

**Human language is weird when you get to thinking about it.** For instance, actual words, like the ones coming out of my mouth right now, are just sounds. But somewhere along the course of human civilization, these sounds were given meaning and we called them “words”. And we taught that meaning to others. That’s pretty much how all of us learned to talk, someone would point at an object and say “this is the sound you make when you are talking about THIS...”

And it just gets hard-wired into us. So that when you want to talk, your brain just takes over, it’s like a natural reflex. So much so, that it feels really weird when you have to actually stop and think about what you are saying.

For instance, we all know the feeling of when you are talking and you can’t think of a word, it’s just there on the tip of your tongue, but you can’t...figure...it...out.

Or when you’ve said a word so much that it starts sounding funny. You’re talking about flowers and after the 10th time someone says “flowers”, you’re like, “Flowers. Flowers. That’s a funny word. What does that even mean?” That’s called **Semantic Satiation**.

One that happens to me a lot is I will write out a word and I’ll know I spelled the word correctly, but it just doesn’t look right. “That can’t be how you spell school...” That’s called **Wordnesia**. Which sounds like something a high schooler came up with.

I got to thinking about words this week because I believe the church has a lot of words like that. Words that mean something significant but because we use them all the time, their meaning becomes lost to us. For instance, words like “fellowship”, “blessed”, “grace”, and the word we’re talking about today, “Gospel”.

We know the Gospel is important. We talk about believing the Gospel and walking by the Gospel and living a Gospel-centered life and having a Gospel-centered marriage and parenting by the Gospel and having the Gospel be at the center of all our relationships...but what does that word mean? When we say all of that stuff, what are we actually saying? Is the Gospel a word that actually means something to us or has it become just a “junk-drawer” term for anything that looks remotely Christian?

As we start our Fall Groups, we want to take a couple of weeks to walk through two key values we have as a church: the Gospel and Discipleship. We want to walk through what these mean, what they look like, because we truly believe that these two words comprise a large part of the Christian life. We want to be a church who means what it says and says what it means, and so, this morning we’re going to answer the question: What do we mean when we say we believe the Gospel? And this morning, we’re going to see that **King Jesus is the Heart of the Gospel**. So, if you would, look with me at **Romans 1:1-7**.

## Romans 1:1–7

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,

To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (ESV)

Ok, so there are three descriptions of the Gospel here in **Romans 1** that show us that **King Jesus is the Heart of the Gospel**. The first description is that **The Gospel...**

### **Completes God's Promises (1:2)**

Paul states that God promised the Gospel, or Good News, to His people through His prophets. We find these in the OT. *Now, what did He promise?* Well, if you survey the OT, you would see that they usually were **about a person**. For instance in **Genesis 3**, right after Adam and Eve first sinned against God, God made a promise that *Eve's offspring* would come and bruise the serpent's head. That's the first promise of a Savior that God makes in the Bible. And if you keep reading, you'll find that God promises Abraham *an offspring* that will bless the world, He promises Moses and Israel *another prophet* like Moses in the future, and He promises King David that *one of his descendants* would be King forever.

All of these promises hinge on a person who would eventually be known in the Jewish community as the "Messiah." Someone who is anointed by God to save and rule His people. So for instance, have you ever read, or heard this passage read, at Christmas time, **Isaiah 9:6–7**

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

This is a Messianic promise.

*Now, why did God make these promises?* Because things are not the way they are supposed to be...

I said a moment ago that the first Messianic promise was in **Genesis 3**. God made that promise because the first humans, Adam and Eve, sinned against Him. According to **Genesis 1:26-28**, God created Adam and Eve to bear His image, submit to His rule, and then rule the world in His place and His way. But Adam and Eve didn't want to submit to God, so they rebelled against Him. What they didn't know is that their rebellion against God would have disastrous effects for the rest of the world. They could no longer live in God's presence because they've sinned against Him, so He exiles them from the Garden. More so, the world they were made to rule is now broken and hostile to them. And their spiritual DNA is now warped so that they now naturally distrust God, even though there's no good reason to...and this natural desire to reject God, *also called depravity*, is passed down to every human being who comes after them. It's devastating.

I came across this statement from philosopher and mathematician Blaise Pascal that really describes the impact of our situation well. He said, "**Man's misery is the misery of a nobleman, the misery of a dethroned king.**" What's that mean?

