



Message Transcript

The Good News in the Gospel

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Before I pray, I just want to tell you, continue to pray for a high five. I mean, I was given this shirt early this week and it was so obnoxious and loud. I'm like, I'm going to preach in it, too because I'm pretty fired up about what God's doing in our church through our kids. And it's one of the best weeks we have. And I'm just going to tell you as your pastor, in the event you missed the deadlines for your kids to sign up for high five, just bring them anyway and just tell them Pastor Jeff said I could bring my kid and they will let you in, I promise.

And so bring them because it is a fantastic week and we would love to let your kids experience the love of Christ. Amen. Amen. As we pray today, here's what I'm asking you to do. Pray for your own heart.

This is a message. Sometimes when I preach that people think it's for other people, but it's not. It's for you. And so pray that God would speak directly to you for you to apply what you need to hear from his word this morning. So let's pray.

Lord Jesus, we just thank you for your living and active word. Lord, we believe that all of it's true, Lord. We believe that all of it's worthy of being proclaimed. And we

believe that when we do, Lord, your holy spirit does a work among us and in us and through us. So, Lord, have your way today, Lord, for each and every one of us.

We just pray right now, Lord, speak to me. Lord, speak to me. And, Lord, in advance for what you're going to do. In advance for how you're going to lead us, how you're going to speak to us, what you're going to do in and through us, we give you praise, glory. We give you all the honor you so rightly deserve and all of God's people who are ready to receive his word and put it into practice very loudly, agreed.

By saying amen. Amen. Amen. I've been looking forward to this for a long time. But here, how about this?

Open your bibles to one Corinthians 15. Amen. So I tell you why I'm excited about it. Number one, I love all of God's word. I've enjoyed preaching through every part of it.

I think you know that. But the book of first corinthians, we've called this series stronger, right? I mean, living godly in a godless culture. And so to do that, I mean, there's been a lot of thorny issues we've been tackling for a long time now. We've been talking about church discipline, divorce, remarriage, marriage, singleness, how all that works, sexuality.

We've taken a look at christian liberties, what we can, what we can't do, how we make decisions on all that stuff. And then most recently, we've talked about spiritual gifts, specifically prophecy in tongues. They're thorny issues. I think for any pastor that preaches this book, it should be called guts, because no matter what you preach, there's always going to be people that disagree with what you say. But this is a message today that is central to everything we believe about the central tenets of the christian faith, so much so that we miss over them sometimes.

So much so that we can miss out on what the most important thing is. And that's the gospel of Jesus Christ. And I've entitled this message the good news in the gospel. Why? Because the gospel, just by definition, is called good news.

But there's good news in the good news. And so many people, when they think about the gospel, like, oh, the gospel gospel. That's such a churchy word. Gospel. No gospel means it's good news.

I mean, it is like the best news that you could possibly hear. That's what I'm going to be talking to you about today. And as we look in one Corinthians 15, we're going to try to tackle the first 19 verses. And as we do, I want to highlight three things that are true about the gospel and what's good about the gospel. So if you follow along in your bibles, there's also some underneath your chairs, if you want to follow along that way.

Here's what the apostle Paul says. Now, I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preach to you, which you also received, in which you stand by, which also you are saved if you hold fast the word which I preach to you, unless you believed in vain. Now, when it comes to the gospel, these first two verses, Paul pointed out that the gospel is the death of Jesus Christ, his burial in the grave, his resurrection. We talked about the gospel, this resurrection of Christ. It should be demonstrated through your personal belief in Jesus Christ as Lord.

When it comes to the gospel and what we're gonna spell out, it should be demonstrated through your personal belief that Jesus Christ is the Lord of your life. Okay? Notice what he says. He goes, I make known to you, brethren, or brothers and sisters, the gospel that Jesus Christ died according to the scriptures that you're gonna read about in just a second that you were dead in your transgressions, and Christ died for your sins. And not only did he die, but.

But three days later, he got up out of the grave. That's the good news. And we're gonna highlight that today. And he says this, notice this, which I preached to you. Now let me tell you about the word preach.

Preach isn't just teaching. Preach isn't just dispensing biblical information. Preaching is heralding a message from the king of the universe that's worthy of being heard. That's preaching. Right now, we live in a day and age where preaching gets put down, where a lot of people say, oh, preaching is not important.

Preaching is not that big of a deal anymore. That was back then. Let me tell you

this. Faith comes through hearing and hearing through the word of God. The preached word of God is the word of God.

To the extent that a preacher is accurate in his understanding of God's word and faithfully proclaims God's word, you hear God. Jesus even said, if they listen to you, they listen to me. But if they reject you, they not only reject me, but they reject him who sent me. In other words, to the extent that the word of God is getting faithfully heralded, you're listening to God. If you reject it, you're not rejecting the preacher.

You're rejecting the one who sent the preacher. You're rejecting God himself. These are his words. Preaching has always been and will always be God's primary method of communicating to people on the planet. So don't listen to people and like, oh, shut that preaching up.

And, oh, by the way, not only is it disliked in church, it's certainly disliked in the world. Just try it sometime. Try to tell people out there that Jesus Christ is the Lord, that he died on the cross for your sins, that he was buried, that he rose from the dead. See how well it's received. Most people will say, keep that thing in church.

That's not what you read about in the New Testament. It is the preached word of God for all people anywhere at all times. And notice who he's talking to here. He's talking to this church in Corinth. So who's he preaching the gospel to?

The church. Where does the gospel need to be heralded in the church? It's not just good news for what happened in your past. It's good news now, and it's good news in the future. It's really good news, because the good news in the good news is the very life of Christ in you.

