"Because We Make Disciples, We Apply the Gospel"
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Two weeks ago, Pastor Matt talked about how because we, as a Church, desire to make disciples, we are committed to sharing the gospel with those who are not believers in Jesus. That is so important. But our desire to make disciples also means we are committed to helping people apply the gospel.

This is the second part of the disciple making process. Jesus says, as we make disciple, we are to be **Matthew 28:20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.** After someone chooses to trust in Jesus Christ, we are to teach him/her what it means to truly follow Jesus. Or the Apostle Paul describes it this way, **Colossians 1:28 Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ.**

But what exactly is the goal? What does it mean to be mature in Christ? Some churches talk about developing "fully formed disciples of Jesus." But what does that look like? At Chisholm Baptist church we talk about wanting to see lives transformed by the gospel, a wonderful goal, but what does that mean?

A big part of making disciples, of helping people grow spiritually, is to encourage them to apply the gospel in their own lives, so it shapes their attitudes. So, it shapes their attitudes toward God, other people and themselves.

Often Christians think the key to spiritual growth is duty and discipline. If you wake up at 5:30 every morning and read your Bible for 45 minutes that will help you grow spiritually. Well, that is a very good thing to do, but if your attitude toward God, other people and even yourself, are not being impacted by what you are reading, not being impacted by the gospel, it is really not spiritual growth.

We want to cultivate these attitudes in our own lives and encourage other believers to develop them in their lives as we seek to make disciples. These other believers might be our children. Parents are called to make disciples of their kids. Or it may be someone here at church, of any age, who we are seeking to encourage in their faith. Or it may be a family member or co-worker who we have an opportunity to encourage we want to help people apply the gospel, because these attitudes are important to our spiritual well-being.

Okay, our first step is to *define* the gospel. Pastor Matt noted how in sharing the gospel we talk about how God loves us, a heart, how sin separates us from God, division symbol, how Jesus' death reconciles us to God, a cross, and how we need to decide whether or not we will place our trust in the Lord Jesus, question mark. That is a great model for *sharing* the gospel.

But what exactly is that good news? The key Bible text in defining the gospel is **1 Corinthians 15:1, 2a 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**. In other words, the gospel is what it is all about**. 1 Corinthians 15:3 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 Scripture.**

The death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. That is the heart of the gospel. Taking into account some other scripture I came up with this definition: the gospel is the great news of what Jesus Christ accomplished through His life, death and resurrection. Now, I used to say, "The good news of what Jesus has accomplished *for us*, but the gospel does not just benefit human beings. Perhaps even more important, it brings glory to God. That is a topic we can explore another time, how the gospel is God glorifying.

I also used to say, "The gospel is about what Jesus has accomplished through his death and resurrection." Now I say *life*, death and resurrection. It is only because Jesus lived a sinless life, always trusting and obeying His Father, that He could be the substitute for us. *His life* meant that His death paid the penalty *not for His sins*, but for mine and yours. So, the gospel is the great news of what Jesus Christ accomplished through His life, death and resurrection.

Okay, let's think about how the gospel, what Jesus has accomplished, impact our attitudes.

First, our attitude to God. For those of us trusting in Jesus Christ, the gospel means our sins are forgiven, the righteousness of Jesus is counted as our own, we are adopted into God's family, we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and we are promised eternal life. And all this is because, the Apostle Paul says, **Romans 3:24 All are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.**

God has shown us grace. Amazing grace. And the more we understand what that means, the more we will appreciate what that means, the more our minds and heart will be filled with gratitude. And gratitude is the key attitude. Everything that God has done for us flows from love. **Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.** And when we understand this, that gratitude to God, begins to grow into love for God. **1 John 4:19 We love because He first loved us.**

And that love leads to obedience. John said, **John 14:15 "If you love me, you will keep my commandments."** Grace leads to gratitude, gratitude leads to love, love leads to obedience. And folks, this type of attitude toward God, a gratitude fueled love that delights in trusting and obeying the Lord, is different than from some of the other types of attitudes toward God I see in people around me or that I sometimes see in the mirror.

For example, a basic command for us as Christians is to gather with other believers for corporate worship. We focused on that a few weeks ago, **Hebrews 10:25a Do not neglect to meet together as some are in the habit of doing**. What are other reasons besides gratitude fueled love for the Lord that someone might obey that command? Meaning, what other reasons would someone come to church?