Well, do you ever have this feeling that your life should be better than it is? That you were meant to be so much more than you are? That this world is not as it should be? Pascal is saying that feeling is an echo of who we were created to be. We are princes and princesses who rebelled against our King and then were kicked out of the palace to live in the poverty and suffering that we created. And while we make the most of it, that longing for the prosperity and peace of the palace still lies deep in us, unsatisfied...and we feel it all the time. For instance...

If you are old enough to remember, I bet you can tell me where you were 21 years ago when the World Trade Center was attacked. I was at school. We stopped everything we were doing and just sat and watched the news all day. We were in total and complete shock. Because this is not supposed to happen! Not just because we're Americans, but because we're human beings. That level of evil just shouldn't exist.

And we still feel a similar shock today. Every time an innocent black man is killed because he "fits a description", or when protests turn into violent riots and we see neighborhoods burn, or when we hear reports of another mass shooting...We know, something needs to change. And it's not just great acts of evil either. We live in a world with miscarriages and infertility...cancer and COVID...addictions and relapses...we are anxious and depressed and fearful and often feel like we have no direction. We know things should be better, but we don't know how to get there. Our misery is the misery of dethroned royalty and we have no way to get back to the palace we were made to live in.

But God does. And He promised to send the Messiah to not only restore the world we've broken but to also redeem us and open the way back to Him. And Paul says, those promises...they are completed in Christ Jesus. **King Jesus is the Heart of the Gospel.** This is the first description of the Gospel, it completes God's promises. The second that Paul gives is **The Gospel...**

## **Concerns God's Son, Jesus (3-4)**

He says it right there in **1:3**. And as we see, that Son is Jesus Christ. And Paul elaborates on this by describing the Son in two ways.

1. ***Descendant of David according to the flesh.*** What does this mean? Well, first, as we read earlier in **Isaiah 9**, the Messiah would be a descendent of David. So, if David wasn't Jesus' great-great-great-great...grandpa, then Jesus could not be the Messiah. It's as simple as that. That's why Matthew starts out his Gospel with the genealogy of Jesus, showing how He's descended from David. Without that lineage, Jesus can't be the promised Messiah.

But secondly, this tells us that Jesus was a real flesh-and-blood person. The eternal Son of God stepped out of the palace into the poverty and suffering of our world, to live among us, to experience what we experience. Why? So that He could create a new line of humanity; one that doesn't take after Adam. Whereas Adam and Eve sinned against God in the garden, Jesus Christ perfectly obeyed God in our sin-filled world. And this matter because of the second description Paul gives us...

2. ***Declared Son of God in Power by His resurrection.*** Now, this doesn't mean that Jesus was not the Son of God before His resurrection. He has always been the Son of God. No, the emphasis in this verse is on the phrase "in power." Jesus stepped out of the palace to live as the Son of God *in weakness*, living in a world conquered by sin and death. But then, through His crucifixion and resurrection, He conquered sin and death and rose *in power* over them. He didn't deserve to die, but willingly gave His life to save those who do...you and I. And through His death our sins can be paid for and forgiven. And through His resurrection, the way back into the presence of God is made. He has undone all that we have created.

So now, all who belong to Jesus Christ, will share in His death and resurrection. He will pay for your sins with His blood and give you the new life that only He has earned. This is why we say, **King Jesus is the Heart of the Gospel**. The Gospel is all about Him...but there's one other description here. and it's about us. **The Gospel...**

## **Calls Us to Faith and Obedience (1:1, 5-6)**

The Messiah is a King. Both the physical King of Israel through David and the Resurrected King over all things through His resurrection. And you either swear your allegiance to the King or you go to war with Him. You don't get to saddle up next to Him as an equal.

And we've already seen what happens when we reject Him. We're actually living in that mess, right now. And so now, we are given another opportunity. By God's grace and out of His mercy, we are presented the opportunity to humble ourselves and submit to King Jesus. Paul calls this the "obedience of faith." What does he mean there?

He's not saying that faith and obedience are the same thing. They are two different things. However, he is saying that they are intertwined. You can't have one without the other. If you have faith, it will prove itself through your obedience. And if you obey God rightly, you

will obey Him because you trust Him. For instance, let's say you called me up at noon and said "Hey, don't eat dinner. I'm bringing something over for you." And I said, "Ok, I won't. I'll wait for you." You would think I trusted you. I had "faith" that you were going to do what you said. But then you show up and you see that I had made dinner for myself and had already eaten. What would you think? You would think that I lied to you. That I told you what you wanted to hear but didn't really trust you. You would see, through my disobedience, that I didn't really have faith in you. Faith and obedience are always tied together. They are proofs of each other. As Jesus tells us in **Matthew 7**, "you will know a tree by its fruit."