That's what it is. And Paul's saying, I came and I preached it to you. Now listen to me. I was an itinerant evangelist for eight years before being pastor of this church. The hardest place to preach the gospel that I ever, ever preached was this.

Christian schools. Do you know why? Because everybody at christian school thinks they're what? Christian. Second hardest place to preach the gospel.

Church. Because everybody that goes to church thinks they're a Christian. Why is Paul spending time preaching the gospel to people in church? Because he knows, like I know, that not everybody that walks into the door in a church is a christian right. So we're going to talk about what that means, because notice what he says.

He says, I preached to you, which you also received, in which you stand. In other words, many of you listen to what I said, that Jesus Christ is the Lord. You received him into your life. You confessed him as lord. You accepted him as your lord and savior, and you're holding on to that.

And notice what he says by which you are saved. Saved means this. It means delivered from. It means being delivered from the power of in the kingdom of darkness. It means being delivered from your sins.

It means being set free in Christ. It means having peace and joy and hope and freedom in all that you are. That's what you're saved from. You're saved from yourself.

You're saved from your self idolatry.

That's what he says. Notice what he says. If you hold fast the word which I preach to you, in other words, if you're listening to what I'm saying, I'm preaching the gospel. And then he says these words, unless you believed in vain. Now, a lot of people read that and say, well, that means, Pastor Jeff, you can lose your salvation unless you keep believing you're going to lose it.

Let me tell you why. That's not what Paul is saying. Okay? If you flip over your Bible to John, chapter ten, this is just one place that you can turn. There are several places throughout the New Testament.

In John, chapter ten and verse 27, Jesus says this. My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me. Christians know the voice of God through his word and they follow Jesus. That's what a Christian is. And I give them eternal life and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.

My father who has given them to me is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of my father's hand. I and the father are one. What does Jesus say? Salvation is not just you choosing God. Behind the scenes, here's what we see.

It's God choosing you. Jesus said in his ministry in Luke, 19:10, I came to seek and save the lost. I'm the one looking for you. You're not looking for me. There's no one that seeks God.

No, not one. There's nobody that goes looking for God if you came to church today. So I'm looking for God. Here's why you're looking for God, because God is working behind the scenes on your heart to let you know that he's the God of the universe and is drawing you to himself. And when somebody confesses Jesus as their personal Lord and savior, Jesus says, I'm the God of the universe.

Nobody's snatching you out of my hand. And my father and I are one, and nobody's snatching out of my father's hands. Here's what he says. When you belong to me, I saved you. You didn't save yourself, and nobody can take you from me.

That's the word of God. So that can't be what Paul's talking about. So he's not saying, if you keep believing, if you keep trying really hard, then you'll be saved. That's not what he's saying. So what does it mean to believe in vain?

He says, unless you believe in vain. Now, if you studied or familiar with the ten commandments at all, one of the ten commandments is you shall not take the name of the Lord your God in what? In vain. And most people would say, well, that's just swearing or bad swearing or using the name of Jesus Christ when you swear. But it's way more than that.

I mean, taking the name of the Lord Jesus Christ in vain means this. It means with my mouth, I am saying that Jesus is my God, but with my lifestyle, I'm living as if he's not. That's taking the name of the Lord your God in vain. It means with your lips, you honor the Lord, but your heart is far from him. It means that you may try to live Christian like behaviors, but deep down, you don't even want to.

It may mean that you kind of fit into a worship setting, but in your heart, you're not revering Jesus Christ as lord. There's a big difference between mouthing words and having a change of heart. See, believing in Jesus is not believing facts about Jesus. It's not just believing that Jesus died on the cross. Every Jew and Roman in the first century knew that Jesus died on the cross.

They saw that with their own eyes. Many know that he was resurrected, right. The disciples saw him with their own eyes. It's not enough to just know it, it's believing in it, right? There's a big difference.

And so there are some in the church who believe in vain who would tell you, I believe in Jesus. I believe he died, I believe he rose, but are not really Christians. What does that look like? It looks like what I look like growing up. I mean, I went to a lutheran grade school, you know, for k through eight.

In the tradition that the Lutherans were in. They taught if you were baptized as an infant, you're saved. So I always thought, of course I'm saved. Cause I was baptized at six months, I was told. And then I was part of a methodist tradition where they had a

tradition called confirmation.

And in your 7th grade year, you went through a class with the pastor and you got confirmed into the church. So I knew I was like doubly protected at that point in time because I was baptized and confirmed. Right? And some of you who grew up in a baptist tradition, they have you pray a prayer of Jesus. I believe that you're God and I repent of my sins.

And I believe that you died on the cross and rose from the dead. And some of you have prayed that prayer, like 737 times and still wonder, am I really a Christian? To believe in Christ means that there's been a change on the inside that changes everything about who you are. That's who a Christian is. Otherwise you're just believing in vain.

You say, well, how do I know? How do I know? How do I know? Cause here's how I know by my own personal testimony. Because when I confessed Jesus Christ as my personal lord and savior when I was 18, something went on inside of me that was totally different than anything else that had ever happened in my entire life.

Now, prior to that, I would argue that God was with me, that I prayed, that I went to church, that I sensed God, I sang worship songs or hymns back in the day that we did. And I was a decent person according to my own standard of what decent was. I read the Bible, I memorized scripture. But when I confessed Jesus Christ as my personal lord and savior, when I repented of my sins, everything on the inside of me changed. Like a love for God and a love for people I had never known.

