

**Sermon Title: The Gospel, On Mission, Week 4**

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**Sermon Questions:**

1. Who is someone you know whose life is characterized by grace? Why is grace so attractive?
2. How does Paul explain what the gospel is in 1 Corinthians 15:1-7?
3. What are the most attractive false gospels the world offers?
4. How does God intend for the gospel to shine out of you? (2 Cor. 4:5-9)
5. Which do you want to focus more on this week? Cultivating a gospel community? Enjoying God in the gospel? Or transforming the world through the gospel?

**Transcript**

Let me begin with this question. Have you ever been around someone who just so clearly lives out of the overflow of God's grace? You can just sense it on someone, smell it on someone, the gentleness of their eyes, the openness, the kindness in which they display. I can think of many people in my life who've demonstrated this. One who just stands out to me is our adopted Grandma Betty.

And Grandma Betty, she was everyone's grandma. She lived right by the U of A campus. She served in a ministry on campus there, and many called her Grandma. She had gentle eyes, a warm hug, a welcome spirit toward everyone. No matter how you look, no matter what, you came from the overflow of God's grace.

This is the gospel that God has so worked in us and rescued us and saved us, that we then can step into that grace as a fountain of a stream of that grace into the world? And this is where we come today in our sermon series on mission. And it's an important thing that we come to the gospel today because it's possible. As we've launched this new year and we've talked about us being on mission, us walking forward in purposeful, conscientious directedness by God in our lives, that we could have heard the last few weeks and heard them as a stack of to dos that just continue to. To just stack up in our lives and the pressure that comes from that.

And if we understand that to be the Christian life, we've missed it all. Because the Christian life isn't about doing more or being more or ramping up all we can to squeeze out of life. It's about walking in step with the grace of, of Jesus Christ. This whole sermon series has been built on our mission here at New Life, which we're proposing is not just our mission collectively, it's also

our mission individually, which is this, to cultivate a community that enjoys God and transforms the world through the gospel. And so we come to that final tagline through the gospel today.

And as we reflect on that, what we're going to reflect on is that the Gospel changes the entirety of our mission. That a life lived without the gospel is a life that implodes in on itself. But a life lived in the grace of Jesus Christ is a life of the overflow of the heart of God. And so here's where we're going to go today. Just quite simply, we're going to talk about this question.

First, what is the gospel? And second, how does the gospel transform the world? So this question of what is the gospel? Perhaps there's no more joyful thing to jump into Scripture on. The gospel has three parts to it, and I want you to look for those as we go to this text.

In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul begins, Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. So already in that first verse, as he introduces the gospel, he says, I preached the gospel to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved. I would suggest to you those three things echo the three parts of the gospel. The gospel you received, the gospel you stand in, and the gospel by which you are being saved. Three parts of the gospel.

The first is that we're forgiven, that our sins are washed away. Fundamentally, the gospel is about our sins being taken away. That Jesus Christ was born into this world to take away our sins. He lived a sinless life. Then he absorbed our sins into himself.

Before he died on the cross, he died for our sins. He absorbed our sins like a giant sponge. He absorbed our sins into himself. And so, even though he lived a sinless life, a perfect and pure life for eternity, in that moment he became sin. Scripture tells us he became sin so that we might become the righteousness of God.

So he absorbed our sin into himself and died to pay the price for our sin, to remove it from us. In fact, he became sin so much you could say, who is the most evil, sinful person that ever walked the face of the earth? And the answer to that question is Jesus.

Not because he ever sinned, but because he absorbed all of our sin and then paid the price for it and died on the cross, that he washes away our sin. He takes away our sin. And if the gospel stopped there, hallelujah, it would have been enough. But then, not only does he take away our sin, he gives us his righteousness, so that he paid the price for our sin, he died for our sin. Then he rose from the dead and gives us his righteousness.

