



APRIL 3, 2022 | PASTOR TIMOTHY SONG

“The Gospel Announcement”

(1 Corinthians 15:1-8)

¹ Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. ² By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.

³ For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. ⁶ After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, ⁸ and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

INTRODUCTION

Good afternoon church. Let's open our bibles to 1 Corinthians 15:1-8. Please follow along as I read. [Read Text].

And this is the word of God. Today, we are continuing the mini-series on counterfeit gospels. Two weeks ago, Pastor Don shared about the gospel story which gives context within which the Gospel message is given to humanity. It's God's story of redemption and His plan to reconcile us back to Him. Today, we will be looking at the Gospel Announcement, or proclamation, which focuses on the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Now, up on the screen, you remember the six words that remind us that the Gospel is found throughout all of Scripture.

- **GOD** created us to be with him. (Genesis 1-2)
- **OUR** sin separates us from God. (Genesis 3)
- **SINS** cannot be removed by good deeds. (Genesis 4-Malachi 4)
- **PAYING** the price for sin, Jesus died and rose again. (Matthew-Luke)
- **EVERYONE** who trusts in Him alone has eternal life. (John)
- **LIFE** with Jesus starts now and lasts forever. (Acts-Revelation)

Remember, Romans 10:17, **“Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ.”**

THE GOSPEL ANNOUNCEMENT



The Gospel announcement must begin with the gospel story because the good news needs context in order to make sense. Graeme Goldsworthy defines the announcement this way: “The gospel is the word about Jesus Christ and what He did for us in order to restore us to a right relationship with God.” He continues by saying, “The gospel is the event (or the proclamation of that event) of Jesus Christ that begins with His incarnation and earthly life, and concludes with His death, resurrection and ascension to the right hand of the Father.”

So let’s look into life, death and resurrection of Jesus to understand what the true gospel is; and the gospel Paul preached to the Corinthian church.

THE LIFE OF JESUS

Did you ever pause to think about why Jesus performed all the miracles we read about during His life? Or why He spoke in parables? Or why He moved from place to place and taught? Sometimes we move too quickly from the birth of Christ to His death. But His life and what He did here on earth matters! Why? Because He didn’t just bring good news, He is the good news!

When you read through the Gospels, something Jesus preached and taught frequently was the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is the reign of God. Jesus was telling people that God is working to bring restoration and the forgiveness of sins. Jesus went around preaching, “God has big plans. And He’s going to use me to fulfill them!”

Remember the book, or for some, the movie “The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe”? The world of Narnia is suffering under the terrible curse of the White Witch. But once the lion, Aslan, the rightful king of Narnia, returns, everything begins to change. One of the beavers says, “Aslan is on the move!” And with that, the snow begins to melt, flowers begin to bloom. And the king is coming to restore Narnia. That’s what Jesus was doing when He came to this world.

Whatever Christ did, He did it to show us a glimpse of His kingdom. He healed because there will be no more sickness. He fed the hungry because there will be no more hunger. He raised the dead because there will be no more death in the kingdom of God.

Jesus also lived a life that was God’s original intent for us. But as sin entered the world through Adam, we are all sinners who are born with a sinful nature. But not Jesus. He was sinless and because of His perfect obedience, we are declared righteous in God’s sight. He did what we could not do for ourselves.



But how did Jesus do this? In Luke 7, you read about Jesus and a sinful woman who falls to His feet and pours a jar of perfume, weeping. What was Jesus' reply to what the woman did? He said three things to her: "Your sins are forgiven...Your faith has saved you; go in peace". Did you notice the progression? Forgiveness of sins are pronounced, faith is exercised, and peace is restored. The life of Jesus must not be overlooked. His life shows us God's plan to bring restoration to and for us. Forgiveness of sin, faith, and peace comes through Christ. And we see that through His death.

THE DEATH OF JESUS

Jesus' journey was to the cross. Apostle Paul says the gospel is the news that Jesus "died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:3). Christ bore the wrath of God in our place, taking upon Himself the punishment that our sin deserved. Jesus substituted Himself for us.

When we think of the death of Jesus, what comes to your mind? What do you think about? Listen to this amazing quote by Trevin Wax:

Christ-followers look to the cross. There, in the midst of Jesus' own grief and sorrow, we see **God with us** and believe that He is able somehow to take our burdens upon Himself and deliver us from our despair. He is not distant from our pain. He understands our suffering because Jesus Christ – God in human flesh – suffered...It is because of the cross that we know God is not absent from our suffering and pain. Because of the cross, we can experience forgiveness and reconciliation and peace with God. As we witness the evil and pain in this world, we too cry out, "Abba! Abba!" God does not give us an explanation. He gives us Himself. The cross is God's answer to our cry (Counterfeit Gospels, 96-97).

Wow. God is with us. He knows our pain and suffering. Why? Because He suffered and died. And he did it for us!

