the eternally good news
- *But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,*

(Ephesians 2:4–6 ESV)

- did you hear that?
- you are—can be—made alive because, even though Jesus died, He rose again
- He is risen! He is risen indeed!

3. Does this good news really work like this for the likes of me?

- Oh, that we had time to discover many in Scripture who came under power of the gospel
- they came to know the reality of risen Christ: think Peter, John, Paul, jailer of Philippi & more
- and so can you, like so many here today
- we know the glory that *He has delivered 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.*

(Colossians 1:13–14 ESV)

- we marvel at the truth: *having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all*

our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.

(Colossians 2:12–14 ESV)

- *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.*
(2 Corinthians 5:17 ESV)
- it's really quite simple, you know: *And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household."*

(Acts 16:31 ESV)

4. The assurance is grounded in Jesus Christ Himself

- *In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace,*
(Ephesians 1:7 ESV)
- all one need do is recognize the sin that condemns you & come to Christ
- *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*
(1 John 1:9 ESV)
- then, by faith, rest in God's promise, as you obey Him, love Him, serve Him all your life
- *And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.*

(Philippians 1:6 ESV)

Conclusion – The glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ

- *Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.*
(1 Corinthians 15:1–5 ESV)
- *For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.*
(1 Corinthians 15:22 ESV)
- *When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."
"O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?"
The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.*

(1 Corinthians 15:54–56 ESV)

Oh, my brothers and sisters, rejoice this Resurrection Day: Jesus is alive

- and because He lives, so can you

And oh, my friends, if you have never come to Jesus, looked to Him, given life & soul into His hands

- today: let this day that we recall Jesus coming to new life be the one in which He gives you new life as well

And then, let us all sing

- *But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

(1 Corinthians 15:57 ESV)