

Based on a message given at **Providence Baptist Chapel, Bedford** ~ 24<sup>th</sup> January '21

### **What is The Gospel?**

*"O Zion that brings good tidings" Isaiah 40:9*

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What is The Gospel? What does that word even mean? If you tried to answer these questions, asked your neighbours, or colleagues, would you or they get anywhere close to understanding The Gospel's true meaning in the Bible?

Sometimes we hear a friend tell us of a relative of theirs who has died. But to make it worse, they didn't even have time to tell their loved one what they wanted to. They wanted to say something vital. *"If only I could have told them, that I loved them"*. But now they bear the thought of if only. A regret lingers in the mind. The opportunity was not taken and is now snatched from them, and it's too late.

The Gospel is about the love of Christ for lost sinners, me and you. If you read this, then I will have no regrets. I need to tell you of the love of the Lord Jesus Christ for every single person that has ever been born. There is a general love of Christ for all people. But only those that listen and respond will be rescued and gathered by Him.

We have a great need to hear The Gospel. Never has the world needed The Gospel more than now. We are one day nearer to that time when each of us will stand before the Lord God and give account; one day nearer to eternity, one day less than yesterday to turn and repent of our personal sins. The Gospel needs to be heard. Yet society (us) often has no time for it. Will you hear it by reading this?

If you hear no other message about The Lord Christ, you need to know about God's exclusive salvation. About your soul and its need to be right with God. Of the consequences of sin, and God's holiness. About an eternal future away from God for every sinner who is unrepentant, remains unforgiven, unwashed, and unpardoned.

**1.The Gospel is: Good news.** *"O Zion (God's people), that brings good tidings; O Jerusalem that brings good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God"*. Isaiah 40:9

In the New Testament the word Gospel, *evangelion*, is mentioned 145 times. It means "Good News". There is another term in the Old Testament that also appears in the New Testament; "Good Tidings" and it is used twice in above verse and 130 times in all. That's a total of 275 times that the words for Good News are mentioned in God's Word.

Mark 1:1 *"In the beginning of the Gospel, of Jesus Christ the Son of God"*. The Bible claims, and it undeniably is, a book of Good News. There is even a Bible (not a very good translation), but it has a very good name, called The Good News Bible.

Psalm 34:8 says: *"O taste and see that the Lord is good"*. This is God's Word, it is about Him, it is His message. Everything about it is good. You cannot find one verse, one chapter, one book in this Bible that is not good. What a contrast to the world we live in! The news we read, things we talk about are often not good news: disease, discrimination, divorce, depression, death: that's just five D's. Then there is sorrow, sickness, strife, separation, and sin: that's five S's. Sadly, those ten things cover the majority, of what we contribute to, suffer from and experience in this life.

We do not want to be gloomy, but we must assess the real world we live in. The world up and down, east to west. It is like this as the consequence of our individual human hearts. The direct result of what I say, I do, you say, you do. It has always been like it. This is the world we live in. A world that desperately needs Good News, and so this message: *"O Zion that brings good tidings"*; is a message we need to hear.

The Bible describes this message as *"The Gospel of peace"* and as *"The Gospel of truth"*. Don't you want to hear of peace and truth? We don't want to hear of war and strife, anger and envy. We don't want to hear of lies and fake news. We want to hear things that are true and good and right. This is a message of really good news.

**2. The Gospel is: Exclusive and Eternal.** Hang on! That's two very broad claims. Exclusive; O yes, it claims so itself. The Lord Jesus Christ said in John 14:6 *"I am the way, the truth and the life; no man comes unto the Father; but by me"*. You cannot get a more exclusive set of claims than that: no other way, no other truth, no other access to God the Father, but through Christ: one way, one person; the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is also an eternal Gospel. It always has been. There only ever has been one way to heaven. It is the same way promised from Genesis 3:15 to the final chapter of the whole Bible. Yes, in the Old Testament there were shadows, types and figures (sacrifices of animals, altars etc), used as pictures. But they were just sign-posts. Not to John O'Groats or Lands' End, but signposts pointing to our need of a Saviour.

One way; and it always was one way to God. It had to be. There cannot be two ways, or a hundred ways; they would contradict. No, one way, and the way must be decided by God Himself. And He has, when the three Persons of the Trinity, before time began: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit agreed that the problem they could foresee, in time and space, could only be solved by God. So God the Father would send God the Son, and God the Son would willingly come into time and He would be a human being, just like me and you, except with no sin. He would live a perfect life. So that me, a fallen person, could have the forgiveness of my sins. The Holy Spirit is the one that opens our hearts and eyes to see and understand our need of the Saviour. There only has ever been one way. It is exclusive and it is eternal.

**3. The Gospel calls us to: “Behold your God”** Isaiah 40:9. This is the Good News, the glad tidings. The Bible has such a simple way of explaining something which is so profound; the human heart is in rebellion with God. The human heart does not want to look to God, does not want to listen; God says just three words through the prophet Isaiah; “Behold, (look), *your God*”. Look not to an impersonal spiritual force, but The God that made you and me.

The word “behold” means look carefully and intentionally: look away from yourself, look away from every thought you might have that you can solve your problems, and will be okay eternally. Look away from every other source of help, look away from thinking that you have one percent goodness to give to God. Look to Him alone.

One snowy night in the 1850’s a young lad heard this verse being repeated again and again: “*Look unto me, all the ends of the earth; and be ye saved, for I am God; and there is none other*”, another exclusive claim. The teenage lad walked off into the street. The verse had arrested his heart. It seized him. He went home and was never the same. His name was Charles Haddon Spurgeon. His sermons have since been read the world over, by more than any others outside of the Bible. “*Look unto me*”; it’s much the same as this verse: “*Behold your God*”. It is a call. The exclusive eternal call of God to lift up your eyes, and to look unto your God.

