

1Tim 24-02-11a

Good morning, welcome to the Sunday morning services at Grace and Truth Bible Church. We are in the book of 1 Timothy and we are looking at Paul's first pastoral epistle as it is known. One of the disputed or not universally accepted letters.

There are some letters that are considered by those who consider themselves to be experts as legitimately belonging to the Apostle Paul and then there are others who are other letters that are disputed and the pastorals for various reasons are not thought to be genuine by self appointed experts but it is legitimate, it is genuine and one of the issues that is raised in it is the gospel that Paul preaches, the truth that he was entrusted with as a steward, as an apostle and it seemed like it would be a good time for us to review exactly what the nature of that commission, that gospel is. Paul is at pains to defend the integrity of the gospel that he preaches and to call out other forms of message that people claimed to be the gospel and Paul says there is only one gospel and it is the one he preaches. However there is some nuance to that statement and it is what we are going to look at this morning and this is going to be pertinent and applicable for us because there is a lot of contention and a lot of communication in our day about what the gospel is and what it isn't, what we ought to be listening to, how we ought to be living our lives and this of course is quite pertinent.

So let's ask God's blessing on our fellowship and on our study and we will dive in. Father we are grateful for another opportunity to spend this time together receiving the benefits that you distribute in our midst through spiritual gifts, the presence and power of your spirit that unites us, that energizes us and enables us to live a supernatural life, to have supernatural comfort, guidance, clarity as to who we are and why we are here. We pray that as we look together at these portions of your word that we will investigate, that the Holy Spirit will give us that clarity and understanding, shine a light on our path so that as a result of what we spend time together in fellowship looking at this morning we will be thoroughly equipped for every good work and be fit and able representatives of the Lord Jesus in the time that remains to us in this life.

We ask it in Jesus name, Amen. We begin in the New Testament with a declaration that the kingdom of heaven is at hand, the kingdom of God is at hand. This is the gospel, the gospel of the kingdom.

It is what Jesus preaches. It is what John the Baptist preached at the Jordan and over the course of time there are a lot of usages of the word gospel. It is surprising the amount of detail that is revealed in scripture when it comes to talking about the gospel.

So I guess one way we could start is by saying if someone handed you a pencil and a small piece of paper and said, write down the gospel, what would you say? What is the gospel? We know that salvation is involved. We know that the promises of God are

involved. We know that the Lord Jesus is implicated, without Jesus there wouldn't be a gospel.

But what exactly is the gospel? We are being given a lot of static in the modern day about the gospel and that it ought to be seen and applied and implemented in society. That if we're just individually saved and we're just clinging to the hope of going to heaven when we die, we're bad Christians because that is not the gospel. Well, what is the gospel? There's been a very helpful article that canvases the uses of the words in Greek in the New Testament that are translated to preach the good news, which is euangelizo, the verb, or the noun gospel, euangelion, the good news, eu meaning good, angelion, angelos, messenger, message.

And so by the time you canvass these, it's such a large collection of expressions that it is difficult to synthesize a single definition or an overarching meaning for the word, whether it's the noun or the verb. And yet, who are we as Christians if we don't understand the gospel? If we can't preach the gospel or represent the gospel or live out the gospel and be representatives of Jesus Christ, this is sort of essential information for us as church age believers to have a firm grip on what the gospel is and by extension, what it is not. So when you look at the uses of this word, I'm just going to quickly survey, just to give an idea of how important this is, how the word is used.

We, first of all, see it as it is used in the gospels themselves, and that is almost a misnomer because we've taken the wording and made it into a genre. So we have the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. But the gospel words, as they're used in the New Testament, the noun euangelion, the gospel, is only found 12 times in those gospels.

And you think, well, Paul uses it a couple of dozen times in its verb form and many times in its noun form, and yet in all four gospels, you only find it used 12 times. It's used only four times in Matthew. It's seven or eight times in Mark.

The word, the noun, gospel, is never used in Luke or in John. Not once. It's used twice in Acts.

It's used once in 1 Peter and once or twice in Revelation. All of the rest of the occurrences of the noun gospel, euangelion, are Paul. And that's a lot.