And it's never ever changed. God is still today changing me. So here's the word, here's the word, listen, if you say I'm a Christian and you've been a Christian for a while and there's no change in your life? Answer me this. How is that even possible?

That the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, indwells you, lives inside of you, has baptized you into the body of Christ, has sealed you for the day of redemption, has regenerated your entire heart and your entire outlook, and nothing's changed. Here's what that means. You're not saved is what it means, because every believer who is genuinely saved genuinely changes. It's the work of God in that person's life. What it doesn't mean is that you're gonna live perfect.

What it doesn't mean is that you're never gonna sin again. What it means is, as God begins you to grow, sins that you used to sin are not fun anymore. To sin. I don't wanna sin that way. I wanna change.

And things you didn't know were sin, God begins to speak to you about things, and your flesh doesn't die. Oh, how I wish my flesh died. How I wish my sinful nature was just gone when I was converted. So all I knew how to do was good. And I'm holding on for that day in glory when that will happen.

That doesn't change. But what happens is there's a change of heart. I mean, just the other day, it was just yesterday, this actually happened. How many of you have that? One neighbor that lives next to you?

You know the one I'm talking about? That one? Yeah, we have one of those. He lives right behind us with his wife. And inevitably I get letters, like quarterly from our HOA explaining to me how I'm not doing something right that I'm supposed to be doing.

And every time I call in, I say, is it so and so that called you and told you this? And they say, yes, it is. I'm like, he'll continue to do that. They like to find things wrong that we're doing. And then we get a letter from the Hoa and I politely call and say, I'm willing to meet with you.

I'm willing to meet with them. We're not out of alignment. And it's some weird thing. It's like, point, like a 37 two. You know, your basketball goal cannot be held up by yellow bags.

It has to be this. I'm like, who's driving the neighborhood? Everybody has those, but I'm the one that gets in trouble, right? So yesterday I got a letter. I was kind of worked up yesterday anyway, and I got a letter and I'm like, okay, what this time?

And I'm reading it through, and it was the letters dash, this and that. And it was for my dog, excessive barking. And I thought to myself for a second, my dog weighs

seven pounds. First of all, number two, my dog rarely ever barks. The only time my dog ever barks is when their dog comes outside.

And as a six month old puppy, he plays with the dog and barks a little bit. He's seven pounds. If I brought him up here and said bark, you could barely hear him in the back. But I got this thing for excessive barking. So I knew who sent me the letter, right?

I knew where it came from. So I politely called and left him a message. And I'm certainly looking forward to their return phone call. So as I got this, what went off in my head first was my flesh. My flesh.

I said, you know, my son's at about the age where I could show him what buying a couple dozen eggs and toilet paper could do. That was my first thought, what a stealth mission would look like for a nine year old. We could high five all night. And then once I began to think more critically and the spirit of God began to show me, that's not it. God began to do something in my heart that was even greater than that.

It wasn't just like, that's wrong. I know that's wrong. I'm not encouraging that. But what God began to do is show me these two people that live behind me that don't know who he is. And God began to show me, hey, what are you and Kim gonna do?

To show my love to them. And so Kim and I, yesterday afternoon got down and we prayed for them. We prayed for them again this morning. I don't know what God's gonna show us, but we don't want to be flippant about it, but be genuine. Because here's what I would hate.

I would hate for those two people to go to hell and know that they had a pastor that lived directly behind him who said he believed in the gospel but did nothing about it. See, that's change. I wouldn't have thought that way when I was 18. I would have bought the eggs and Brock, I would have taken you with me, man. We would have gone and done it.

We kind of did. But that was a whole nother story anyway. God changes hearts. God does stuff in our lives, right? Is he doing something in your life?

See, tell me this. This is the question you got to answer. At what point in your life did Jesus Christ become the Lord of your life? Well, I've kind of always been a Christian ain't wrong. You are born dead in your transgressions and sins.

All of you are separated from God. From the time that you're born. All of you only think about you. I was talking to a friend of mine that got saved here a year ago at Easter, and he was telling me the other day at breakfast, he said, he's like, you know, Pastor Jeff? He goes, before I was saved, if you would have asked me, he goes, I would have told you what a good guy I was.

He goes, I honestly thought I was a really good guy. He goes, now that I'm saved and I'm looking back on my life, there was nothing good about me at all. And I'm like, that's the truth of the gospel. That's what we learn about ourselves, right? We think we're doing good.

We think we're okay. We trick our mind into believing that all is good, but it's difficult, because unless we're born again, right, we have no relationship with God. Now, some people push back at this point, and they're like, you're just being pentecostal or you're just being baptist. They always pray that prayer, do this. No, I'm saying I'm being biblical with you, and if you don't have a moment in time where you've trusted in Jesus Christ, you're not a believer.

Now, some of you may say, well, hey, listen, you know, I'm older. I don't remember the exact time, but I know there was a moment in time in the summer of 1989 where I really was starting to walk with God. And since then, there's been massive change in my life because I welcome everything about God. I buy that. I buy that.

But for somebody to say, no, I've kind of always been a Christian, or I've just kind of grown up in it, it doesn't mean anything. I mean, I have three children that are going to stand before the judgment seat of Christ. I can't be there with them. They can't say, well, my dad was a pastor, and my mom loved Jesus, and they poured into our lives, and we went to church, like three times every single weekend. That doesn't count for anything.

What counts is at some point in time, every single one of my children has to confess Jesus Christ as their personal lord and savior. What has to happen in your life is you have to confess Jesus Christ as your personal lord and savior. When did you do that? When did you do that? If you haven't done that, let me tell you what you stand in right now.