Afterall, you are personally accountable to Him. We are accountable to parents, or spouses, and bosses at work. Accountable to the Government to pay our taxes. But also accountable to God. We must come before Him. We must bring our “soul account” with us. An account that is in deficit, overdrawn. We have such a burden of sin; we need to bring it before God and ask Him to cancel our debts: not look to anyone else, not think we can cope with this mountain of debt alone. Please, do not ignore Him any longer, do not push Him away, do not close your ears.

**4. The Gospel is a call us to look to Jesus Christ.** The book of Isaiah was written 800 years before the Lord Jesus Christ. It says: “*He shall feed his flock, like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs*”. This is a prophecy about Christ. Isaiah is looking way into the future. He sees the Lord Jesus Christ in his mind’s eye, as the only hope: he sees Him feeding His flock, gathering lambs one by one, to Himself.

This message, this Good News, this Gospel, is about a person, Christ. He is an indisputable, historical fact. You cannot see Him today, not with your physical eyes. But you can with your spiritual eyes. Tens of thousands of people heard Him, saw Him, saw what He did when He was a man. There is more evidence for Christ today, than there is for Julius Caesar. There is more evidence for Jesus Christ being real,

being a human-being that walked on earth for thirty-three years than there is for any other ancient historical figure. There are more books written about Him. The Bible has sold more copies than any other book. Historians at the time attested that the Lord Jesus Christ is who He says He is. Isaiah points forward. *"He shall feed His flock"*: this is Christ, this is the Good News, this is The Gospel.

**5. The Gospel is: a call to One who is a Shepherd.** He calls Himself the Good Shepherd; He calls Himself the One that gathers. You see, we are like sheep which have gone astray, we have gone this way and that, gone off into the rocky outcrops, and got lost. We are now in great danger; our souls will not be gathered unless He comes and gathers us one by one. *"He shall gather the lambs with His arm, with His strong arm"*. When the Bible talks about the arm of Christ: it is His message and His power to save.

He shall gather the lambs with His arm and He will carry us. We cannot walk on our own, we cannot save ourselves from sin, we cannot come into the fold to be with Him. He needs to come and find us, rescue us, gather us up, carry us and bring us to Himself. This is a message about a Good Shepherd; the Shepherd who does everything for us. I accept my need and that Christ alone must save me. I do nothing but repent and trust, as soon as I hear His voice calling me, the voice of the Shepherd.

He gathers, He feeds, He carries, and He leads the lambs. That is me, that is you, if you will seek Him, stop resisting Him any longer. The Gospel is a call from the Good Shepherd. He comes looking for you, looking for me. He will gather you, if only you will hear and ask Him. The Good Shepherd: He calls us, He gathers, He feeds, He leads and He carries. *"He shall gently lead those that are with young"*. He gathers even the youngest to Himself if they will hear Him.

**6. The Gospel: is a call to look to Calvary.** Jesus Christ is pictured here not only as the Good Shepherd, but as one who will lay down His life for the sheep. I cannot lay down my life to earn Heaven: He must lay it down for me. He must do everything. He must bear the terrible, just punishment for my sin instead of me as my substitute.

In Christ's life, He had not one thought of disobedience to His parents, not one lustful thought. He did not look upon anyone else with pride, jealousy, or anger in His heart. He lived a perfect life. How do I know that? Pontius Pilate said: *"I find in this man no wrong"*. There were two men hung either side on the cross. One of the men testified: *"This man did nothing amiss"*. He lived a perfect life. He died a perfect death so that you could be free, forgiven, cleansed, washed, and pardoned from sin.

Have you been forgiven? Do you have your sin upon your record still? Do you have guilt upon your heart? Can you feel it? If the Lord was to call you this day: would you

still feel that guilt, on your “soul account”, unwashed, uncleansed, unforgiven; the Gospel calls you to look to Calvary; the only place where you can be cleansed: “*God commends His love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*”; the just Christ, for the unjust you and me, if you will hear Him.

**7. The Gospel is: the dividing line for all eternity.** In Luke 23:39 there were two robbers, two thieves on either side of Jesus Christ on the cross. One would fear God and one would not. They both heard the seven sayings of the Lord Jesus on the cross, pleading with His Father for the people in the crowd to be forgiven; people who had hurled insults and abuse at Christ, and mocked Him. The two men both mocked Him, but one heard His words; words offering forgiveness, and believed and feared God. He trusted that Christ would be his Saviour, the other would have none of it.

What about you? Are you on the left or are you on the right? Are you with God or are you against Him? Will you fear God in your heart and seek His forgiveness; and trust Him with faith in your heart, or will you push Him away? Have no fear (respect) for God, just a cynical mocking? If you do not fear God, you mock God; if you don't fear God, you push Him away, don't do it for your eternal soul's sake.

There is only condemnation for those who reject the love of Christ. One thief heard: “*Today you will be with me in paradise*”, the other thief died in his sins. What will it be for you? With God forever: because you fear Him, trust Him, believe in Him, and have repented of your sins. Or will you stay as you are? With that dividing line for all eternity in front of you, not behind you.

**Hear the call of The Gospel. Come to Him in prayer, trusting by faith and repenting of all your sin. If you really mean it, He will hear your cry and change your life.**

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If you wish to find out more about the Gospel or would like to speak to the Pastor then please e mail on [Pastor@providencechapel.org.uk](mailto:Pastor@providencechapel.org.uk)