Well, it could be guilt. "If I don't get to church on Sunday morning, I feel guilty." Or it could be "duty and discipline." "I am supposed to be in church on Sunday morning so that is where I am." It could be habit. "It is just what I always do on Sunday morning." Or could be fear. "If I don't go to church on Sunday, God might allow something bad to happen to me next week."

It could be to please or impress or not disappoint someone else. Oh yah, that happens. I suspect more than one person is here this morning for that reason. It could be for what I would call "practical benefit." "I want to go to church this Sunday, because that cute gal I saw last Sunday might be there again."

Now, I realize folks who go to church for any of those reasons may end up truly worshiping the Lord. But they also may end up like the folks Jesus describes in **Matthew 15:8, 9a These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain.**

If you come to church on Sunday morning because your heart is filled with gratitude fueled love, you will almost surely worship in a way that pleases the Lord. And you will find joy as you do that. And your joy will please God even more, because it is a joy rooted in Him. Folks, we want to apply the gospel by responding to God with gratitude fueled love, and we should encourage others to do the same.

Second, the gospel impacts our attitude toward others. **1 John 4:10,11 This is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another**. Friends, a clear implication of the gospel is that those who have bee shown grace by God, should show grace to others. Those who have been given by God, should forgive others. Those who have experienced the benefits of Christ's sacrificial love, should be willing to sacrifice on behalf of others.

Those are important applications of the gospel, but I think the key attitude is what the Apostle Paul talks about in **Philippians 2:3,4 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.** To love our neighbors as ourselves requires we avoid selfish attitudes. And to avoid selfish attitudes we need to embrace genuine humility.

And the gospel produces humility in two ways. First, it reminds us we are all sinners. Even seemingly nice people are sinners. For example, Joe, a coworker at the office, seems like a great guy. He is very friendly and polite, is always willing to help anyone with a project, and on

Friday he brings donuts for everyone in the office. He seems like such a good guy!

But one morning you read the newspaper and realize Joe is *not* such a good guy. He has been arrested for physically abusing his wife and sexually abusing his daughter. You think, what a creep! They had better fire him at work, because I don't even want to be in the same room as him again.

Folks, Joe was always nice to you, but your perspective has changed. You realize it is not just about how someone treats you, but about how they treat others. We need to realize that it is not just about how someone treats other people, but about how they treat God.

You may treat folks around you better than some others do, but none of us treat God as He should be treated, (Matthew 22:37) loving Him with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. Thus, we are all in the same boat. We all sin and fall short of the glory of God. All of us at times, through our actions and attitudes, reveal that we are lovers of self rather than lovers of God. We are all sinners in need of grace.

The gospel also reminds us that even the good things we do are not because of what wonderful people we are, but because of the grace of God. If you are a Christian, trusting and following the Lord Jesus, while your brother-in-law says he is an atheist, don't assume you are smarter or better than he is. Remember what **Ephesians 2:8,9** says **For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.**

In fact, any good accomplishments, actions or attitudes on your part do not make you better than anyone else. **1 Corinthians 4:7 What do you have that you did not receive?** (Nothing – abilities, intelligence, character, good looks, charm, it is all from God). **And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?** There is no reason to boast, because the gospel reminds us, we are all sinners, and we are all recipients of grace. When we recognize that, we develop an attitude of humility which enables us to set aside selfish attitudes, and begin to love one another, even as God has loved us. The gospel changes our attitudes toward other people.

Third, the gospel also produces a confidence which enables us to live in a way that honors the Lord and which brings joy to our lives. It is not a self-confidence, but a Christ confidence, a confidence that flows from our relationship with Jesus Christ, form the gospel.

How does this happen? First, the forgiveness we find in Jesus Christ brings freedom from guilt and shame. This is at the heart of the gospel. Jesus died for our sins, paid the penalty our sins deserved, so that we are considered "not guilty." The theological word is "justification" or "made righteous." This eliminates our guilt before God. And when we really understand what this means, it removes the shame as well. We no longer have to be embarrassed about our past. Being free of that guilt and shame can make one feel clean on the inside. I also think a lot of problems or complications in relationships occur because people are ashamed of their mistakes or sins and thus lie to cover them up. This dishonesty can mess up our relationships when others realize we have been deceiving them and they wonder what else we have been lying about.

