

A. Foundational Elements

1. Sermon Title: Finding the Mission: Built on the Message
2. Text: Gal. 1: 1-10
3. Subject: The Centrality of the Gospel
4. Main point of Text: Paul instructed the churches in Galatia to accept no other gospel.
5. Main point of Sermon: The gospel is the foundation of the Christian mission.
6. Objective of Sermon: Hearers will understand the centrality of the gospel message to the Christian faith.

B. Formal Elements

Introduction

1. Two truths and One Lie Game
2. Background of series: Let us go back and refresh our memories on what has been discussed thus far in our series, “Finding the Mission.” In the previous sermons in this series we have learned: The mission is to make disciples. The power for the mission is provided by the Holy Spirit. The people best fit for the mission are those being changed or living by the commands of Christ. Now, this morning, we look at the foundation of the mission, which is the message.
3. Background to the text: Before reading our text in Galatians 1:1-10, let’s take a look at the context. Apparently, Jewish Christians from Antioch have convinced some of the gentile believers in Galatia that they need to trust Christ but also be circumcised (6:12), or submit themselves to the law in order to be saved. These false teachers explain a “gospel” message where individuals seek to be justified by the law, but to be justified by the law you must keep all of the law (5:3). The false teachers suggested as much. The Galatians were noted to observe special days (4:10), again a sign that they are trying to meet the requirements of the law for justification. Upon hearing this news, Paul sent this letter with a clear and sharp rebuke: this is not the gospel.

TEXT

Gal. 1:1 Paul, an apostle—not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead— 2 and all the brothers who are with me,

To the churches of Galatia:

3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, 4 who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, 5 to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

6 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— 7 not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. 9 As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.

10 For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.

From this text I want to share with you one truth, one reason for that truth, and three application points. Overall this morning, the main point is this: the gospel is the foundation of the Christian mission and the Christian faith.

I. TRUTH: THERE IS NO OTHER GOSPEL (v. 6-9)

Paul begins his letter like all of his other letters by giving an introduction of the sender and the recipient. Next, he does something interesting. Typically, Paul will use the section immediately following his introduction to express thanksgiving for the recipients, their faith, and what God is doing in and through them. Yet, this does not happen here. Here, Paul moves immediately into a rebuke. Saying, “I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel.” Paul breaks his usual letter writing style, or perhaps is using a different letter writing style, for a significant reason.

You see, Paul was astonished, hurt, and broken-hearted by the news that the individuals he had seen delivered from the present evil age were now being taught to desert the very gospel which delivered them. The false teachers taught justification, or salvation, is found in trusting Jesus *plus* circumcision, or becoming Jewish, or following the law. The intruders proclaimed a gospel of Jesus plus other activities make you righteous before God.

The primary activity taught was that of circumcision. Circumcision, within the Roman empire at that time, was a primarily Jewish practice which was a physical sign that showed this person is Jewish. The specifics of circumcision I will leave to the parents to discuss. Nonetheless, the purpose of the practice, itself, is important to discuss. The practice is not a new practice. No, the practice had been important in the Jewish tradition for many years. We see circumcision in Genesis 17, where God himself commanded Abraham to implement circumcision as a marker of showing the person had become a part of God’s people, or become Jewish. In our text in Galatians, as we discussed earlier, these false teachers were proclaiming circumcision as a means to be justified, or declared righteous before God.

The error of the false teachers is their message proclaims you need Jesus and these works of the law to save you. They were saying, “You must submit yourself to the laws we were given.” They were wildly distorting the gospel. You see, God gave his chosen people circumcision to show they were his people, and God gave the Jews the law in order to understand how to relate to God. However, circumcision and the law were never meant to save, or able to save.

Paul will later use the evidence of Abraham to show the errors of the false teachers. Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness. Abraham was justified, or declared righteous before God, because of his faith not his obedience to the law. The law was not the means of justification. No, the law was supposed to be a guardian used to highlight the need of

justification by grace through faith. The law was given to show sin as sin, so that people might run to God for freedom from their own wickedness.

If trusting “Jesus plus...” is not the gospel, what is the gospel? Paul alludes to the gospel in verse four. He said, “The Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father.” The gospel is that the world and all the people therein are evil. We participate and are guilty of wickedness. Therefore, we deserve to be punished along with the present evil age. Yet, God in his great love sends his son, Jesus Christ, to be the deliverer for all who would trust him. Jesus lives a life completely fulfilling the law (that you could not), dies the death that you deserve, and raises to life again to provide you the free gift of being declared righteous, or without sin, before God. Have you turned from your sins, and trusted Jesus alone to save you? That is what is offered to you in the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The picture of the gospel, or euangelion, presents a word picture of the good news for the victory of a new kingdom. This understanding is present for Paul in verse four, as he discussed the victory over the present evil age that is brought to those who are delivered by Jesus. The picture is that a kingdom is in this world in which an evil ruler, Satan, is reigning. The kingdom is forwarded by the evil ways and wicked practices which disobey God. The citizens of this kingdom are in rebellion to God for they do not love him. Each and every one of us, at one point, was in this kingdom, Satan’s kingdom.

