

WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

By Jennifer Lieberum
Christian Centre Abbotsford

10 November 2024

My prayer for us today:

1 Corinthians 2:1-4 NKJV

¹And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. ²For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. ³I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. ⁴And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

Introduction:

Is there anyone here who does not enjoy receiving a gift?

There is something especially delightful about an unexpected gift—one that catches you by surprise, given freely without any obligation. Such a gesture, whether from a friend, a loved one, or even a stranger, feels like a spontaneous outpouring of affection and generosity.

While gifts on special occasions—like Christmas, birthdays, or anniversaries—are wonderful, there is something undeniably joyful about receiving a present when you least expect it. When your husband surprises you with a bouquet of flowers, or a friend comes over with a new pair of sunglasses for you, a bag of coffee beans, or a lovely plant, it is a tender reminder that you are thought of, cared for, and loved. In those moments, you realize that someone took the time and effort to choose something for you, something that cost them in some way—whether in money, time, or thought.

Gifts are not always material; sometimes they come as acts of service or kind words, each one conveying love in its own way and lifting our spirits.

The Bible tells us that **God, our Heavenly Father, has prepared a most precious gift for us—one that came at a great cost. Our response to it will resonate through eternity. He so hopes we will receive it with open hearts!**

The most wonderful thing about this gift is that it is entirely free—there are no strings attached, no hidden conditions and no expectations. It is given purely out of love for us, a gracious act of generosity.

Scripture reading:

Ephesians 2:1-10 NLT

¹Once you were **dead** because of your disobedience and your many sins. ²You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil—the commander of the powers in the unseen world. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God. ³All of us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature. By our very nature we were subject to God's anger, just like everyone else.

⁴But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, ⁵that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God's grace that you have been saved!) ⁶For he raised us from the dead along with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ Jesus. ⁷So God can point to us in all future ages as examples of **the incredible wealth of his grace and kindness toward us**, as shown in all he has done for us who are united with Christ Jesus.

⁸God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. ⁹Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. ¹⁰For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.

Let's chew on this a bit:

We were under the sway of the devil, just like all those thousands of people in our city who don't know Jesus and haven't received His gift of salvation.

We had no clue about a different way of life, but were following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature, following the carrot of the world.

But one day eternity broke in! We heard the message of the Saviour Jesus and responded to Him. He forgave us instantly and completely of every rebellion and disobedience, every transgression. He cleansed us and gave us the gift of His righteousness and eternal life.

He brought us into His family, and gave us a new identity, a new heart and nature on the inside. Our spirit was regenerated, made brand new, sinless and incapable of sinning.

He gave us His Spirit to live in us and help us work out this beautiful new life in His kingdom.

THIS IS THE GOSPEL:

(GOOD NEWS)

GOD **LOVES** US AND GAVE HIS SON TO **REDEEM** US AND BRING US INTO HIS FOREVER **FAMILY**.

SALVATION IS A **GIFT** WE RECEIVE BY REPENTING AND PUTTING OUR FAITH IN **JESUS**.

WE ARE SAVED BY THIS **GRACE** AND WE CONTINUE TO LIVE BY IT AS **GOD'S CHILD**.

ALL BECAUSE OF JESUS' GRUESOME SUBSTITUTIONARY SUFFERING AND **DEATH ON THE CROSS**

He took all our sickness, sin, and curses on His own body and took the full punishment of the wrath of God for us! And he rose again, conquering sin, death, hell and the grave and He's alive today, seated at the right hand of God, having all authority on heaven and on the earth.

TESTIMONY: What I experienced through my brother's tragic passing 7 weeks ago

- Hold lightly to the things of this earth and be grateful
- Life on earth is short, especially in light of eternity
- Opened my eyes again to the huge community of people out there outside of the walls of our churches who are without Jesus and need to hear the Truth about Him.

JESUS' PLEA:

- i. Jesus addressed religious attitudes towards sinners:

Luke 18:9-14 NLT : Tax collector & Pharisee

⁹Then Jesus told this story to some who had great confidence in their own righteousness and scorned everyone else: ¹⁰Two men went to the Temple to pray. One was a Pharisee, and the other was a **despised tax collector**. ¹¹The **Pharisee** stood by himself and prayed this prayer: **'I thank you, God, that I am not like other people—cheaters, sinners, adulterers. I'm certainly not like that tax collector! ¹²I fast twice a week, and I give you a tenth of my income.'**

¹³ "But the tax collector stood at a distance and **dared not even lift his eyes to heaven** as he prayed. Instead, he **beat his chest in sorrow**, saying, **'O God, be merciful to me, for I am a sinner.'** ¹⁴I tell you, this sinner, not the Pharisee, returned home justified before God. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."

- ii. Jesus' mission on earth (besides going to the cross) was to tell people that the kingdom of God has come (IN HIM). He went from city to city preaching, healing the sick and casting out demons, demonstrating the kingdom of God.

Matthew 9:35-38 NKJV

³⁵Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, **teaching** in their synagogues, **preaching** the gospel of the kingdom, and **healing** every sickness and every disease among the people.