Right now. If you haven't done that, you're under the wrath of God, which means if you were to die at this moment, you would feel the fury of God as you would be cast out into hell. The Bible talks about hell as a place of outer darkness, a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth, a place of torment, a place of isolation, right? I mean, it's no place you want to go. Let me tell you how bad hell is.

Whatever hell is, and I've not seen it, never will see it. But let me tell you how bad it is. In Mark, chapter four, there's a story about a man who is demon possessed. And when Jesus sees this man and asks him what his name is, the demons speak on his behalf. You know what they say, legion, for we're many, right?

Jesus is casting the demons out of this guy. Do you know what the demons ask? You know what demons ask? Don't send us to hell. Let us go unto the pigs.

Do you realize demons would prefer being inside of a pig to being in hell? I mean, hell is no place for anybody to go. And that's where every soul goes that dies. That on this side of heaven did not confess Jesus Christ as their personal lord and savior by the thousands, hourly. Go there.

You will go there if you've never confessed Jesus Christ as your personal lord and savior. That's what the Bible teaches. That's what Paul's preaching. Now. Here's the good news.

Here's the good news. Ready for the good news? And the good news? If you get that, here's the truth. Jesus came and died for you and was buried and rose from the grave so that you would never, ever, never, ever have to experience any of that.

He loves you with an unconditional love. He can't stop thinking about you. He created you. And while you couldn't get to God, Jesus said, I'm coming looking for you. I want a relationship with you.

I love you, right? But everybody's got to come the same way. See, a lot of times, rich people and elite people think the gospel is for poor people. A lot of people that are disenfranchised think the gospel is only for elite, right? A lot of people that are broken in their sin think God can't love them.

The gospel is only for good people. And people that are religious think that the gospel is only for broken people. Let me tell you who the gospel's for. The gospel's for everybody. Jesus stretched his arms out and died for everybody so that in humility, everybody, everywhere has to come and bow their knee in the same way.

And you know the hardest people to reach. You know the hardest people to reach. Listen, listen. Religious people. Cause religious people think that because they've done good things, they have kudos and pats on the back that you count for something.

And to confess Jesus as lord and to repent of their sins means nothing that they've done in themselves. Count. Remember when Nicodemus came to Jesus at night in John, chapter three? He was the teacher of Israel, which meant he was a political leader and a religious leader, which meant he fasted twice a week, which means he tithed off of everything he had, which means he was the perfect religious specimen of the day. And what's Jesus tell him?

You must be born again. And he's like, what, I got to go inside my mother's womb a second time? I mean, explain that to me. He's like, no, you're the teacher of Israel and you don't even get it. Here's what I'm telling you.

Just the same way that you were born of a physical, natural birth, you must be born of a spiritual birth. And if you're not, you can be the most religious person of the day. And on the day of judgment, it will count for nothing but nothing. Everybody's got to come the same way. The five year old little girl that's going to come to Christ this week has to come in the same way that the 99 year old man has to come in humility and brokenness and repentance of sin, believing that Jesus is the Christ who saves

them.

That's the only entrance. That's the narrow gate, right? And that's what Paul's saying. And he says, if you believe what I'm saying, if you've confessed in that Jesus, the God man who died for your sins and rose from the grave, you will be saved. Keep holding fast to that.

And the truth is, people that are believing that will always hold true to that because they'll never let it go, right? Unless you believed in vain. Unless you think it's because of some of your efforts or some of your attitudes or some of your ideas that you can get to heaven unless you're believing in vain. So here's the question. Here's the question.

Do you believe or have you believed in vain? Is it just that, yeah, I've kind of always believed Jesus died and rose and I've had a couple nice experiences. Here's what I tell you. God is always working from the outside in, from the time that you're young, drawing you to himself, giving you encounters, letting you know he's real. Yeah, I had this experience at camp.

Yeah. I had that experience at church. Yeah. My neighbor came and did that.

Yeah.

God's always working from outside in. Here's the question. At what point in time did he start working from the inside out? Cause to work from the inside out, you gotta give him permission to work from the inside out. You gotta say, lord, I'm tired of running my own life.

You lead my life. Come into my life. Fill me up with your holy spirit. When did that happen for you? Happened for me when I was 18 and everything began to change in my life.

When did it happen for you? See, if you don't have that moment in time. And we've had people in our services all weekend long praying prayers of repentance. I met somebody last night that was crying tears and said, I've gone to church my whole

life, but I don't know that I've ever personally trusted Christ like you were talking about.
And I did it tonight.

And I said, well, you can be guaranteed because of the authority of God's word that by believing in Jesus tonight, it's the best thing you'll ever do. And how pathetic would it be and how wrong would it be for somebody to sit in our church week after week, month after month, year after year, hearing the gospel, thinking that they're saved, listening to the lies of the enemy, saying, like some of you are hearing right now, this isn't for you. Why did you come to church today? That's for all those other people out there. If you're hearing that in your head, it's because God's calling you to be his.

If you're hearing that in your head, it's because you're not a believer in Christ. Because if you're a believer, here's what you're saying to yourself. This is awesome. I totally believe this. God.

I'm praying for all those around me that don't believe this, because I want everybody to experience the life of Christ that I have. Amen. And so I want to tell you

in this place today, right where you are right now, you confess Jesus Christ as your personal lord and savior. He will save you, save you to the full, fill you with his spirit, set you on a new trajectory unlike any that you've ever been on in your entire life.

Amen.

