

THE GOSPEL CHANGES EVERYTHING

TEXT: Romans 1:15, 16

Twenty-five times the New Testament mentions “preach the Gospel,” “preaching the Gospel” or “preached the Gospel.” Literally rendered, “gospel” comes to us from the Greek word *euangelion*. *Eu* means “good,” and *angelion* means “announcement.” These words mean “good news,” but what kind of good news? We know that Paul gave the definitive statement of the good news that we announce, which is, “...that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures” (I Corinthians 15:3b, 4). Those are the words of our announcement. But what did this announcement mean to the listeners of Jesus and the disciples in the day in which they preached the Gospel? As a matter of fact, Jesus was preaching the Gospel before the word was perfected into the definitive statement by Paul. The ancient culture of the day gives us insight as to what was understood when someone spoke of the Gospel. To the Jewish world, what came into their mind was the Hebrew word *mebasar*. Nahum 1:15 is a good example of how this word translated “good tidings” is used: “Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace! O Judah, keep thy solemn feasts, perform thy vows: for the wicked shall no more pass through thee; he is utterly cut off.” This was the good news that the Ninevites had been defeated by the Babylonians and their hope was that a new king would now come and give kindness, blessing and create a healing environment. This seems to be the message of Jesus when He said in Mark 1:15b, “...The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.” Early in Christ’s ministry, we see our Lord enter the synagogue at Nazareth and He takes the scroll of Isaiah and He reads “The Spirit of the Lord *is* upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord” (Luke 4:18, 19). Jesus says to the Jew that He has come to throw off the yoke that rested upon the hurting and establish His kingdom upon the believers, which shall be victorious over all other kingdoms.

To the Gentile, they, too, had a preconceived idea that came to their mind when they heard the word “Gospel.” From 9 BC, we find the Priene Inscription reads in part, “Since Providence... has set in most perfect order by giving us Augustus, whom she filled with virtue that he might benefit humankind, sending him as a savior [σωτήρ], both for us and for our descendants, that he might end war and arrange all things, and since he, Caesar (and inherent from this Lord), by his appearance.... surpassing all previous benefactors, and not even leaving to posterity any hope of surpassing what he has done, and since the birthday of the god [τοῦ θεοῦ] Augustus was the beginning of the good tidings [εὐαγγέλιον] for the world that came by reason of him....” The word “Gospel” carried the understanding that a bad king is conquered and the good King has

come to set up his good government that would usher in blessing and help in all manner of their lives.

When we repent and believe the Gospel of Jesus Christ, we enter the life of blessing and the government of God that rests upon the shoulder of our Lord (Isaiah 9:6b) now dominates our heart. The Gospel brings a new way of thinking and a new way of living. Referring back II Chronicles 7:14 from last week's message, we see also in the New Testament the Lord declares He is our God and we are His people. II Corinthians 6:16 says, "And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people."

For the Christian, the Gospel changes everything. There is to be no line of separation between the way we live, think and move from one arena to another. We have a King and there is a kingdom not of this world. Let us therefore consider:

1. ETHNICITY

Notice I used the word ethnicity, not race. Ken Ham of "Answers in Genesis" says, "The Bible does not even use the word race in reference to people, but it does describe all human beings as being of 'one blood'" (Acts 17:26). This of course emphasizes that we are all related, as all humans are descendants of the first man, Adam (1 Corinthians 15:45), who was created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26–27).More and more scientists find that the differences that set us apart are cultural, not racial. In other words, the so-called "racial" differences are absolutely trivial— overall, there is more variation within any group than there is between one group and another. If a white person is looking for a tissue match for an organ transplant, for instance, the best match may come from a black person, and vice versa."

James Emery White wrote in an article entitled, *Shadow Racism*:

When it comes to a theology of race, there are four headlines: 1) We were all made by God; 2) We were all made in the image of God; 3) We were all made with distinction and variety – including the color of our skin; and 4) We are called into a relationship with God the Father by the Holy Spirit through Jesus the Son. This is why the Bible makes the following declaration: Galatians 3:28: 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.'

This brings us to the great evil of racism. And it is a great evil. It undermines, destroys and rips apart the very nature of God's creation of a single human race made in the image of God for relationship with Him and with each other. Let's be clear about the nature of this evil because racism is a word being seized and applied to almost everything in our politically-charged, social-media-trolling, Facebook-posting climate – by all sides. But we must dissect the real nature of this sin, because if everything is racist, nothing is racist.

True racism is believing in racial superiority. It's believing that race determines intellectual, cultural and moral capacities. From that comes the practice of racism, which involves racial prejudice, bigotry and discrimination against others based on their race or ethnicity.

And that is a great evil and a stench in God's nostrils, for it betrays the heart of God toward His creation – that all people are one and made in His image. To claim that you have more of the image of God than another, that you matter to God more than another, that you are distinct from the human race in a way that is superior to another, is heresy. And to have it take root and erupt in hatred, mistrust and division is unconscionable.

2. LAW ENFORCEMENT

One of more difficult mantras of some of the citizens of our country in recent days is the cry to de-fund the police or do away with law enforcement. The Bible addresses how we are to look at law enforcement in Romans 13:1-4. God declares the officer of the law is a minister of God to us for our own good. The Lord is saying that if we resist their God-ordained authority, we are resisting God Himself. The only exception for civil disobedience is when we are demanded by law to disobey God. Peter explained how we are to respond if ever placed in that situation in Acts 5:29b: "...We ought to obey God rather than men."

If you want to see a national and historical comparison look at the difference in the American Revolution and the French Revolution. America is a republic founded upon rights of individuals given to them by God. The French Revolution was founded upon the rejection of God and the rights for the majority or mob.

To reject God is to give way to chaos. The anti-Christ philosophy of Karl Marx states, "The Communists disdain to conceal their views and aims. They openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions. Let the ruling classes tremble at a Communistic revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win." (Marxists: Marx & Engels: Library: 1848: Manifesto of the Communist Party: Chapter 4).

Rioting is more than public upheaval. Stealing is more than taking something that doesn't belong to you. Assaulting law enforcement officers is more than anarchy and at times murder. It is all of this, plus overt rebellion against God Almighty.

3. THE CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO SOCIETY

Galatians 5:22-25: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit."

There is only one way this kind of life can be lived and that is by embracing the Gospel of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. The Gospel changes everything!

I love you all.

-Pastor Pope-