³⁶But when He saw the **multitudes**, He was **moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd**. ³⁷Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. ³⁸Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest."

NLT – crowds - were confused and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

ESV - harassed and helpless

This is a true description of people without Jesus – weary, confused, harassed, and helpless, just like sheep with no shepherd to look after them. They have no guidance and direction, having to rely on themselves to try navigate through life.

- iii. He was motivated by compassion. He tried to get his disciples to see this, to "get it."
- iv. He implored us to pray for labourers to be sent out into His harvest
- v. Jesus was concerned for the souls of ALL PEOPLE, even the enemies of his nation. One day, he engaged with a Samaritan woman at a well. Samaritans were hated by the Jews. But Jesus crossed societal barriers and norms. He revealed Himself to her as the Messiah. She ran off to tell her village and in that time his disciples returned with food, urging Him to eat.

John 4:34-37 NKJV

³⁴Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work. ³⁵**Do you not say, 'There are still four months and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!** ³⁶And he who

*reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. ³⁷For in this the saying is true: 'One sows and another reaps.'³⁸ **I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labors."***

Jesus' disciples were looking at circumstances in the natural, being concerned with food, and were definitely not concerned about the Samaritans, but Jesus saw souls that needed saving.

A "white harvest" implies that the fields are ripe and ready to be harvested. He was pointing his disciples to the Samaritan people of the nearby town. He was teaching them to look beyond the natural to see the needs of the souls of men and women, even those they were prejudiced against.

The harvest is white all around us – ripe and ready to be harvested! There are people who need Jesus and we carry Him and His message of good news.

Our Lord and Master, Jesus, is pleading with us.

- **He asked us to pray to Him to send out labourers into His harvest!**
- **He said the harvest is ripe and ready, and**
- **He also said we must go, TO ALL PEOPLE!**

Mark 16:15-18 NKJV

*¹⁵And He said to them, "**Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.** ¹⁶He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. ¹⁷And these **signs will follow** those who believe: In My name they will **cast out demons**; they will **speak with new tongues**; ¹⁸they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will **lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.**"*

This gospel message is to be shared far and wide; to the unreached places in the world, but also to your neighbour next door and your boss and co-worker, family member and friend. WE MUST SHARE THE MESSAGE ABOUT JESUS, AND TRUST GOD FOR SUPERNATURAL SIGNS, FOR HEALINGS AND DELIVERANCES, ETC.

CHRISTIAN CENTRE ABBOTSFORD APPLICATION:

Thursday, Prayer Walk around our church building. We looked up to the thousands of people living in shacks on our doorstep and across to those in the townhouses and up the hill. This is our immediate proximity. **Don't you think we should do something about reaching these people? And help to restore broken lives and even living conditions? I do.**

Let's **shake off the dust of the past and get back to the plow!**

Let's **get on with the mission Jesus so clearly gave us – to share the gospel and make disciples of ALL PEOPLE GROUPS.**

Jesus said he would make us **fishers of men**. It takes courage and boldness.

Let's **pray for boldness as we go!**

3 Illustrations

3 illustrations of this good news message we are called to share. It may help you understand it and can also help you share it with others. If you want a detailed description of the gospel and what it means for us, I refer you to Paul's writings in **Romans 5-8**. It's brilliant!

Illustration 1 – The Great Exchange (Deon)

[Our sin for His righteousness]

Illustration 2 – Palace (Sarah)

[We become children of God, who can freely, confidently approach Him]

Galatians 3:26 AMP

*²⁶For you [who are born-again have been reborn from above—spiritually transformed, renewed, sanctified and] are all **children of God** [set apart for His purpose with full rights and privileges] through faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷For all of you who were baptized into Christ [into a spiritual union with the Christ, the Anointed] have clothed yourselves with Christ [that is, you have taken on His characteristics and values]. ²⁸There is [now no distinction in regard to salvation] neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you [who believe] are all one in Christ Jesus [no one can claim a spiritual superiority].*

Illustration 3 – Door (Jen)

[Jesus is the Door – the ONLY way into the kingdom of God]

Imagine this barren wasteland – ground is stony and hard, nothing can grow there and there is no water. You're on your own here, it's survival of the fittest. But there is this paradise nearby, where there is abundance of food, green vegetation and water, and it's safe here. There is no crime plus the people are loving and kind. They will gladly receive you into their homes. There's just one problem. This paradise has an impenetrable wall around it that cannot be breached. The only way in is through this unassuming brown door. You can freely enter, but as you do, you must take off all your old smelly clothing. You will get washed and given new clean clothes and in time you will learn the new ways of this community.

This brown door is Jesus. He's the only way to the Father and eternal life. We lay down all our old stuff, all our filth and self-effort in exchange for His robe of righteousness.

The gospel is JESUS and Jesus is the gospel. **He is the way we are SAVED and the way we continue to LIVE. It's a daily walk with Jesus, in Jesus and for Jesus!** No matter how much you progress in the kingdom of God, you never get beyond Jesus.

Luke 18:17 NKJV Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it."