So that if you went to heaven right now and you walked into the throne room and you kind of snuck out God's Book of life, and you opened up that book of life and you went to the page

that says Greg Levine, or look up the page that says John Beason, you'll see Greg Levine lived a sinless life, perfect and pure, and gave his life sacrificially for others. Now, if you talk to my wife or my Children or anyone that knows me. If you spend five minutes with me, you'll learn really quick. I have not lived a sinless life, a perfect life, a pure life. But it's not just some idea out there.

Jesus gives us his righteousness so that when God looks upon me, I am holy and righteous in a white shiny dress. That I am clothed in Jesus Christ. And what he did is imputed to me. It's credited to me, it's put into my life, in my account. So my sin is washed away, and then his righteousness is given me.

And if it ended there, hallelujah, it would have been enough. But the third part of the Gospel, he takes away our sin. He gives us his righteousness. And then day by day, patiently, mercifully, powerfully, he enables me to live worthy of that calling. He changes me so that I am not simply holy, because what Jesus did, but Jesus holiness becomes lived out in my life as he helps me to follow him on a daily basis.

Three parts of the Gospel. We saw it there. That passage that begins this Gospel, which you receive, that forgiveness that's taken away, in which you stand. His righteousness in which we stand, and in which you are being saved, that day by day help to live righteously. Then he continues, For I delivered to you.

Verse 3. For I delivered to you, as of first importance, what I also received. That Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures. Forgiveness. That he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, his righteousness given to us.

And that he appeared to Cephas, that's Peter. Then to the 12. Then he appeared to more than 500 brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James and to all the apostles. He said, Jesus died for our sin.

He rose from the dead for our sin. And then he revealed Himself. First to Peter and then to the 12, but then to over 500. He's establishing that this is a historical fact. In his day.

He's saying most of those 500 are still alive. Go talk to them. Go check it out. This isn't just a rumored thing written down by one or two people. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is a historical fact.

The Gospel. Jesus died, was buried, rose again, displayed Himself for all to see and to know. And he did it to take away our sin, to give us his righteousness, and then to enable us to live worthy of that calling. The Gospel. What is the gospel?

What is. What is the good news?

There's an invitation here from Paul, for us to anchor our life in the life of Jesus Christ and that his life is a life that can transform our life. It can transform the brokenness of our life, the pain of our life, the sin of our life, the loss of our life. It can transform indeed the world itself. What is the gospel? The reality is that that's not the only gospel out there.

It's the only true gospel. But there's many gospels out there. In fact, the Gospel of Jesus is actually first a Roman term. The Gospel, the good news is actually a term that's used by Caesar himself. The Gospel of Caesar, the good news of.

I want to take us back to verse one and read that one more time. Paul says this. Now I would remind you brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand. Remember the gospel I preached to you. Paul says they had heard a gospel preached to them.

It was the Gospel of Caesar. Bend your knee to Caesar. Bend your knee to the Roman Empire and you will receive all the goods of the Roman Empire. The peace of the Roman Empire. The threats around you will be no more.

Because you have the power of Rome on your side. You have the commerce of Rome on your side, the finances, the wealth of Rome on your side. Bow your knee to Caesar and receive the good news. And the Christians, the early Christians heard this, scratched their heads and they said that good news did not end up to be everything that it promised, right? But there is a king who has given us all that he has promised and his name is Jesus.

And so they co opted this little term, the good news. And they said there is a true good news, not a false good news that the world offers. There's a truth that you can bank your life on.

And as it was in their day, so it is in our day. Two thousand years later, good news is all around us. Now why would there be so many things, so many parts of this world promising to. Because we all get this, that there's bad news, that there's brokenness, that there's sin, that there's pain, that there's loss. We see it everywhere.

We see it in our own hearts. We see it in our country, we see it everywhere. It's broken. There's an English author, 19th century English author, G. K. Chesterton, who once said the most verifiable fact of Christianity is our sinful nature. And it's true.

We feel it. And the world comes in and it feels that same pain. And then it tries to provide its false gospels to fix that. And they're all around us, we still have the same false gospel of the promise of politics today, but they're manifold. You flip on your tv, you scroll through, you look at the ads that hit you.