That's the gospel of Jesus Christ. I mean, just think about it. When the word of God is preached, it always demands a response, always demands a response. When Peter preached the first sermon in acts two, what do people say, brothers, what must we do to be saved? And Peter says, hey, repent, be baptized and you shall receive the Holy Spirit.

One even simpler is in acts chapter 16. When Paul and Silas are in prison and they're praying and there's a jailbreak, all the gates are let loose. This philippian jailer is going to commit suicide because he knows he's responsible at his own death for letting the prisoners go. And rises. He's about ready to kill himself.

Paul and Silas shout out, no, no, no. We're all here. Don't do it. And he looks at him and he says, sirs, what must I do to be saved? And acts 16:31 says this, believe in

the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.

That's the gospel. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.

Unless you believed in vain. I'm ready. I'll make him my savior so I can get to heaven.

I'm just not ready to make him lord yet. Good luck finding that in the New Testament. Good luck finding the guy that came to Jesus and said, rich young ruler. Hey, I've kept all these since I was a kid. Well, cool.

Make me your savior. But if you ever decide to make me your lord, come back. No, the man walked away sad. Why? Because it's the Lord who saves.

Well, I don't want Jesus to be the Lord of my life. He's just going to control me. He's going to boss me. No, let me tell you something. He's the Lord of your life.

He's who you want to be centered on. Because your life will be the most glorious and satisfying when Jesus is the Lord of your life and you can live your life for you or you can live your life with Jesus on the throne. But you can't do it intermediate. You can't just have a little Jesus. Like I've told you several times from this pulpit, you can't just be a little pregnant.

If you're a little pregnant, you're going to get a lot pregnant. You got a little of the lordship of Christ. You're going to have a lot of the lordship of Christ. And if he's not your lord, you have none of it. He's the Lord.

When did Jesus Christ become the Lord of your life? He's always been the Lord. When did you personally receive him to be lord? When did you tell him? I'm tired of my own sin.

I want you to lead. I want you to be lord of my life. I want you to come into my life, not just be outside of my life. And I'm telling you like I told you before, having preached many times, every time I've gone to a christian school, I always know what I teach on. I always teach on the older brother in the story of the prodigal son because

it's called the prodigal son.

But there's two sons. Nobody ever talks about the older son who's the prideful religious one that never ever enters. People that come to church think that, wow, I go to brave church, man. They open the Bible every week. We worship, we praise.

We're in small groups. Hey, you can worship, praise, be in small groups, hear the Bible every week and bust hell wide open when you die. If you've never confessed Jesus Christ as your personal savior, and you might say, oh, this is all that hellfire and brimstone stuff. No, this is a pastor that loves you so much that would be willing to stand here and tell you that God has an unrelenting, unconditional love for you and he wants you to be his. He just loves you.

And no matter how far you think you've drifted or no matter how religious you think you are, he's inviting you to come to the cross of Christ. Amen. Amen. Let me tell you, if it can be demonstrated and should be demonstrated through your personal belief in Christ, it can be validated by the physical resurrection of Jesus Christ. How do I know the gospel is true?

Because it's validated by the physical resurrection of Christ. Notice what it says in verse three and four. This may be a contender for the best sentence in the bible of what the gospel is summed up. Notice what Paul says, for I delivered to you as of first importance. Now, there's a lot of things in this book that are important.

Everything in this book is the inerrant word of God. But here's what he says. This is the most important. Like this. You get this right, everything else falls into place.

You get this wrong, it doesn't matter what else you think of first importance. What I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day according to the scriptures. Don't miss this. Don't miss this. I believe God can talk to us subjectively.

I believe God's alive. I think you've heard me talk enough sermons to believe that. But how do we know that Jesus died and rose? It's according to the scriptures. Not only will you hear people belittle preaching, but they'll belittle the word of God as if it's

not important.

It's the word of God that reveals that Jesus Christ Rose, right? It's validated. I believe in the scriptures. I believe in the word of God. I get this irritating rash inside of me when people start putting down preaching in the word of God, right?

It just goes against the grain of everything that God teaches. It's important. We're going to preach to our children this week. Why? Because we believe in the scriptures and we believe in the preaching of the word of God.

Amen. And that's what brings people to faith. And notice what he did through the resurrection, it says. And he appeared to Cephas and then to the twelve. After that, he appeared to more than 500 brethren at one time, most of whom remain till now.

But some have Paul in asleep. And then he appeared to James and then to all the apostles. And last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared to me also. So who

did he appear to? Think about this for a second.

Think about it first. He appeared to Cephas. He writes about. Right. When was the last time Peter would have seen Jesus before his resurrection?

It would have been the night that Jesus was betrayed. When Jesus told Peter, hey, Satan has desired to sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you, and I've been praying for your restoration. And Peter, being the king of the foot and mouth disease, what does he tell Jesus? He says, oh, no, no, no. You don't need to pray for me.

He goes, even if all others fall away on account of you. Not me. I'll even die for you. And Jesus says, what? This very night, before the rooster crows, you'll betray me three times.

Whose word was right? Peter's or Jesus? It's Jesus. It's always a good answer. In church, it was Jesus's right.

Peter denies him three times, locks eyes with Jesus. Jesus sees him. And you could see that. Feel the shame and guilt in Peter as he goes out and weeps bitterly. So who does he come and appear to?

Cephas to say, I'm alive now. Which tells me this. When Jesus needed Peter the most, Peter failed. Jesus. Who does he go and see?

The biggest failure he could find. It tells me this. No matter how much you failed, no matter what you promised God that you didn't do, there is forgiveness available through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Isn't that awesome? How about this then?