It's found at least once in every Pauline epistle except Titus. So our understanding of gospel largely comes from Paul. Paul is the primary purveyor, the communicator, of what the gospel is.

So our first point is, if we want to understand what the gospel is because we are creatures of the gospel, we are recipients of it, we believe it, we are saved by it, we are guided by it, it comprehends everything to do with our salvation and our subsequent life,

especially in terms of our present and future hope. It's all bound up in the gospel. So just having said no more than I've said, where should we look for our understanding, for our definition, for our grasp of the gospel? We're going to be looking to the apostle Paul.

It's just the weight and the freight of the words themselves suggest this. When you do find the word gospel used, for example, in Matthew, it is three of the four occurrences are the gospel of the kingdom. And we know how important context is and that modifying words make a difference.

So I could say, I have good news for you, the literal meaning of the word, I have some good news. Well, what is the context? Have I just had a medical examination or a test? Have I just come from visiting relatives? Am I at work and I've come back from an executive meeting? Am I your accountant looking at your balance sheet? What kind of good news is good news? Because the term by itself can't be so narrowly focused as we sometimes do in the Christian world. So when we talk about the gospel in the gospels, this is primarily the gospel of the kingdom.

And that is how it is used three of the four times in Matthew, good news of the kingdom. To what extent does the gospel of the kingdom overlap with the gospel by which we are saved and by which we are defined and by which we are guided as Christians in the church age? Well, this is a question that bears investigation and ascertaining a careful answer. The gospel of the kingdom, these are statements of Jesus' ministry.

Jesus goes through Galilee or through all the cities and villages teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every sickness and disease. Where does Jesus proclaim this gospel of the kingdom? In Israel, in Galilee, in Judea, in the cities and villages. And so this is a targeted message to the people whose forefathers were given promises.

The good news of the kingdom, the kingdom of God is at hand. The kingdom of heaven is at hand, is a piece of news about previously delivered promises and expectations. That were created by and under those promises.

And these are specific promises to the nation of Israel about a king, a land, freedom from oppression and invasion by surrounding nations, fruitfulness, prosperity, and so on. So that is the gospel that is initially preached by John the Baptist, taken up by the Lord Jesus, communicated by the 12 and the 70 that he sends out. And what does Jesus say when he sends out the 12? He says, go not in the way of the Gentiles.

If you have watched the dramatization called The Chosen and you reach a certain point in the telling, their telling of that story, two of the disciples go to the region of Decapolis and a kerfuffle develops because there are Gentiles there and they are listening and they come back confused and they've caused riots and violence and consternation and division. And Jesus has to go and set everybody down and try to start talking about the

Gentiles. This is completely imaginary.

This is ostensibly a result of sending the teams of two, the six teams of two disciples out. And Jesus specifically said to them in their instructions, go not in the way of the Gentiles. There is no record that any of them went to Decapolis or engaged in preaching to or receiving responses from Gentiles.

It's just not there. Jesus says in another place, I am sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. The message of the gospel of the kingdom, the good news of the kingdom is what? What is the call to action that John the Baptist delivers, that Jesus delivers, that he sends his disciples to deliver? What is the verb? Metanoeo, repent, change your mind, repent because the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

The kingdom of God in the other gospels is at hand. Change your mind, change your priorities, change your thinking because the delivery of the fulfillment of the promises of God to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and their descendants is imminent. It is at hand.

That is the good news of the kingdom. You can quibble about what constitutes good news if right will prevail and evil will fail and you deliver that news. That's good news to people who are on the side of right, not such good news to those who are going to come under condemnation and judgment, right? And yet it is still called good news.

It may not be universally good news, but it is good news to those who are on God's side, who are aligned with God's plans and purposes. And the fact that it's not good news for everyone doesn't mean it isn't good news. So Mark opens his gospel by saying, this is the beginning of the gospel about Jesus, the Messiah.

And what we're going to find is in any definition of gospel, in whatever context we find the word, it is never disconnected from the Lord Jesus. Whether it is the gospel of the kingdom, there is no kingdom without a king. There is no fulfillment of the promises to Israel without the work of Jesus Christ, Jesus, the Messiah.