Every ad has a false gospel in it. Parents, fun exercise with your kids today. Just start looking at some ads and ask this question. What's the false gospel being promised here? The gospel of health?

Gospel of wealth? The gospel of prosperity? A gospel of power. A gospel of sexual fulfillment, A gospel of pleasure. What's the gospel?

Because the gospels are manifold. And Paul comes in and he says, don't be duped by the false gospels of the world. God sent his son, and there are eyewitnesses to that fact. And he came and he gave himself for you to give, to give to God a sacrifice, to take away your sin that you might be in relationship with God and with one another again. And this is the gospel you need to bank your life on.

We feel it, don't we? What is the gospel? The gospel is that we are broken and in desperate need of a redeemer. And that redeemer has come in the person of Jesus Christ. The gospel is the only hope that we have.

The gospel isn't just out there or 2000 years ago or what Jesus did for us. So the gospel is, Jesus Christ born, lived a sinless life, died on the cross, was buried three days later, rose again. The gospel is our sin being taken away, his righteousness being given us, and then a daily help to progressively allow us to live worthy of that calling. But the gospel isn't just an idea. Then Paul takes this and we could say, not only what is the gospel?

How does the gospel transform this world? He makes it personal. Listen to the passage continue in First Corinthians 15, talking about Jesus appearing to Peter, and then to the 12 and the 500 and to James. He says, last of all, as to one untimely born. He appeared also to me.

As you read this, every single person can receive this invitation, surrender their life to Christ, and put your own name. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.

Jesus comes into our lives. He says, for I am the least of all the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle because I persecuted the church. But by the grace of God, I am what I am. And his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.

He's saying, I didn't deserve to be an apostle. I wasn't a follower of Jesus Christ during his ministry. I didn't see the miracles happen. I didn't hear the parables firsthand.

He didn't meet Jesus until after Jesus had risen from the dead and ascended on high. Paul's saying, I wasn't worthy of being an apostle. I'm the least of all the apostles. But Jesus appeared

all also to me. And then he says, I worked harder than all those apostles because I wasn't an eyewitness, because I wasn't there.

I worked harder than all of them. Yet it was not me working, but it was God working in me. The gospel becomes personal. It's a personal experience. It's meeting Jesus Christ and having him enter our life and change us from the inside.

And it's a power that moves through us to transform the world. What the world needs is the gospel. We could walk through this series and think, boy, I need to love people more. I need to be more kind. I need to enjoy God more.

I need to live a kingdom life better. I need to do so many things to engage in this world and transform. I need to be more active. And if that's the way we translate this, we will fail. Because this world is not transformed by us working harder.

It's not transformed by us being more creative with ideas to say, how can we love or be more kind or be more patient or somehow change the world? What the world needs is the gospel. The gospel. I have wept this week in prayer for what's happening in Minneapolis and bubbling out in our country.

There is no earthly answer to solve it. There's no, there's. There's no vote or activity or human stand. What the world needs is the gospel. It needs the gospel of Jesus Christ taking away sin, giving his righteousness and then his power changing us and enabling us to live worthy of his calling.

What we need is the gospel. The world needs the gospel. It's the gospel that's gonna transform this world.

So we come to Christ, we ask him to move through us so that it's not simply us trying to make a difference here in Tucson and to the ends of the world, but it's the gospel. And it's a very different thing to try and have us work harder at solving things and surrender things to say, gospel Jesus, would you pour out your gospel through us? Because life was never intended for us to be a reservoir for the grace of God as the gospel. The gospel is a river supposed to flow through us to the world. It's a beautiful thing.

We are part of the gospel. Message. Do you catch what Paul is doing there? He's me in all my brokenness. God transformed me.

I'm part of the witness of the gospel. If you're a follower of Jesus Christ, your name is in the gospel witness. God intends to use you, your story in all its brokenness, in all of the shattered pieces in it. As Dustin said, we just got back from India not long ago. In fact, it would be fun to

share with many of you at 12:30, kind of some more what's going on.