To the twelve. They were always called the twelve. At this point in time, they were eleven. Judas Iscariot hung himself. But they're called the twelve.

The twelve? The twelve. They've been called the twelve for years. So it's still the twelve. He went and appeared to all the disciples.

He let them know, hey, you've been following me. I told you what was going to happen. I told you I was going to go to Jerusalem and die. You know that I died.

Guess what?

I am alive. Thomas was one of the twelve. He wasn't there the first time. So Jesus comes back and sees him a week later and says, hey, put your hands in my hands. Put your hand in my side.

Stop doubting and believe. He validated himself to those who were following after him. Then he appeared to more than 500 brethren at one time, some of whom are still alive, some of whom were dead at the time. I mean, can you imagine this? I mean, for 500 people to imagine an illusion all at the same time seeing the same thing, the statistics on that are mind boggling.

It's like one in a gabillion or. What's a gabillion? I don't even know. It's almost unbelievable to say that every single person saw the exact same thing, right? 500 at one time.

And everybody's walking away saying, yep, that's exactly what we saw. Right. Then. Who does he appear to? He appears to James.

Now, it could be any number of James. There's several James in the Bible. There was James the son of Zebedee. You know, we hear about Peter, James and John. That was that James.

There was one of his disciples named James, who was a son of Alphaeus. He has the nickname James the less, which is rather unfortunate. I mean, which James are you? I'm James the less. I mean.

But then we had James, who was also the half brother of Jesus that wrote the

book of James that was also instrumental in leading the church in Jerusalem in the first century. That's the James that I believe it was. Now, any of you guys that grew up as younger siblings and had, like, an older sibling that thought they were God? Anybody know what I'm talking about? James had an older brother.

Are you raising your hand, Brother James?

That was rhetorical.

James had an older brother that claimed he was God. And now his older brother is validating himself to his brother, saying, I am the God man. And guess what he had to do as the younger brother. He didn't get into heaven because he was part of Jesus earthly family. He had to get in heaven because he was part of Jesus heavenly family.

By repenting and believing that Jesus was the Christ right then he appeared to all the apostles. It tells me there were more than just the twelve that were apostles. I think there's other scriptures that point that out. The very next verse would highlight

that for you. And last of all, Paul says, as one untimely born, he appeared to me also.

Paul was an apostle. I mean, there were other apostles. So Jesus is appearing to everyone. Now, I don't know about you, but who would you appear to? I mean, if you were Jesus and you want to validate yourself.

I mean, I just get these thoughts in my head sometimes. Like, it would be really cool, like, since he could come in and out of rooms and descend and ascend and do all that stuff. If one night, like, while Pontius Pilate was sleeping, Jesus just kind of knelt down by his bed until he woke up and was like, boo, you know, or something like that. Or just saw Herod's family. He doesn't go to them.

Why? Because he's always going to the people that are going to believe in him by faith. If you have a desire to say, I want to know Jesus, I want to know that he's real, I really want to know. He will come to you and anyone that comes to him, he will never, ever turn away, right? And it's validated by his resurrection.

It's validated by his resurrection. It's because Jesus rose from the dead that we know he's the Christ. If he didn't rise from the dead, where is he? He's in the grave. He's in the grave.

Now, I looked and found this week that Muhammad, who is the founder of Islam, died on June 8, 632 BC. That's when he died. And during Ramadan every year, people make pilgrimage to his grave, right, to give honor to the life that he lived. But they can't honor his resurrection. They can't honor his current life.

You know why? Because he's dead. Now, if you ever get a chance to go to Israel or you go with one of the trips that we lead, we'll take you to the grave site of Jesus. Let me tell you who you won't find there, all right? You won't find Jesus.

I mean, if there would have been time to etch an epitaph, it would have said, here this, he is not here. He is risen. Right? You won't find bones. You won't find DNA samples.

Why? Because we serve the resurrected Christ, Jesus, who died and was buried, who rose. So if you just believe in the Jesus that lived a good life, he's a good man, he was a good teacher. Yeah, he was. What makes Jesus God is rising from the dead.

No one else has ever done it. Now you'll have contenders. It seems like every year there's a group, and every three years there's a bigger group. And about every five years there's a group that makes national news with some cult leader that claims that they're the messiah. And there's this big hubbub.

But then when that guy dies, the whole group disbands because it's not real. What about these guys? Church history would tell us that a majority of these guys went to their death for believing that Jesus Christ rose from the dead. Now just think about that as historical proof. I mean, if you really knew that Jesus Christ hadn't risen and they were going to take your head off or saw you in two or crucify you, and you knew that when you died, you were dead, would you live that way?

I mean, would you be willing to say, hey, do whatever you want? Would people in church history be able to say, hey, you can take my life, but you could take my earthly life, but you can't take my soul? I mean, if you want to prove Christianity wrong, let me tell you one thing you can do. This is all you have to do. Just prove that Jesus Christ did not rise from the dead.

If you can prove that Christianity is false, it's completely false. Now, I warn you in advance, hundreds of thousands have tried. Zero have succeeded. Many whom have tried have become believers in Christ because of the overwhelming evidence that Jesus Christ did rise from the dead and that he is the Lord. You do not have to put your brain on hold to figure this thing out, right?

This is who our disciples are, right? This is what Jesus did. He validated himself through his physical resurrection from the dead. And let me just give you a word on this. If you believe it, if you say, I believe this, you won't be able to keep this stuff to yourself.

