

Evangelism Class 5

What is the Gospel?

Sometimes we downsize the Gospel or Good News to the message of salvation and or forgiveness when Biblically it is much more. This raises the question, What is the Gospel?

The Bible is about God, the God who created the Heavens and the Earth out of nothing. God is the author of life and the designer of all that is. Further, God is also the Ruler of the Universe. Creation is designed to operate according to God's design. God's commands are preceded by design so that God's commands correspond to God's gifts and creation. God's commands are like the Owner's Manual...they are not designed to deny us any good thing but to guide our steps so that we enjoy life according to God's design and to prevent our destroying our life by acting contrary to God's design.

The Bible is a story of how God created an orderly and beautiful Universe and how Creation has come to be disordered. Further, it is a story of God's complete commitment to restore order and beauty to his fallen and marred Creation. God's commitment to do whatever it takes to restore God's lost and fallen creation is the only hope for the world that there is. The problems are bigger than we can fix...if God does not rescue, then no rescue is possible. The bible tells the story of the relentless and determined love of God to seek and save the lost...and how God's seeking and saving lost people is God's means to restoring the whole creation. As the story of the Bible unfolds again and again, we are confronted with things that seem mysterious to us. We wonder why would God do what he does? Why wouldn't God do it some other way? Why would God allow so much tragedy and sorrow in his creation? Some of these questions God chooses not to answer immediately...but God does promise to answer those and many other questions one day. See 1 Cor 13:12 and Jn 16:12

The term Good News is an Old Testament term used in four places in the Hebrew Bible. Let us look up and reflect upon these verses and their implications for our evangelistic mission.

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Ps 40:9 In trouble David cried out to Yahweh and He rescued David...The Glad News he speaks of is the news of Yahweh's rescue from those who desire his hurt.

Is 40:9 The exile of Israel is certain but the judgment of Yahweh against his people is not forever. Because of Israel's sin God has withdrawn his presence but he will not withhold it forever. One day Yahweh will return in glory to make his home with his people, Israel, again in a new second Exodus experience. What made Israel different from every other nation was that Yahweh dwelt visibly in their midst and one day he would do so again. He will come in glory to re-gather his scattered flock and to be their shepherd again.

Is 52:7 Yahweh will return to Mount Zion again to dwell in the midst of his people and to comfort them, by redeeming them out of slavery as in the first Exodus and to Rule over them as their King in the sight of all the nations.

Is 61:1 The Spirit of God who hovered over the deep in the chaos of Gen 1:2 will hover over and anoint the Rescuer to bring the Good News of deliverance of Israel as he rolls back the curses of the covenant that have come upon them because of their disobedience. This anointed One, or Messiah or Christ, will declare the Year of Jubilee and cancel the debts, free the captives, comfort the afflicted and brokenhearted.

The essence of the Good News is that the God who made the world, loves the world and has determined to rescue it from the chaos and disorder into which it has fallen. God is committed to do whatever it takes to rescue the Lost, even to the point of sacrificing his own Son for the sins of those he loves. The One who wrote the story of our lives will do whatever is necessary to rescue us...this is the story we have to tell the nations...the story someone told to us...the reason we are here tonight...learning how to tell it more effectively to others.