Part of what we do on a trip like that is that we share our testimonies. There's this one testimony that a member shared. And as that concluded, that person said, well, I hope, because there was some gnarly stuff in the testimony, I hope that your opinion of me hasn't changed. And then there's this beautiful moment where another member of the group said, oh, but my opinion of you has changed. I love you so much more.

That's the gospel. That's the reservoir of the grace of God being poured out through a life, through the brokenness of a life. And then you see it, you see the glory of God at work. This is what Paul explains, in fact, over in second Corinthians, he. He uses himself as an example of it over in first Corinthians where he says, this is the gospel, the least of me, the one who is a persecutor of Christians, God changed me.

And then over in second Corinthians, we see him use this same image, the work of God, the transforming light of God coming into his life, transforming him and then shining through him. And he's going to give us this picture at the end of this passage of a.

And it's not a perfect jar like this, it's a broken jar. Because through the brokenness, Paul is going to say, the light of God can come through our lives. Let's read the passage over in 2 Corinthians 4. We read it here. For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants, for Jesus sake.

The gospel isn't about us. It's not about me, about how great I am. It's not about me putting on a show to the world. No, no, it's about Jesus Christ and his work. Verse 6.

For God who said, let light shine out of the darkness has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, God has met me. Paul said, if you're a follower of Jesus Christ, God has met you, he is. He has met you in the darkness in your heart. And now his desire is not for you to stuff that up, but for that to be displayed to the world. And so he gives this picture of a broken vessel which the light shines forth.

Verse 7. For we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed, but perplexed, but not driven to despair. Persecuted but not forsaken, struck down, but not destroyed. Paul says, all of those parts of our life that are so gnarly, the battles that we have against sin, against addiction, the relational struggles, all of these ways in which we are crushed in this life, Paul says, are ways in which the light of God is shining out our lives.

Because if we were to just take a perfectly beautiful pot like this, you put a light in it, put a top over it, no light would get out.

God doesn't need your perfectly prettied up, filtered life. He needs your broken life. He needs my broken life. Because it's through the cracks that he shines the brightest.

We are streams, streams of grace meant to flow through us. One of the. This shows you how nerdy I am. One of my favorite Christmas presents was a rain barrel to collect water off my roof. This was exciting.

This last week got rain here, right? It's filling all the way up. If there was no opening of that rain barrel and if it just filled up with water. And I looked at the rain and I said, well, that's neat. Look at my collection of water.

What is that? It's meant to be used to flow out to water. You are meant to be a picture of grace through the cracks. The waters of God flow. The streams of his mercy flow the light of his life.

The light of his glory shines through us. We, we are those who hold the gospel. And how do we transform the world through the gospel? Through the cracks, through our jars of clay. That's where you look at the person next to you and just say, you are a cracked pot, Greg.

You're a crack pot. I. I know, but it's true.

And so in our anxiety, our depression, our struggle to live worthy of his calling, our sins, our temptations, our broken relationships, all of our struggles, all of the things that the world would tell us to put makeup on and pretend isn't there when we come to church, Paul is saying, no, no, no, no. That's where the gospel shines out of our brokenness. So how do we apply this what does this look like? Three practical applications. We're going to really walk back through the statement cultivate a community that enjoys God and transforms the world in light of through the Gospel.

So that. First, cultivate a community. Cause it's not just cultivating community, it's cultivating a gospel community. Cultivating a Gospel community. That's our calling.

God is looking for a community in which we love each other and are patient with each other and are merciful with each other because he is patient and merciful and loving towards us. You see the flow of that grace over and over in Scripture. Consider these words out of Colossians, chapter three. He says, put on them as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness and patience bearing with one another. And if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other, as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

That truth is spelled out over and over in Scripture. Jesus, when he was asked by the disciples

to teach them how to pray, he included this. Father, forgive us our sins as we forgive those who have sinned against us. We are called to pass on the grace of God because He is so loving and so patient and so merciful. He doesn't offer us condemnation.

