



gracefellowship

Series: Multiple Month
Date: January 14, 2024

Title: What is the Gospel?
Passage: Romans 1:16-17

Scripture Reading: 2 Corinthians 5:14-21

How many of you like stories? I love a good story. It can be in the form of a mystery novel or psychological thriller or a movie. I love all types of movie genres, especially if it has a good story line to it. I think my favorite types of movies are true stories where people have overcome great challenges in their life to accomplish something incredible. And if you want to see me cry in a movie, show me something with a father and son relationship that gets restored. I'm a sucker for the heart-felt stories where redemption and restoration take place.

Great stories have five elements to their plot:

1. Beginning
2. Climbing action
3. Climax
4. Falling action
5. Resolution

Why am I telling you this stuff you learned in elementary school? Because today we are talking about the gospel and its important for us to understand what the gospel is if we are going to learn to share it. Last week, as we began Multiply Month here at our church, we talked about things that are happening around the world where the Church is growing rapidly and seeing disciples of Jesus made and churches planted. One of the things we highlighted is the fact that the people of God in those areas have regular and consistent times of prayer and fasting. We have invited you to participate in 21 days of prayer and fasting to seek God and learn to be filled by Him. Today after the service our Elders are getting together for one of our regular meeting times and we are going to fast through lunch and spend time in focused prayer together. You can be praying for us as we do that.

But another thing that is happening around the world where the Church is growing is that the people are sharing the gospel. It's difficult to share something you don't know or understand. So today I want to spend time talking about the gospel and what it is, in an effort to help us become more capable in sharing the gospel with

others. The sad reality is that research done by the Barna Group tells us only a little over half, 55%, of Christians have shared their faith with a non-believer in the past year (that statistic has held for the past decade). I have no idea what the numbers would look like if we polled our church, but I have a suspicion it would be low. Part of the reason for that is I am not very good at personal gospel sharing, so I have not led us well as a church in that area. This is something I'm asking God to help me with and give me more boldness in this year.

But again, it's difficult to share the gospel if you don't know what I mean when I ask, "What is the gospel?"

What is the gospel?

Some of us might boil that down to a definition. Tim Keller, Matt Chandler and others have said the gospel is: "You are more sinful than you could possibly know, but you are more loved by God than you could ever imagine."

If you looked up gospel in the dictionary you would get a definition like this:

- **The teachings of Jesus and the apostles; the Christian revelation. (dictionary.com)**
- **The message concerning Christ, the kingdom of God and salvation (merriam-webster.com)**
- **Gospel literally means "Good News."**
 - **Latin: evangelium**
 - **Greek: euangelion**

The New Testament writers borrowed this word from the Romans in order to help their audience know what was going on. When the Roman emperor and other kings of a province had a male child who would one day take the crown, they would send riders out into their kingdom to proclaim the gospel- the good news- a child had been born who would rule and reign over the people. News is meant to be shared! Especially good news! And this gets us back where we started this morning talking about stories...

When you watch the news they will give a headline and tease an event, then the anchor will say, "Let's go to our reporter in the field for the story." That's when we get the details about what happened. What led us to need the story? Is the story good, bad, tragic? Does the story have a resolution yet?

Here's what I want you to understand today:

The gospel of Jesus- the good news- is not a definition...it's a story!

That doesn't mean it's a fairytale or is made up like a work of fiction. It's a narrative of what God has been doing from the beginning of creation until today- and even into the future!

- It's a story about good news of God's love.

- **It's a story about salvation through Jesus.**
- **It's a story about God's Kingdom and eternal reign of Jesus.**

As with any good story there are multiple angles you can look at the gospel of Jesus from and tell the story. This morning I want us to look at a couple ways we can that and then give you something you can hang on to and learn that may help you share the story more effectively in in the places God has planted you.

First, let's look at a passage of Scripture together.

:: Romans 1:16-20

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.

17 For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”

18 The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, 19 since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.

20 For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.

First Question: Who is the story about?

The story is about God!

The gospel is about God, it's not about you! This is His story and everything unveils who He is and what He's done. Then we will find out how we benefit from God's story.

Paul tells us he isn't ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God! The story begins with God because God is the originator of the universe.

:: Genesis 1:1

1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

:: John 1:1-4

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

2 He was with God in the beginning.

3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

4 In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.

What does God do? Go back and look at Romans 1 again:

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.

The power of God brings salvation. Why is salvation necessary? Because after God created everything and made it perfect, the pinnacle of His creation, mankind, rebelled against Him. Sin entered the world. Adam and Eve rebelled against God, choosing self-glory rather than glorifying God. When sin entered the world it broke everything! Our fellowship with God was broken, but the whole earth and everything in the universe fell into chaos as a result of man's rebellion.

To truly understand why the gospel is good news we need to understand the bad news. Our sin separates us from God and brings about punishment.

- **Sin and rebellion have consequences! Our holy God would not be a just and faithful Judge if He let sin go unpunished.**

Here's how Paul talks about this in the book of Romans.

:: Romans 1:18-25

18 The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, 19 since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.