For us, the good news of salvation, the inclusion of the Gentiles, however you want to construe and understand Paul's gospel, it is centered in Jesus Christ. So that is the anchor point. Neither is there salvation in any other.

There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved and whereby Israel is going to receive the covenant promise fulfillment that the entire Old Testament anticipates. It is in him. He is the seed of the woman.

He is the means by which the barrier between God and men is overcome. One mediator between God and men, the man, Christ Jesus, whether it is Israel, whether it is the church. So the first thing we can say about the gospel is it is good news from God's perspective.

It is good news for those who are related to God, who choose God, who place their faith in God. The gospel is good news. Secondly, it is inextricably linked to Jesus Christ.

And this is really important when you start hearing current day manifestations and purported instances of gospel preaching, because if it is the good news of help for the poor or social justice or distribution, redistribution of wealth or the ending of oppression or any other socially aware, socially sensitive, socially beneficial message, where is Christ in the message? If you get a message of good news that the truck with the big cross on the side is here to distribute groceries and cheese and bandages and medicine, and we are here to hold your hand and aid you through a crisis and lift you up out of the miry clay and set you on dry ground with some provisions. It is not the gospel if it is not attached to Jesus Christ, charity, benevolence, kindness, social sensitivity, social action, parity, racial reconciliation. We know at the outset there is no gospel apart from Jesus Christ.

And to the extent that quote unquote good is being accomplished or attempted, to the extent that it is not connected to Jesus Christ and doesn't reflect his glory and through him the glory of the father, it is not the gospel. It is not good and it doesn't count. All our righteousnesses, Isaiah says, are as filthy rags.

We think it's great. We sew together the fig leaves and think they accomplish something. All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags and we fade as a leaf.

The grass withers, the flower fades. Human endeavors, human attempts at achieving a kind of existential good that is separate and distinct from God through Christ perishes with the using. It passes away.

It's ephemeral. It's transient. It is fleeting.

And it is corrupt. It is a product of corrupt and fallen humanity. It is inevitably soiled and perverted and polluted and defiled by the mixed motives, the short-sightedness, the desire to gratify ourselves in some way even as we are endeavoring to help others.

We are getting some perverse gratification out of being seen as a benefactor or being viewed as charitable or people being beholden and thankful to us. We always corrupt it. We always defile it.

We always pervert and soil abstract efforts at good. It is only good that is connected to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is only good that reflects the glory of the Father that has any intrinsic value, any lasting value.

And the same is true of the gospel. Any gospel that does not connect directly and intrinsically to Jesus Christ is no gospel. If it attaches to saints, if it attaches to Mary, if it attaches to works, if it attaches to my good intentions, my efforts, it's filthy rags.

So the very opening lines of the gospel of Mark, the beginning of the gospel about Jesus, the Messiah, and in Mark 1, 14, it says, Jesus came into Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God, kerosone, proclaiming, preaching, broadcasting the euangelion, the gospel, the good news of God. Now, if Jesus comes into Galilee, where is he? Israel. What good news is he proclaiming from God? It is the fulfillment of the promises that God previously delivered to these particular people.

The next verse, Mark 1, 15, gives the content, the time has come and the kingdom of God has come near. The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news.

Repent and believe what good news? It says, repent and believe the gospel in your King James or new King James. Repent and believe the gospel. When we hear the word gospel, what do we think? Jesus died for our sins, eternal life.

The one who lives and believes in me will never die. A reunion and resurrection with fellow saints. That's what we think of when we think of gospel.

When Jesus comes in Mark chapter one, proclaiming the good news of God, the good news of the kingdom, what is its content? And what is the required response? The time has come. Something that has been anticipated for decades, for centuries. The time for its fulfillment is now at hand.

What is at hand? The kingdom, the kingdom, which implies a King, which implies that there is going to be a domain where it will be peaceful. It will be righteous. There will be deliverance.

There will be provision. There will be blessing. There will be happiness, the peaceable kingdom.