He is not some kind of judge looking over us, waiting for us to make some kind of mistake. He is looking over us with love and patience and mercy. He's asking for us to then pass that on within a community. Jesus tells a parable that is a little bit outrageous along these lines. Matthew chapter 18.

He says, There is this guy who was forgiven and an exorbitant amount more than we can possibly comprehend. It's 10,000 talents. Now, a talent biblically is 20 years wages. So if you take 50,000 as a year's wage times 20, that's a million dollars. Times 10,000 talents, that's getting into \$10 billion.

It's just an outrageous amount. There's a guy forgiven so much, none of us can possibly grasp how much he's been forgiven. And then he walks out and someone owed him a pittance compared to this, just a pittance. And he refused to forgive him.

And Jesus taught that that showed that that servant was never forgiven. He never received, never sunk into his heart. Cause it's not possible. It's not possible to know how much we've been forgiven and then not forgive others. You can't drive on the Tucson streets and get frustrated and want to honk your horn at all the stupid drivers that are cutting you off.

All the peons of life who are cutting you off. Have you ever been in that? The only way to ever think that about other drivers is to think of yourself out of pride. I'm the good driver. And all of these drivers, peons, If you know just how broken you are, just how patient God is with you, just how compassionate and merciful he is to you.

Not possible to be judgmental to someone else. We use the phrase spilt milk. A child spills a glass of milk at the dinner table. It's not possible to respond out of the gospel with any measure of frustration. It's not even possible to go, what are you doing?

It's just not. For in the gospel, you'd be like, I have made mistake after mistake after mistake after mistake in my life. I've made so many mistakes, you can't possibly comprehend them. So spill your milk. It is nothing.

It is nothing. Let me help you clean it up. That's a response out of the gospel. That's what Jesus is saying. He's saying we're supposed to forgive as Jesus has forgiven us.

Peter had a hard time grasping this, like, are you telling me like Satan seven times? No, 70 times? Peter, forgive for eternity. Because we will never forgive another human being, even a

tenth of a thousandth of a percent of what God has forgiven us. All of my sin was against a holy, pure and righteous God who has no darkness in him at all.

And the measure by which he has forgiven me doesn't compare to anything a human being is even capable of doing to me. Because any human being and I, we're on the same plane. God.

So if we understand just what he has forgiven us of, then forgiving others and loving others, that's gospel. That's gospel community. So we're not just about cultivating community. We're about cultivating a gospel community that has the mercy and gentleness and humility of Jesus Christ poured through us to others. As we launch community groups here just in the coming weeks, that's our prayer, is that our community here at New Life would smell of the gospel, would smell of grace.

So first, would we cultivate a gospel community? Second, would we enjoy God in the gospel? Would our enjoyment of God flow out of the grace of God, the heart of God?

God welcomes us. God calls us home. And he calls us home not as a stern taskmaster, but as a loving father with welcoming arms.

This week, my sister and I were reflecting on an older relative. And then we brought my mom into the conversation here. And she said, the only thing is, you just need to be clear, it was on your dad's side, not on my side. There you go, Mom. There's the caveat.

They're lovely people, but I like got anxiety going over to their house. They were the kind of. They were the kind of couple that had a living room that no living went on in. Did anyone have these? Right.

Like they had the plastic covers over the couches because couches were a thing to be looked at, not sat on. Anybody have this? Did you have runners through the room so you couldn't even. Runners? Yes.

You gotta stay on the runners, right? Yeah. So I'm pretty sure like rose colored carpet is what I remember. Anyways, so this is kind of home. And I think for many of us, we think of God in the same terms.

This God that. We have to mind our p's and Q's. We have to be careful about stepping in because we don't know where we're gonna go. Out of bounds. And God is a loving God.

Do you want to enjoy God? Know God's heart, God's heart of grace, God's heart of welcome, God's heart of compassion, God's heart of joy. God does not have plastic covers on his couch. He throws pillows at you as you come in the room. He jumps on the couch with his kids.

