

The Gospel – John 3:16

If you were able to join us last week, the message focused on the importance of two spiritual disciplines: prayer and fasting. Regular prayer and fasting will help you grow closer to God, your Heavenly Father; Jesus, your blessed Redeemer; and the Holy Spirit, your source for guidance and power. I hope you've been able to experience this truth over the past week as you've participated in the first seven days of our twenty-one days of prayer and fasting. I also hope that as you move into week two, you'll find yourself in a better place with God. Perhaps a little closer to Him and a little more prepared for the Holy Spirit to speak to your heart.

This week I wanted to remind you of a gift from God that is a gift that keeps on giving. It's the single greatest gift you can receive and when applied daily is the single most impactful gift you'll ever receive. Of course I'm referring to God's gracious gift of **The Gospel**. If you were with us when we used Milton Vincent's book called *The Gospel Primer*, you'll remember that his main point in the book was Christians must learn to preach the Gospel to themselves daily in hopes of experiencing the fullness of God's mercy and grace. Vincent establishes that "God's gifts are all of grace, and there is nothing we can do to earn them. However, the wise believer will make sure he is positioning himself in the spot where God's gracious gifts are located. And the Scripture teaches that all such gifts are located inside the gospel." (Milton Vincent; *The Gospel Primer*, Introduction)

William Tyndale, who died a martyr's death for his efforts in translating the Bible and then sharing it, penned these words in 1525 about the gospel. "*Evangelion* (what we call the "gospel") is a Greek word, signifying good, merry, glad, and joyful news, that makes a man's heart glad and makes him sing, dance and leap for joy." (William Tyndale: *Doctrinal Treatises*, pg.8)

I think it's safe to conclude that every Christian who learns the art of daily applying the gospel will soon discover the powerful, life-altering impact it can have. No longer should the gospel be something we only embrace as our salvation ticket into heaven, or only see as valuable at the time of our conversion. The gospel must be viewed as a divine message directly from God that is taught throughout the entirety of the Bible, it is something to be fully believed and trusted, it is something to be proclaimed often, and should be lived out each day as we surrender ourselves to Jesus and give Him our very best.

Most people sitting under my voice would agree that everything we are as a Christian church is founded and supported by the authentic doctrines of the Bible, with the doctrine of the gospel standing as the foundational truth present from the very beginning. Simply put; the good news message of Jesus Christ as the only Savior of the world is something Christians should hear as much as they preach it. And it must be understood that the true gospel was God's plan from the start.

When we embrace and apply the doctrine of the gospel, we will experience a gospel culture in our church. It's the same with the doctrine of grace. When we embrace God's grace, we will

experience a culture of grace in our church. When we embrace the doctrine of the Trinity, we will experience the full nature of God at work in our lives as one God in three distinct persons. A healthy, thriving church is one where people peer into its walls and see Jesus on display through the lens of the broken and problematic people He has rescued.

John 3:16 is the most popular verse in all the Bible. Therefore, it is important that we acknowledge this verse as the simplest version of gospel doctrine designed with you and me in mind. Let's have a look at this verse in its entirety and then break it down phrase by phrase. **Read John 3:16.**

“For God so loved the world” – Let's begin with God. For this verse to make sense, we must decide what to do about God. Who is God? If we're not careful, because of our familiarity with His name, we might tend to skip over this part and in turn lessen the impact of who it is we're thinking of. We must guard against the trap of losing respect and awe for The Great Creator.

Video – No Ocean Big Enough by John Piper

In the very beginning is where we are introduced to God, and this is where every person who reads **Genesis 1:1** must decide who God is. You will either deny His existence or you will stand in utter awe of His grandeur. *“For God”* is the same God who created everything and is the same God who revealed Himself to Abram and said **Genesis 17:1**, *“I am God Almighty.”* The gospel reminds us that we are not to settle for a lesser god, but are to embrace God Almighty, who surprisingly does not despise the world, but loves the world.

How does God love the world? John says, *“For God so loved the world.”* This implies that God's love is so intense for the world that He cannot resist it despite its current state of depravity. **1 John 4:16** says, *“So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.”*

How much does God love the world?

“That He gave His only Son” – This Son is the promised Messiah of the OT, fulfilled in Jesus the Christ. In Him, there is no other, nor will there ever be another. He was God's “only” Son. Unique and purposed for our salvation. The world has no other authentic hope aside from trusting in Jesus, God's only Son. Jesus, given to us out of massive love from the heart of God, came willingly, giving up glory, to live a worthy life that we can never live only to die a guilty death that because of Him, we will never experience. God's only Son is our only entry back into the perfect presence of God, the Father. There is no other way than that of Jesus Christ. This is the extent of God's love for an unworthy world.

For whom does this promise go out to?

“Whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” – Two messages exist here. First, the one who does not believe in Jesus, will absolutely perish. What is perishing? According to Paul from **2 Thessalonians 1:9**, *“They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might.”*

Second, this portion of John 3:16 in the Greek text translates more closely to “*whoever believes into Him should not perish.*” True belief in Jesus erases a person’s inhibitions and removes the distance between man and the loving, Almighty God who created him. When you place your trust in Jesus, He becomes the center of your universe and you become the culmination of God’s work to save you from yourself. God is not worried about which sins we have committed or may commit. Nor is He concerned with how you compare to other sinners. God is only concerned with whether you have surrendered your life through faith to His only Son.

God has simplified the gospel for us in that we can just believe and trust in Jesus. We don’t have to try and be good enough. We don’t have to know all the answers. Why? God is good and He has the answers and has lovingly given everything to us through Jesus. That folk is the doctrine of the gospel. And, when every person sitting here embraces it, then doctrine begins forming our culture. The world needs to see the church in love with Jesus!