

Title: What is the Gospel

Text: ~~Matthew 11:28-29; Isaiah 6:8~~

Romans 1:16-17

John 1:1-3

The Gospel is the 'good news' of an historical event; of God moving toward man; of God drawing near to man in Christ; of God, by his forgiving love, enabling man to draw near to him. It is 'good news'

The newspaper man might say: "It is not for the editorial page - this is how you should think. It is not for the society page - this is how you get along with people. It is not for the "Dear Ann Landers" column - this is how you find answers to your problems. It is not for the sports page - this is how you move and act. It is front-page stuff."

It is "good news" about a man, about a particular life, about a Way. It is "good news" about an event in history that gives meaning to history, and makes it ^{God's} "his story."

As Bishop Gerald Kennedy ^{once} ^{has} said, witnessing is standing on the corner shouting: "Extra, Extra, read all about it!"

The gospel is not an idea of man. ^{with it} It is an act of God. ^{The Gospel} ~~is~~ It is not a religion, but a revelation. Through the patriarchs, through Israel's escape from Egypt, through the prophets' words, but primarily through the words, the teachings, the life, the mission, the cross, the resurrection of Christ, God ~~works~~ ^{has revealed himself} ^{into history, declares}

The gospel is the 'good news' of what God is, as proved by what he has done. It is a disclosure not of what man must do, but of what God has done ^{for man}

^{ABI} The gospel is the 'good news' of an event.

^{II} The gospel is also the good news of an invitation. "Come unto me, all you who are weary....and I will give you rest."

"Take my yoke.....and learn of me."

To those of you who think of Jesus as merely a teacher, a fine one, the best perhaps, but still a teacher - I say that no mere teacher could utter these words unless he was a (sonsummate)egotist or paranoid. He said: "Come unto me." He made claims in his teachings that, if he were merely a teacher, were pompous, pretentious, presumptuous. His words would jar any merely human conscience.

It is the faith of the christian that the invitation, "Come unto me," was delivered by the Incarnation of God's love. The words we use are only human pointers, symbols, inadequate formulations. We say: "The Word made flesh, the God-man, the Son of God, ~~the Son of Man~~." The words ~~don't unscrew the inscrutable,~~ ~~but they do~~ indicate that the christian knows that the invitation comes from God himself.

Come, those who will!

You are to decide. You are free. You must respond. You - and you alone - are responsible for your response to God's action. Come, all of you!

Origen, in the second century, said that it was an invitation to all poor devils. And that's where we come in, isn't it?

Let's not kid ourselves. We have all sinned and fallen short of his glory.

We are commanded to be humble and righteous. We break God's law.

We are asked to come, and to pray. We rebel against his wishes.

We are asked to be perfect as he is perfect. We miss the mark of the high calling.

Transgression (breaking the law), iniquity (rebellion against God), sin (missing the mark) - they are all with us.

~~But~~ But God has not condemned. He has forgiven. He accepts all who, in trust and love and faith and obedience, commit themselves *unto Him*

Celsus, ~~an~~ an early rebel, who in the second century commented about nearly everything, wrote that all other leaders say, "Come to me, all you who are clean and worthy," while Jesus says, "Come unto me, you downtrodden, you beaten," and the ragtag and bobtail of humanity trail after him." He sneered that Christ attracted the "very dregs of the population - peasants, mechanics, beggars, slaves."

But Origen responded, "Yes, but he does not leave them dregs. He fashions men, giving them back their self-respect; enabling them to stand on their feet and to look God in the eye."

The gospel is the "good news" of an event, and of an invitation.

III
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The gospel is the 'good news' of a relationship. We are not the people of a book; we are the people of a PERSON.

It is not that the word became printing and dwelled among us; the word became flesh and dwelled among us.

The gospel is not good advice about how we can manage to conform our life to a standard of good and right. ^{The Gospel!} ~~It~~ is a relationship with a ^{person} ~~man~~. Before we are ever asked to "do" anything, we are asked to "come."

We accept Christ. We receive him in our hearts as a gift. We live in his company. And then, only then, do we become what we love.

I remember hearing once a simple parable. The great Christ found a small man and took him along. And they walked together every day. Someone, one day, asked: "who are those two big men?" Another answered: "the one on the left is my neighbor, Smith. I don't know the one on the right, but they look like brothers."

IV
^{The Gospel is the good news of a relationship}
Then the gospel is the "good news" of a fellowship.