The old Testament anticipations where violence ceases, children are safe and free to roam and play. There's no hurt. They will not hurt and destroy in all my holy mountain.

So this idyllic sort of return to the paradisaical pre-sin, pre-flood, pre-corruption days where God's presence is near. This is the kingdom of God. This is the good news of God.

Very specific. These promises are not to the world. The world may benefit by association or by extension, but these promises are specifically made to the descendants of Abraham through Isaac, through Jacob, not to the world.

That is why Jesus only preaches in Israel. His followers, his disciples only preach in Israel. Why am I belaboring this? Because hear me now, the gospel of the kingdom is not for today.

It is not for us. It is not for now. And when you take the kingdom noun and turn it into an

adjective and you have kingdom work and kingdom people and kingdom processes and kingdom this and kingdom that, kingdom ethics, the kingdom justice, it is an immediate departure from what the word of God teaches.

The good news of the kingdom is specific to Israel. Jesus only preached it to Israel. And even in Matthew 24, when he says this gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the world and then the end will come, when is that preaching prediction going to be fulfilled? When is the gospel of the kingdom going to be preached to the whole world? Well, if you start from the understanding that the gospel of the kingdom is the good news to Israel, that God is going to establish the kingdom where righteousness dwells and David and his sons and his son, capital S, are ruling on the throne, that gospel, when is that going to be preached? It is not the gospel being preached now.

And so saying, well, when the gospel of the good news of the work of Jesus Christ and salvation for the Gentiles, when that covers the whole world, then the end will come, that's not what Jesus said. This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world, the whole land. That's the last seven years of the age of Israel.

And that is when the gospel of the kingdom will once again be taken up and preached because deliverance and relationship with God will once again be on the Old Testament basis. When you come to faith and relationship to God in Daniel's 70th week, you are Old Testament covenant promises, Old Testament expectations, Old Testament anticipations, and you are listening to and responding to the gospel of the kingdom. This gospel of the kingdom will be preached, Jesus says in Matthew 24.

How helpful is this to understand in terms of end time signs that, well, certainly maybe there is an echo or there's an adumbration that the wider or more specific gospel that pertains to this age will be preached in the whole earth. But Jesus didn't say the gospel of my coming or the good news of salvation or the good of deliverance from sin and entrance into life and future hope. He said the gospel of the kingdom, this gospel of the kingdom will be preached, then the end will come.

And this is basically a prediction that Daniel's 70th week has to happen before the end will come. Very helpful to rightly divide that particular piece of scripture. So understanding the gospel is important for our interpretation of scripture and also for our function as believers in this age.

Many, many things that are said about the gospel in the gospels, which are universally applicable. What should our level of dedication be? In Mark 8.35, in Mark 10.29, the gospel is something so valuable that you might sacrifice for it. You might even lose your life for the gospel's sake.

When you get to Acts, Peter says that the Jerusalem council that God ordained that by his mouth, by Peter's mouth, the Gentiles might hear the word of the gospel and believe.

That's Acts 15.7, and remember this comes after the first 12 chapters of Acts largely focus on Peter and his early ministry in the Jerusalem church and the Jewish church. Then in starting in Acts 9, you have Paul and Paul is going to be the apostle to the Gentiles.

And when this comes up at the Jerusalem council in Acts 15, well, is it legitimate to extend this news to the Gentiles? What is the nature of the message that should be given to the Gentiles? And the Holy Spirit inspires Peter at that point to stand up and say, Peter himself delivers that good news to the household of Cornelius. And this, seeing the sheet let down, what God has declared clean that let no man call common and so on. And this is Peter's recognition and authentication of God's gospel message and the mysteries that are going to be revealed through the apostle Paul.

And the final occurrence that we have of the word gospel in the New Testament, we'll look at those by Paul after the break, but it's in Revelation 14, 6 and 7. And this has been controversial because people want to try to see a definition of the gospel in this. This is where there's an angel with the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth, to every nation, tribe, language, and people. And the next verse gives us what the angel says.