20 For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.

21 For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.

22 Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools

23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles.

24 Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another.

25 They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.

This isn't a popular message in our culture, but our sin deserves punishment. But remember, we need to hear the bad news in order to get to the good news! When Adam and Eve sinned against God He didn't just leave us in our sins hopeless. God promised a rescue! What I want us to do for the next few minutes is look at

Ephesians 2 and watch the rest of the story unfold and see what God has done, is doing and will do to take everything that was broken and restore it.

:: Ephesians 2:1-22

¹ As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ² in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.

³ All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.

That section talks about how we are *alienated* from God because of our sin. The penalty of sin is death. And Paul says all of us found ourselves in that place by our very nature; not because we did something bad after we were born, but because we inherited a sin nature, causing us to be in opposition to God from the time we drew our first breath. That's the bad news. Here comes the good news!

⁴ But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.

⁶ And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus,

⁷ in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—

⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.

¹⁰ For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

These verses lay out for us the *justification*, or salvation, that is available to us because God is not a God who delights in wrath, but He loves to show mercy to all who would believe in Him in faith. We are saved by the grace of God- it's not based on our good works. We can't earn salvation; it is a gift given to us out of the generous heart of a loving God. God did not count our sins against us. Rather, He sent His Son in the form of a man, took all of the weight of our sin, placed it on Jesus and punished Him instead of us. Jesus took the wrath of God so that He could offer you the free gift of salvation, which results in true life.

But the good news doesn't stop there, it continues...

¹¹ Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (which is done in the body by human hands)— ¹² remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the

covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

¹⁴ For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, ¹⁵ by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, ¹⁶ and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. ¹⁷ He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸ For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

¹⁹ Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. ²¹ In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. ²² And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

God *reconciled* us to Himself in Christ and he *unified* us with all who believe- Jew and Gentile. All who trust in the finished work of Jesus on the cross as the payment for our sins become members of God's household- His Kingdom. God is doing a work all around the world to reconcile people to Himself and to unite us as one people under the banner of Christ.

That brings us to one final piece of the story and then I'm going to give you three ways to remember it so you can tell the story to others.

The final piece of all this is the ultimate *restoration* of God's creation to His original design.

:: Revelation 21:1-8

¹ Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.

² I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.

⁴ 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

⁵ He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

⁶ He said to me: “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life.

⁷ Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children.

⁸ But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars – they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.”

The day is coming when God will gather all those who believe in Him for salvation to live with Him forever. And in the process He is going to recreate the heavens and the earth back to it's original perfect state! But the best news is that God is going to dwell with us! We are going back to life in the garden where we have access to God in all His glory. He will wipe away all evil, sickness, death, sorrow and sin and we will live with Him in perfect fellowship. That's good news!

You may have noticed in verse 8 that everyone doesn't accept this invitation to eternal life with God in His new creation. There are those who choose to be their own gods and worship gods of their own making. For them there is a second death. This is why we need to become more passionate gospel sharers- we don't want anyone to experience eternal separation from God. If you ever find yourself thinking, “I can't wait for all those sinful, evil people to get what's coming to them and to languish in hell forever,” let me just tell you, you do not have the mind or heart of God!

:: 2 Peter 3:8-9

⁸ But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.

⁹ The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

After all these years since Jesus' life, death and resurrection, why hasn't He returned? He is waiting patiently for as many people to find salvation in Him as possible! That's the heart of God. He doesn't want anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

Now, let's wrap the morning up by me giving you three things to help you be able to share the gospel with people God has put around you in the strategic places where you live, work and play.

First, we said the gospel is a story. The whole message I just preached today can be boiled down to four words that you can use as a framework to tell the story yourself.

Five Parts of the Gospel Story

- **Creation**
- **Relationship**
- **Fall**
- **Rescue**
- **Restoration**

The best thing you can do to tell the story of God's redemptive plan is read the Bible and be familiar with the overarching plot of the narrative. You do not have to know everything or have all the theological answers to people's questions. Know the story and share the story. When someone asks you something you don't know, admit you don't know and promise them you will find an answer and get back to them.

Here's the second way you can remember the big narrative and share it with people- the acronym GOSPEL.

You should have been given a card when you came in this morning. On that card you will find a tool you can use to help you remember the basic elements of the story to share with people:

God created us to be with Him.

Our sins separate us from God.

Sins cannot be removed by good deeds.

Paying the price for sin, Jesus died and rose again.

Everyone who trusts in Him alone has eternal life.

Life with Jesus starts now and lasts forever.

There is a third way to remember how to share the gospel- tell your story! What has God done in your life? There is no better or more powerful method of gospel sharing than to tell your story of God's redemptive works in your life!

This week in our Life Groups we will be discussing the gospel and looking back over the first week of our 21 days of prayer and fasting. Don't miss out on that opportunity to dive in deeper with people and be encouraged to grow as a person who shares the gospel with others.

(If time permits show the GOSPEL video by Propoganda from Dare 2 Share)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K48-Li7IfA>

I love you!

God loves you exponentially!

We get to share His love to others this week!