Second, and I think, most important, the gospel means we have a new identity in Christ. Again, this is totally by grace, through faith. We don't earn this in any way, but every believer in Jesus is adopted as a child of God. **Romans 8:14-17 For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit you received brough about your adoption to sonship. The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit what we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs-heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ.**

That is who we are. That is our identity in Jesus. No matter your age, ethnicity or sex, that is who you are, if you are a believer in Jesus. How much money you have, how high your IQ is, how good looking you are, how many friends you have, what your political views are, what football team you cheer for, doesn't matter. If you are trusting in Jesus Christ, you are a son or daughter of God. And nothing can change that.

That means you can be confident God loves you. A basic emotional need is knowing we are loved. And there is nothing better than being loved by God and knowing nothing can change that. The apostle says, **Romans 8:38,39 For I am**

convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present not the future, not any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

This confidence that you are a deeply loved child of God means you don't really need the approval of other people. Oh, we all like the approval of others. You sometimes may think you need it, but you really don't. Because, friends, when God is pleased with who you are and what you are doing, it doesn't really matter what anyone else thinks. And if God is not please with who you are and what you are doing, it doesn't really matter what anyone else thinks.

When we understand this, the gospel enables us as Christians to "play for an audience of one." We are not focused on what other people think of us or what they will say about us, or even what they might do to us. Our only concern is whether our attitudes and actions are pleasing to the one who loves us with an everlasting love.

Knowing that I am a child of God, knowing I belong to Him, knowing that I am loved by Him, also gives what Tim Keller calls, "the freedom of self-forgetfulness." Incidentally, that is a great little book to read, "The Freedom of Self-Forgetfulness."

What does that mean? Keller asks, "What do you think about when you walk into a room with 20 people?" Do you wonder "What do these people think of me?" "Do they think I am dressed funny?" "Do they wonder what is he/she doing here?" "Will anyone want to talk to me?"

However, if you have the freedom of self-forgetfulness, your thoughts will be things like, "Oh, there is Tom. His mom died last month. I need to make sure I offer my condolences." "Oh, there is Kathy. I know she has been feeling overwhelmed with the new baby. I need to try and encourage her." Folks, the gospel can provide a confidence, a Christ-confidence, that enables you to take the focus off of yourself and focus instead on encouraging and serving other people.

Folks, a big part of applying the gospel is to allow it to shape our attitudes, our attitudes toward God, toward others, and toward ourselves. People who apply the gospel will tend to be grateful, humble, confident individuals. As these attitudes are cultivated, they will be people who honor the Lord and serve folks around us.

Nothing has impacted my thinking more in the last 30 years than this sentence, "The gospel is not the ABC's of the Christian life, but the A-Z of the Christian life." That is what Tim Keller said and they are words we all need to hear. I had often thought of the gospel as a basic aspect of Christianity, the milk of our faith, (Hebrews 5:12), something we need to grasp and then grow beyond. But I now realize we can never grow beyond the gospel. Whether you have been a Christian believer for six days or six decades, the gospel should be at the heart of your Christian life.

So, my encouragement for you this week is to take time to ponder how the gospel impacts your attitudes and your life. Maybe make a list of all the things that you have experienced through the gospel for which you can be grateful to God. Remind yourself that because you are saved by grace, through faith, in Jesus Christ alone, you are not "better" than anyone else out there. Maybe make a list of some folks you find a little irritating and then say, "But Lord, I know I am not better than any of these people. They each need Jesus just as much as I do."

And then think about what your identity in Jesus Christ means in day-to-day terms. Make it your goal to build Christ confidence in your life. Ask the Lord to help you overcome the fear of what other people think, and to instead gain that freedom of self-forgetfulness.

Incidentally, a great little book on our identity in Christ is just being published. It is written by our own Amy Matson. She wrote it for kids, so it explains this concept in a way we will all be able to grasp. If you are interested in getting a copy, just get in touch with Amy. (number on the screen)

So, friends, focus on applying the gospel and on becoming a more grateful, humble, and confident individual. And then because this sermon is about making disciples, help someone else apply the gospel in their life. I suggest you talk to at least one other person and share with them something you learned this morning, and encourage them to grow in gratitude, humility and confidence, so

they can honor the Lord and serve those around them.