So this angel stands up with the eternal gospel and he's going to give it to every nation, tribe, language, and people. Then the next verse says, the angel says in a loud voice, fear God and give him glory because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth and the sea and the springs of water.

Well, some people try to say verse 7, this call to worship is the content of the eternal gospel that was mentioned in the previous verse. And so the substance of the eternal gospel is fear God and give him glory. In what sense is this good news? Is this a revelation of a message? This is really a call to respond.

What does Jesus say? Repent and believe the good news. Repent and believe the gospel. This is what is required in terms of response.

But when Jesus says repent and believe the gospel, that can't be the gospel because it's got no content. It's all about, well, react to whatever it is I said. What did you say? I said, repent and believe.

Well, repent about what? Believe what? So Revelation 14, 7 doesn't give the content of the gospel. The gospel is not fear God and worship him. Although this is certainly a necessary response, the content of the eternal gospel is not given in Revelation 14.

Why? It doesn't need to be. It has already been revealed in all of the preceding scriptural definitions and descriptions. So what is the eternal gospel? Well, what is the time in which this angel is standing up? It's the last seven years of the age of Israel.

What is the eternal gospel? The eternal gospel is the good news that has been delivered ever since the beginning, ever since the garden, that there is going to be restoration and deliverance, that God is going to deliver and bless those who come to him in faith and who obey the gospel. So the thing to remember as we go to our break here, what do we take away from the first session? We know that Paul warns the Galatians and others against false gospels. John warns against a false gospel, that there are other gospels.

And Paul is emphatic that there is only one gospel and it is the eternal gospel. That is the gospel that he preaches. However, that is in the context of speaking to churches in the church age.

There is one gospel for the church. It doesn't mean that that is also the gospel of the kingdom or that that is the gospel that Jesus and his disciples preached. Context, context, context.

The gospel of the kingdom is not the gospel of Paul. The gospel of the kingdom is not the gospel that saves us. It doesn't mean that there are two gospels.

But the good news is multifaceted. It isn't unidimensional. It is not flat.

It's not shallow. It's not easy. The gospel has substance.

It has content. It has form. And all gospel, gospel of the kingdom, gospel that Paul preaches to the Gentiles and to the Jews, the good news of Jesus Christ is centered in Jesus Christ.

The unifying factor for all aspects, all expressions, all variations, if you will, by way of context and by way of audience and by way of timing and by way of content, never departs from Jesus Christ. So one thing you can say is any other gospel, and this is, for example, the idea of the Mormons, that you can be a little Jesus Christ with your own planet and you can be its savior, that there can be many gods and many Christs, and the notion that the Jehovah's Witnesses have and that other cults have where you get soon distanced from the person and work of Jesus Christ. There is no gospel that is not directly based on and attaches to Jesus Christ.

Neither is there deliverance in any other. Neither is there a kingdom from any other. And we're going to see this when we review the uses of this and the expressions that Paul delivers in his letters about what the good news is, what the mystery is, what the relationship to Jesus Christ is.

But when it comes to application, if I look at my life and it's going on, I've got it going on. I've got circumstances. I've got opportunities.

I've got efforts. I've got tasks. I've got accomplishments.

I've got priorities. I've got obligations. Whatever it is I'm doing, I am not body of Christ.

I am not representing Jesus Christ. I am not an embodiment of the gospel. I can't be like that wife who wins her husband without a word if my life doesn't reflect Jesus Christ, not just Bible, not just moral goodness or ethical purity, but Jesus Christ.

Paul says, I determined to know nothing among you. And we'll see this when we come back. I determined to know nothing among you, but Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

Love that is sacrificial and beneficial. That is the measure. Look back over a day.

Look back over a week. Look back over an episode or an effort or a circumstance or a relationship. To what extent is Jesus Christ manifest in me? To what extent am I practicing genuine divine love that is sacrificial and beneficial, that is enabled and empowered by God through His spirit and through His word? Nothing else counts.

Nothing else matters. That is the center. That is the expression.

That is the issue of the gospel for us. It will ultimately be the issue and the expression for Israel in the kingdom. We'll see more when we come back from the break.