You can't. Well, I'm an introvert. You won't. Trying to keep Jesus buried is like

trying to push a beach ball under the ocean for a period of time. At some point in time, that thing's going to come up and out.

I mean, we read stories in the news all the time about people who have served on a battlefield or people who have been in a mall or a school, when there's somebody or a gunman that comes in to take out their life and somebody jumps in front of a bullet or saves their life. And I've never seen a news story where somebody is being given footage where they say, did that person really save your life? And they're like, well, that's very personal to me, and I don't want to share about that right now. Never seen it, right? Somebody just saved your life.

The most introverted person will come on and say, the only reason I'm alive is because so and so just took a bullet for me. And if they hadn't have been there for me, I would not be standing here right now. That's the gospel of Jesus Christ. If you have life in Christ and realize Jesus died so that I could live, I don't care if you're an introvert, extrovert, or whatever. You can't keep that to yourself.

Discipleship, true discipleship always results in evangelism. If you're truly saved,

you will share Christ. You'll do it in your own way. You'll do it with your own personality. You'll do it with your own temperament.

You may not be a preacher. You may not get a soapbox. You may not be vocally, you know, outward in your expression. But even if you're an introvert, there'll be certain people that you have a relationship with where you tell them, hey, I believe what I believe because Jesus Christ is the Lord of my life. You can't keep it.

Sit down. Teaching is not discipleship. It's a part of discipleship. The purpose of our church is not just so you walk away from our church and be like, I really like coming to brave church. Cause they preach the Bible, and I know a lot more about the Bible.

I'm glad you know more about the Bible. But if it doesn't translate into people that are sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with their unsaved friends, then what's the point? Cause I wanna tell you something. When you get to heaven, I'm gonna tell you who's not gonna be there. Unbelievers.

There's no gospel sharing in the coming kingdom. It's for time and space now. And true evangelism always results in discipleship. I mean, if somebody truly gets saved, the first thing they're going to want to do is worship Jesus like you do. Wow.

You know, because if they don't want to worship Jesus like you do, it's because they're not saved. All saved people want to worship Jesus, and they want to grow in Jesus. It's two sides of the same coin. So when I hear churches say, well, we're more of an evangelistic church. We're more of a disciple making church no, you're both.

If it's being done well, if I'm really growing in Christ, I'm sharing Christ. If I'm sharing Christ, I'm growing in Christ. I mean, which came first, a chicken or the egg kind of thing? Right? And that's what it is.

And it can be validated through the resurrection of the dead. And let me give you a final point here. When it comes to the gospel of Jesus Christ, the good news in the gospel, let me tell you this, the gospel would be devastated. It would be destroyed. It would be devastated if the resurrection of Jesus Christ proved false.

There is no gospel. And that's what Paul is going to point out in the next verses. I'll give you seven things from the next verses that would show what the world would look like if Jesus Christ did not rise from the dead. What Christianity would be if Jesus Christ did not rise from the dead. Notice what he says first.

He says, now, if Christ is preached that he has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say there is no resurrection from the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised. Okay, so point number one is this.

If there's no resurrection of the dead, number one is this. Christ is still dead. He's still dead there. He's no messiah. He's dead.

He's in a tomb. He's dead. Why would you pray to him? He's dead. Why would you sing songs to him?

He's dead. Why would you preach about him? He's dead, right? That's what he's saying. And some of you are saying there's no resurrection from the dead.

Now why would Paul say that to a church? Because in the first century, much like the 21st century, people don't believe in the resurrection of the dead. We're going to talk about that all throughout this chapter and what's going to happen when you die and all that stuff. Let me tell you this. There is a physical resurrection of the dead.

Greeks believed in dualism. They believe like this, the body, all the body stuff, fleshy stuff bad, all the soul stuff good. New age people today, body bad, soul good. No, no. Here's what we believe.

I believe in the resurrection of the dead. Jesus Christ died and rose fully bodily and physically. When he comes back, he's coming back fully bodily and physically. If at any point in time Jesus stopped being a man, we as human beings would have no connection with the father. If at any time Jesus stopped being God, we have no forgiveness for our sins, right?

He had to rise. When you go into the coming kingdom, you will have a body, right? Your soul and your resurrected body will reconnect. There will be an eternal body that's not like our current body. And that body, if you know Christ, will be able to enjoy bliss with him forever and ever.

Amen. Or you will receive an eternal body that will experience torment forever and ever and ever. Amen. Cause I listen to people say, well, how could you go to hell? You know, you just burn up.

Not with the coming body that you have. I mean, there's a new body, but don't make any mistake about it. You will have a body in the coming kingdom. When Jesus rose from the dead, he wasn't like Caspar, the friendly ghost. He had a body.

He said, thomas, reach out and touch my hands. Touch my side. He ate fish on the beach with Peter. He had a body. You will have a body.

God created our bodies. Our bodies are good. They're sinful, but they're good. Our new body that we have in heaven won't know any sin. We won't know even know how to sin.

We won't even know how to plan a strategic move on our neighbor in the backyard. We won't even know. We won't even have the thought or temptation, right? Because the evil one won't even be there, right? So Paul's saying, if there's no such thing as the resurrection of the dead, then Christ didn't rise either.

You have no messiah. Notice what he says in verse 14. And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain. Your faith also is vain, right? It means this preaching is pointless.

Sharing Christ is pointless. If Jesus didn't rise from the dead, what are you heralding? I mean, who are you speaking on behalf of? I'm speaking on behalf of Jesus. He's dead.

Why are you speaking on behalf of him? It would make preaching pointless. It would make sharing Christ pointless. And notice what he says at the back end of that verse. He says at the end of verse 14, your faith also is in vain.