Now, this doesn't mean that people who genuinely trust Jesus will never sin. I'm not saying that. What I am saying is that people who genuinely trust Jesus will do all they can to honor Him through obedience. So much so, that when **they don't obey Him they will confess and repent of their sin**. In fact, repentance is one of the great pieces of evidence that you really do trust and love Jesus. You care about what He thinks and you are upset that you offended Him and didn't do things His way.

To put it another way, if you are someone who doesn't care about obeying God's word and doesn't repent of your sins, that is evidence that the faith you say you have is not the genuine faith of **Romans 1:5**. **Is that you?** Are you unconcerned about obedience? Are you unconcerned about the ways you disobey God or hurt others?

If so, then here is the good news for you this morning: King Jesus is able to turn **Sinners (like you) into Saints**. Look at who Paul wrote this letter to...

The Romans grew up worshiping idols in pagan cults. A lot of them had no understanding of the Old Testament prior to becoming a Christian. But now, these pagan, idol-worshippers are "loved by God...called to be [His] saints." *What does that mean?* It means God looked at these sinful human beings, dishonoring Him, rebelling against Him, and instead of hatred...He felt compassion and pity. He loved them. And out of that love, He took the wreckage that they called a life and laid all of it on Jesus. And by His blood they were washed clean...made new. They become His saints.

And this is what He does with all of us. You take your failures and mistakes, your sin and your disobedience, your shame and guilt...and you come and you drop it all into the hands of King Jesus. And through the blood that flows from the scars in those hands, He washes it all away. You are made new.

Is that where you're at today? Do you need to bring your sinful heart to Him this morning? Perhaps for the first time. And here's the thing...because our King was fully human, He's the perfect person to take your problems to. Listen to the encouragement from **Hebrews 4:15-16**

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (ESV)

Come to Jesus and find the mercy and the grace you need this morning.

But don't just stop there. The Lord doesn't just cleanse us and let us go. NO! He has big plans for each of us. Because not only is Jesus able to turn sinners into saints. He is able to turn...**Rebels into Ambassadors**

How many of you know the story of Paul? If you go to Acts 8, you'll find that he was formerly known as Saul. And he hated the early church. So much so, that he tore apart churches, imprisoning Christians, voting for their execution...if he was doing that today, we would call him a "terrorist."

Yet, on the road to a city called Damascus, to destroy the church there...Jesus interrupted his life. Saul met Jesus and his life was changed. He went from being the primary persecutor of God's church, to the one most persecuted for God's church. He, like the Romans, went from being a great sinner to God's saint. But he went much farther than that...Paul became King Jesus' ambassador. And he urged all those in Christ that this is their role now too! Listen to how Paul encourages one church in **2 Corinthians 5:17-21**

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (ESV)

If you have been washed by the blood of Christ, then you are a new creation...and if you are a new creation, then you are an ambassador for Christ Jesus, called to share the good news of what God has done for you with the rest of the world. In other words, in King Jesus we are restored to where God wants us...in His presence as His image bearers. And because that's where we are supposed to be, that's where true joy is found.

That's one of the main reasons we have our Fall Groups, is to help you understand and grow in your ability to live out your faith in Christ Jesus. Not only so you can grow in your own knowledge of God and King Jesus, but so you can embrace the joy of being His ambassador. We want to pour into you, so you can head out into the world, wherever God takes you in the course of your day...and pour out into others the good news that the King is also the Savior. That the One in control of all things is also the One who has made all things new.

**King Jesus is the Heart of the Gospel...**because through Him our greatest enemies, sin and Satan and death, they've been destroyed. If you are in Christ, you're not going to Hell anymore! You have a new life, a new path that leads straight to His throne...it might be bumpy along the way, but no one can pull you off the road. There's no reason to fear. He's got you.

And if King Jesus is not your King...then what are you waiting for? Today is the day to take hold of eternal life. His arms are open, bring your mess of a life up and just drop it into His arms. He will not refuse you. He came for people like you...like me.

Let's pray.