He is a loving God, a gracious God, a joy filled God who welcomes us. Can I just ask you this question today? Have you met God? Have you experienced God? If you have not yet, would today be the day?

We'd love to pray with you after the service. We'd love to step in with you and invite you into a relationship with a loving God, a joyful God who invites you into his joy in the gospel. Cultivate a gospel community. Enjoy God in the gospel. And finally to transform the world through the gospel.

Transform the world through the gospel. It's a reminder when we try to make a difference in this world, it's not about us trying harder. So as a church, we have school partnerships, we have foster care ministries. This ministry that announced today, this. I forget the name of it.

With you Tucson. With you Tucson. Because that was so challenging. With you Tucson. To come alongside young mothers who have unplanned pregnancies in pregnancy and post.

To come alongside helping. It's a beautiful thing to do. All of this. We have a. That we help out.

We help out with benevolence and all things. But the food pantry, I'm pointing out there. Cause it's right outside. It's not policed. It's just outside the building.

And people come at all hours every single day to grab food from the food pantry. Now, is feeding people a good thing? Yes. Is coming alongside people with kindness and compassion a good thing? Yes.

But at the end of the day, John mentioned the statement to preach the gospel at all times, but use words when necessary.

There's a misnomer there. Is it a good thing to be compassionate, to love, to help, to feed? Yes. But at the end of that process, there has to be words shared. We have to attach the gospel to any effort.

We have to push back the darkness of this world. We have to, with our neighbors, with the people we work out at the gym, with, someone we meet at the grocery store, in our friendships, in our conversations, we have to pass on the gospel. It is the driving force of what will change this world. We somewhat do this naturally with the greatest joys of our life. In the last two weeks, how often has someone come up to you and said, oh, you've gotta try this restaurant.

I mean, have you. Oh, it is so good. It is that you've got to go. Or have you tried this snack? No,

literally, at Trader Joe's they got these fruit juice.

Have you tried these things? They are life changing, these things. Or maybe it's a show on Netflix. Have you, you know, this new. Have you.

Are you watching this show? You've got to watch it. It's the best. We naturally share out of the overflow of joy to transform this world. We have to attach to any effort.

We have the gospel. There has to be a time and a place where we share. And it doesn't have to be that. We're great theologians. We share what God is doing here.

That's what Paul does. Back in this passage, First Corinthians said, Jesus appeared to all these people. He did all these things. But then he appeared to me. He came to me.

I'm very aware of my own doofusness this morning. Someone shared. I'm not sure what this was actually like as far as compliment or put down or where it was. It was kind of all the above in one statement. Deborah and I were together and someone looked at Deborah and said, yeah, she's right, you are such a saint.

And she is. But I was like kind of catching the sidetrack of that. Of what about me. Like, she's a saint. Yes.

And it's true. And I get it. I get my own stuff. But here's the thing.

The king of glory, the ruler of the universe, he looks down at me with all of my doofiness he's got angels in his ears going, are you kidding me? You're gonna love him. And he doesn't just love me, he delights in me.

He delights in me, chose me, wants me, and then showers my life with his goodness.

Every day.

Every day. He does many miracles.

No one sees them, no one notices them. Little mini miracles just to nudge me. Look at that one. Greg, I'm right here with you. I want to remind you I'm right.

He whispers in my ear, little gentle thoughts.

And we have to share. Hey, world, if you knew the mercy and patience and kindness of God. Because he is so patient with me, he is so merciful to me. He is so loving to me. And I've got to

share it.

I've got to share the gospel. Would you pray with me, Lord? Help each one of us see just how much you've forgiven us, just how much you love us.

That beyond the wildest reaches of our imagination, your love is a billion times larger. Help us receive it, help us rest in it. Help us share it.

That the darkness of this world would be pushed back and transformed for your glory, for our good, for the good of everyone around us. In Jesus name we pray. And everyone said amen. Let's go ahead and stand as we sing.