It means no resurrection, means believing in Christ would be nuts. Like, why in the world would you believe in a dead messiah? I mean, you would have to be certifiable. You would have to be crazy. Go out and tell your friends, I believe in Jesus.

Who's that? Oh, he's a guy that died, like, 2000 years ago. That's crazy. The Jesus I believe in is not a dead Jesus. The Jesus I believe in is alive and well and dwelling in and through me right now, as I speak.

That's the Jesus that I believe in. That's the Jesus that I'm proclaiming. Notice what he goes on to say in verse 15. Moreover, we are even found to be false witnesses of God because we testified against God that he raised Christ, whom he did

not raise, if in fact, the dead are not raised. Here's what he's saying.

All preachers are liars, and the word of God is false means this. For me to open up this book and tell you that this is true means I'm lying to you, and it means this book is false. Paul's saying this. He's like, all we're doing is testifying that God raised Jesus from the dead, when in fact, he didn't even raise Jesus from the dead. So we're liars.

We're going against God and what he said. This book is wrong. Preaching, stupid. That's what happens if you don't believe that Jesus Christ rose from the dead. Notice this.

For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. We're back to our original argument that Jesus is still dead. Verse 17. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless and you are still in your sins. It means your faith means nothing because you're still in your sins.

Well, God saved me. From what? Your sins. He didn't save you from your sins.

He's not even alive.

You have a worthless faith. I mean, for you go out and proclaim that you believe in this Jesus who didn't even rise from the dead. That's crazy. It's nuts, right? Worse yet is this.

Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. How many of you know somebody in your life who's died? It means whether they claim to be christian or not doesn't matter. They're either a worm food or b, they're being eternally punished in hell, and there's no hope for their soul. That's what that means.

If Jesus didn't rise from the dead, that's all that means. It means we just go back into the earth. Or if the Bible is true, it means that we're eternally damned and there's nothing we can do about it, right? And then finally Paul says this, which I think is the most honest statement in the New Testament, or certainly one of them. If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men to be most pitied.

If your faith in Jesus Christ is about living your life for him. Now, I just trusted in Jesus so I could make a better living I just trusted in Jesus so I could have a better life. I just trusted in Jesus so my marriage would get better. I just trusted in Jesus so I'd learn some behaviors about how not to lie as much. If that's your faith in Jesus, you should be pitied more than any other person on the planet.

You can get that stuff anywhere. See, the gospel is not just about here and now. This is all a dress rehearsal for the coming eternity in our world, right? The gospel of Jesus Christ. The fact that Jesus rose from the dead is not just to save you.

So you have a good life now. It's to save you because of what's coming and the wrath of God on the world and God's love for you, that you can be protected and loved and have your eternity completely set forever and ever. Amen. And amen. Now, you think about these seven that are written on the board.

I don't know if you can read them all because of this boat that's behind me. But if you think about this, this is how the world thinks about Christianity. This is why you

have a hard time sharing. And if all you're going to do is go out and share Jesus and say, he's a good guy and he died for you and he can give you a good life, this is what they're thinking. When you share Jesus, you better share the resurrected Christ, who's as alive as he's ever been, who's sitting at the throne of God, the father almighty, who's soon coming to judge both the living and the dead.

And you better be ready for him because you don't get an opportunity when he comes. And here's how you should feel the weight of your sin. You should feel right now that God is talking to you. There's some of you here. I know there has been.

It's been in all of our services, where God is speaking to your heart and say, I know he's talking to me. And some of you have hardened your heart to that and said, no way. No way. I'm not responding. And others of you are like, what do I do with this?

Here's what you do. You confess Jesus Christ as your personal lord and savior. You repent of your sin, and you say, I wanna make you the lord of my life. And when you do, you will be born again, and you will experience the power and presence of the third person of the Trinity come into your life and change you now and for all eternity.

Amen.

And so the way I want to close today is just by praying for that I want to give you an opportunity to respond to the gospel. I want to give you an opportunity before we take communion, to know that your life with Christ is ready and that if you were to meet him right now, you wouldn't have to wonder, oh, I don't know if he'd take me or not. I don't know if I'm good enough or not. It's not about you being good enough. It's not about you getting things right.

It's about you simply believing that Jesus is the Christ and wanting him to be lord of your life. So if everybody just bow their heads for just a minute, and if that's you today and you're here, like, there have been several throughout the weekend that have said, nope, that's me. I need to pray and receive Christ. Would you just extend a hand up in the air real quick and just say, that's me. I want to welcome Jesus Christ into my life today.

Thank you. I just want to welcome him in my heart. Thank you. Yeah. Because Jesus Christ is talking to you.

The Bible says today if you hear the Lord's voice, do not harden your heart. So here's how you can pray. Let's just pray. You can pray silently while I'm praying out loud. Jesus, I believe that you are the Lord.

That you came to this world and lived a perfect life, that you died on the cross for my sins and were buried. And I believe today you rose from the dead. Right now I repent of my sins, and I want to confess you as my personal lord and savior. Jesus, come into my life, Lord, I pray whether people raised their hand or just prayed that prayer silently where they're at, Lord, for all those who sincerely prayed that prayer, Lord, that you would fill them afresh with your holy spirit, whom you just deposited there, who you just indwelled there, who you just sealed them for. You just baptize them into the kingdom.

Lord, do a work in their hearts so that they would know that they know that they know that they are children of God. Lord, do a work among us here as we celebrate your supper in Jesus name. Amen.

