

WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

It is often said that there are many methods for sharing the gospel, but the message remains the same. While this is true, it does not imply that defining the message of the gospel is simple. Rather, depending on what is or is not emphasized, one articulation of the gospel can dramatically differ from another. The main distinction involves whether the gospel is communicated from a macro or micro level.

At The Village, we use the language of “gospel in the air” and “gospel on the ground” to describe the two ways of explaining the gospel. Unfortunately, when emphasizing one perspective, the other is typically neglected, thus rendering the view as too near-sighted or too far-sighted. This tendency often results in a deficient understanding of the gospel due to a neglect of certain key elements.

COMPLEMENTARY PERSPECTIVES ON THE GOSPEL

Those who are more near-sighted have a “gospel on the ground” perspective. They view the gospel in relation to the life, death, resurrection and future return of Jesus Christ. This perspective is necessary and helpful as it properly orients around the person and work of Jesus Christ for us and our salvation. However, if viewed alone, it neglects the cosmic context of the gospel in which the work of Christ is centered. Along with this neglect can come a subsequent disregard for the social dimensions of the gospel, such as social justice and community.

Those who are more far-sighted have a “gospel in the air” perspective. They view the gospel on a cosmic scale in highlighting an overarching narrative of creation, fall, redemption and consummation. This perspective is necessary and helpful as it properly situates man and his salvation in the global work of God to reconcile all things to Himself. However, if viewed alone, it neglects central realities demonstrated specifically in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Along with this neglect can come a subsequent disregard for the personal dimensions of the gospel, such as personal confession and evangelism.

Neither of these perspectives is wrong. In fact, both are right. At times, the Bible gives an overarching narrative of God’s redemptive work (see in particular the apostolic sermons in Acts), while at other times, the Bible narrowly focuses upon the specific content of Christ’s death and resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:1-8). Though neither is incorrect, the danger comes in emphasizing one perspective over the other.

COMBINING THE PERSPECTIVES

We must find a way to combine both of these perspectives. The “gospel on the ground” makes little sense without the overarching narrative of God’s creative and redemptive work. The “gospel in the air” makes little sense without describing the means of redemption – a substitute Savior who has incarnated into the story as Redeemer. We must see both perspectives without neglecting one or the other.

The analogy of 3-D glasses might be helpful. In theory, 3-D glasses have two lenses which capture and communicate two different views of the same image. The effect of combining these two perspectives provides, theoretically, a more crisp, clear and lifelike expression of the story on the screen. In the same way, a fusion of far-sighted and near-sighted perspectives on the gospel leads to a more rich and robust expression of the “good news” that we call “the gospel.”

In combining these two perspectives into one comprehensive statement, we might say the following:

The gospel is the historical narrative of the triune God orchestrating the reconciliation and redemption of a broken creation and fallen creatures from Satan, sin and its effects to the Father and each other thru the life, death, resurrection and future return of the substitutionary Son by the power of the Spirit for God’s glory and the Church’s joy.

RESPONDING TO THE GOSPEL

In this explanation of the gospel, we speak about “fallen creatures” affected by “Satan, sin and its effects.” This condition corresponds to all of us. All mankind is sinful, afflicted with and enslaved to sin and as such subject to its curses and consequences. Of these consequences, death is the most vivid as it depicts spiritual death – separation from our Creator, the fount of all life and joy.

Sin has separated us from all that is good and lovely in this world and has replaced it with a mirage. It promises pleasure but never truly satisfies. It is insatiable. Yet, there is a way out, and it is found in the gospel. God has provided reconciliation and redemption – freedom for those who respond appropriately to the gospel.

The proper response to this gospel is two-fold: faith and repentance. These are not two distinct responses but rather two views of the same response.

Imagine standing on a beach with your back to the sea. In turning around, you only turn once, but there are two ways to describe it. You could say that you turned toward the ocean, or you could say that you turned away from the beach. In the same way, faith and repentance are akin to two ways of describing the same turn. Repentance is turning away from sin, while faith is turning toward God.

God has provided everything that is necessary for your reconciliation, redemption and restoration. He has done so in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Turn to Him. Trust in Him.

MOVING FORWARD

The gospel is the historical narrative of the triune God orchestrating the reconciliation and redemption of a broken creation and fallen creatures from Satan, sin and its effects to the Father and each other thru the life, death, resurrection and future return of the substitutionary Son by the power of the Spirit for God's glory and the Church's joy.

If you feel a prompting to respond to this message, to turn from sin and to the Savior, or simply have questions to discuss, we would love to talk to you. Below are three options:

1. Come forward during response time.
2. Stop by Connection Central before or after service.
3. Contact a staff member (contact info is available on our website).