Yet, another kingdom proceeded this kingdom and will soon come again. This kingdom is God’s kingdom. The kingdom of all that is good, and pure, and right. This kingdom is far greater and more powerful than the other kingdom. In fact, this kingdom has already won the victory and defeated the most powerful attacks of Satan and his kingdom. This victory was won when Jesus came to die for the forgiveness of sins and break the power of sin and death for all who believe. This act was the first action ushering in the new kingdom to come to rule the world. Indeed, soon, very soon, God’s kingdom is coming, when Jesus returns again. Jesus will be riding on a white horse victorious, and all will bow to him and confess him as Lord. Some will bow and confess willingly, if they have already received Jesus as savior and king. Some will bow and confess unwillingly. The saved, will look upon the Lord; and while doing so, they will experience love, and justice, and victory. They will see every sacrifice, struggle, and sorrow as worth it. The unsaved, will look upon the Lord; and while doing so, they will experience hate, and punishment, and defeat. They will see every position, praise, and power removed.

Euangelion, or the gospel, is the message that proclaims the victory and deliverance one can find in Jesus. The message of good news enables you to be forgiven for your rebellion and freed to enter the kingdom of God, if you will turn from the other kingdom and trust Jesus as savior and king.

But Paul warned the Galatians, and I warn you, with the authority of God’s Word. Do not turn to another message to be saved, not that there is another message to save. Salvation comes through

Jesus and Jesus alone. Salvation does not come through Jesus plus works of the law, or Jesus plus sacraments, or Jesus plus anything. No other news is good news. With great earnestness Paul said, even if this other message comes to you from an angel (v. 8), there is no other good news that upon receiving brings salvation. The truth is there is no other gospel. The reason for this truth is what we turn to next.

II. REASON: THERE IS NO OTHER GOD (v. 10)

EXP: In verse ten, Paul said, “For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.” It seems Paul used these rhetorical questions for two purposes. The first purpose was to show that he is able to be trusted over the false teachers because he is speaking the truth of God. He goes on to explain his history in the following verses as a way of proving he is speaking the truth of God. The second purpose centers on the use of the conjunction, “for”, or *gar* in the greek. The conjunction there is an Explanatory Conjunction—indicating additional information is being given about what was just described. In this case, the conjunction connects the truth with its reason. Truth: there is no other gospel; reason: because there is no other God. Since Paul is ultimately trying to please God rather than men, he is only able to share the true gospel. This is the truth and its reasoning, now let us move into how we respond to God’s Word.

III. THREE APPLICATIONS

1. Receive the Gospel

If you are lost, this gospel, this message of deliverance is for you. Without trusting Jesus, you are along with the present evil age destined for punishment. Perhaps, you have realized the wickedness of your own ways and noticed you need help. You have surely noticed you are not perfect, but instead broken and needing a savior. You might have even tried yourself to be better, but failed. I urge you to trust Christ to deliver you from God’s wrath, and be declared righteous before Him. God is asking you today: “Will you join my kingdom?”

2. Share the One and Only Gospel

If you are saved, then you have already trusted Christ and Christ alone to be justified. Yet, I ask you what is your answer for the evil, or chaos, of the present age. It is no surprise that the world and our nation is filled with brokenness, that comment is made constantly. But, what message do you share when you are confronted with the brokenness of this world? Do you suggest religion, government, education, or therapy as the answer? These things are not bad, but they are surely not the answer which will bring deliverance from the evil age. In Paul’s time, the false teachers suggested following the law, religion was the primary answer for deliverance and those echoes are still heard today. During the time of the Old Testament prophets and in the Medieval Ages, government, or a king, was the primary answer for deliverance and those echoes are still heard today. During the Enlightenment, education, or reason was suggested as the primary answer for deliverance and those echoes are still heard today. Now, the primary answer for deliverance seems to be therapy, or psychological treatment. As I said before, none of these tools are bad

when viewed in their proper place. However, to use these tools as the message of salvation is to bury the gospel altogether. When asked about the needed answer to the evils of the present evil age what will you share?

3. Do Not Distort the Gospel

Some of you are saved and do not bury the gospel, but try to share it. I encourage you, but caution you with this question based on the truth we have learned from Paul. Do you share some of the message or a distortion of the message out of concern that you might offend the person you are talking to? Are you trying to please God when you share the gospel or man? Do you hold back or keep quiet about certain aspects of the gospel message because it will bring confrontation? Then, please hear the rebuke of Paul, sharing half of the truth or sharing the truth plus other activities, is not sharing the gospel. So I ask you, “When you share the gospel, is it pure or distorted?”

Conclusion

In June of 2009 in Shanghai, China, a thirteen story apartment building, called the Lotus Riverside Residential building, collapsed. Because this building was fairly tall at thirteen stories, piling, or vertical structural elements were used in its construction. These pilings go underneath the building into the ground to help distribute the weight of the building deep into the foundation. After the Lotus Riverside Residential building was finished, then the workers were instructed to make an underground garage beneath the building. The construction workers began to dig away at the foundation, slowly altering the foundation a piece at a time. Faulty construction practices were used and the foundation was removed to a point that the pilings snapped and the building collapsed. One worker was killed and thousands of dollars were lost, all because the foundation was altered.

Similarly, the foundation of the Christian mission cannot be altered. The foundation of the Christian mission and the Christian faith is the message of the gospel. If we alter, distort, or try to change the gospel in any way far greater consequences will be at stake. As Paul said to the Galatians, let the one who distorts the gospel be accursed. For, surely, a distorted gospel brings a curse to all its recipients.