R. H. Strachan writes, in THE INTERPRETER'S BIBLE: "In the New Testament it is assumed that no disciple of Christ can make adequate profession of his faith apart from membership in the Christian community."

The New Testament describes the early church simply: "They devoted themselves to the fellowship."

To speak of solitary christians is to speak biblical nonsense. The New Testament knows nothing of solitary christians. The word, "saint," is never used in the N.T. The plural form, "saints," is often used. True christians are always members of a fellowship.

Every aspect of life is shallow if we go it alone. LOVE - without which there is almost nothing in life - is a relationship.

And, what a fellowship it is. It differs, but it differs in love. It disagrees, but it is not being disagreeable. It gives to each his full right. At least, this is what the fellowship is intended to be.

There is the story that one Englishman is a gentleman; two together are a tea party; three, and you have the Empire. One person from North Dakota is worrying about rain; two ~~to~~ together are cursing the government; three, and you have come to their largest town. One Baptist is in prayer; two together are a denomination; three, and you have a split in the church.

The fellowship is inclusive; it is not a private club to which we invite the desired and from which we exclude the less lovable. All are loved.

It is a society of forgiven sinners, who ignore as insignificant, all ~~differ~~ differences, and are interested only in one thing: "Do you love my Lord? Then, *brother* hold my hand." *The Gospel is the Good news of a Fellowship*

The gospel is the 'good news' of a triumph.

God comes into the world in Jesus Christ to conquer sin, and he does. He comes to conquer even that last great enemy, death, and he does.

The Christian faith did not arrive or develop as a quiet meditation. It has always been a blast on a trumpet. All who heard didn't necessarily follow, but they, at least, were awakened.

Christianity sees the world as a battlefieldd. *We are told to speak of* ~~God has spoken~~ in Christ and "the day of march has come."

Those who follow, with banners flying, have a sense of victory over the world. It is said that "they turn the world upside down."

With only the security that comes from his assurance of victory; with the experimental knowledge that they are not always on the winning side, they move on in confidence - proud in defeat, never lost in despair, futility, or boredom - knowing that he will win in the end.

"For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

This is "good News." No one has such sheer joy as one caught up in Christ's crusade.

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And there is death. Christianity faces it unafraid, for the Son of God died and rose again. We face it by saying, "REJOICE" and, since we are identified with Christ by love and faith, we walk in the power of his resurrection.

△
The gospel is also the "good news" of a mission, a task, a concern. Because God has acted, what ought we to do?

Jesus did not call his disciples to holy retreats. He called them to action and self-denial. "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

Jesus identified himself with humanity - the sick, the hungry, the naked. We must do so also.

This faith of ours is a missionary faith. The Great Commission is: "Go." Have you discussed Christ with your friends? Have you invited other to church? Have you sought out ways to be of service?

There are no solitary Christians, I said. There are also no silent Christians. It is heresy to confine faith to this building. Faith is a leaven. It is to be freed, not imprisoned.

Love of God must be fulfilled in love of neighbor. "Let justice roll down like waters....." " Do justly, love mercy, walk humbly with God."

//Bliss/Carmen/has/written//

Bliss Carmen has written:

They're praising God on Sunday
They'll be all right on Monday
It's just a little habit they've acquired.

The Gospel

Is that all it is to you? ~~It~~ is meant to be more; it is meant to be, indeed, the good news that you are needed, and that there is work to be done and divine strength to help you in the work.

An orchestral society is a worthy organization. Members listen to the music played by the orchestra with appreciation. They contribute so that the orchestra may play. They study so that they may listen intelligently. They are uplifted. But they are still spectators. The members of the orchestra play.

We are called to be part of the orchestra. And whether we are called to be the solo violin, the steady drums, the occasional triangle, or the loud clash of the cymbals, we are called to participate and the orchestra is incomplete without us.

The good news is that God is in the midst of the struggle and in the center of the crisis calling on you to stand and lend a hand. It's not hard work that kills us; it is meaningless work. We need to be needed. I'm telling you that there is good news: GOD NEEDS YOU. You should cry out in gladness: "HERE AM I! SEND ME!"
even as Saul Condit:

Pulpit Digest/O ctober 1970/ page 53

sermon written by Rex Knowles, Director of counseling service, centre college, Danville, Kentucky

*BILL Board with pictures
Ham and egg*

STORY TOLD of a pig and a chicken -

*Chicken said: look at all the wonderful things we
are doing - providing food for man's breakfast. Pig said
Chicken is dedicated
Pig is ^{TOTAL} Committed*