Jesus Christ died instead of us. He not only knows our pain and suffering caused by sin, He takes our sin and its consequences upon Himself so that we can be free. He experiences the full force of God's wrath toward sin in order that we might be saved. Only the cross satisfies God's demand for justice. Another amazing quote:

Picture the first humans in the garden of Eden in uninterrupted fellowship with God and each other. They are called to do the will of God, but they disobey. "Not your will, Lord, but mine!" decides Adam, lurching forward to take the fruit. Thousands of years later, another garden is before us – Gethsemane. The Second Adam, Jesus, agonizes over the will of God, shrinking back from the cup of God's wrath, the cup He must drink for His sinful people to be spared. "Not my will, Lord, but Yours!" He decides.



On the cross, God demonstrated His perfect justice and His great mercy. He executed justice by pouring out His wrath against sin upon His only Son. He showed mercy by absorbing that wrath Himself, thus allowing us to escape His judgment. Wax writes, “Because Jesus was filled with horror and cried out, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’ we are filled with wonder and cry, ‘My God, my God, why have you accepted me?’” (Wax, 98).

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

There are times you hear the gospel announcement, and a key element is missed out: the resurrection of Jesus. As we near Easter, there is a build up to Good Friday, the death of Christ. But the death and resurrection of Christ go hand-in-hand. The resurrection is important because Christ’s death is important. And Christ’s death is important because of His resurrection. You cannot have one or the other. You need both for it to be the gospel announcement. N.T. Wright wrote,

The resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth is the heart of the gospel (not to the exclusion of the cross, of course, but not least as the event which gives the cross its meaning). It is the object of faith, the ground of justification, the basis for obedient Christian living, the motivation for unity, and not least, the challenge to the principalities and powers.

By Jesus being raised to life, it shows that His sacrifice was good and the payment of our sin was made in full. He defeated sin and death for us. We’re no longer condemned but have new life in Christ.

OUR RESPONSE TO THE TRUE GOSPEL: REPENTANCE AND FAITH

So, what must be our response to the true gospel of Jesus? Two things: repentance and faith. True repentance is not just a feeling of sadness or guilt. First, it’s a sin, a violation, against God. We put ourselves in God’s place. Sometimes its hard to understand the gravity of our sins. But that’s essential in coming before God with humility and sincerity. True repentance causes us to turn away from sin and fight against it. We strive to live and obey according to the Scriptures.

The difference between Christians and unbelievers today is not that Christians are perfect while unbelievers still sin. The difference is that Christians mourn over their sin, find forgiveness in Christ, and then fight sin through the power of the Holy Spirit. We give up our own personal agendas and choose to seek first God’s kingdom and righteousness (Matthew 6:33). Brothers and sisters, do you mourn your sin?



Christian faith is about believing in Someone, not something. And true faith has power because of who we believe in. With this faith, we are saved. And we commit to living our lives here reflecting the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. That's true heart transformation. That's when you know the gospel you believe is not a counterfeit.

COUNTERFEIT GOSPEL #1: THE MORALISTIC GOSPEL

This finally brings us to a couple counterfeit gospels Trevin Wax mentions regarding the true gospel announcement. The first counterfeit gospel is the moralistic gospel. At the heart of the moralistic gospel is people not recognizing their desperate need for a Saviour but rather, sees moral, upright behaviour as the goal.

Falling into moralism becomes a danger when we place our focus on something we shouldn't be. The question we must ask ourselves is, "Am I focusing on Christ and what He did for me?" Here are some ways to spot whether we are being moralistic.

Think of the times you shared the gospel to someone. What were your exact words when sharing? Perhaps you said something like this: "Hey, we're all broken sinners. But if you believe in Jesus, you can be saved." What's missing? There's no mention of the cross. There's no resurrection. There's nothing that clearly tells us what we need to be saved from. In other words, we're telling people that they need to be saved without providing why they need to be saved and how they can be saved. Without that, the people hearing may think that it's up to them to decide to turn around and change their lives. But that's a counterfeit gospel! And it's more about getting right with God without really knowing who Jesus is. This can really lead people astray.

[APPLICATION]

Another way in which we can spot a moralistic gospel is when we talk about how Christianity is about being a good person. Again, the emphasis should always be on Christ and what He's done for us. But instead, it becomes more about rules and regulations that we must follow in order to be "good Christians". Trevin Wax says, "When morality becomes the essence of Christianity, we change the good news into good advice." The shift is that we focus on the goodness of Christians rather than the goodness of Christ and what He did for us. Our "moral gospel" could be about taking care of the family, or becoming a better husband or wife, or treating people nicely with compassion. These are all good things and things we must do. But that's not the true gospel. And when we begin to focus on doing "good works", we lose the beauty, wonder, and power of the gospel. It's more about us and what we do. It's like the gospel has come down to a self-help program: 10 steps to improving yourself. Brothers and sister, are we falling trap to this counterfeit gospel?

If you're a Christian, we've all struggled in our walk with Christ. When we first became a Christian, we are overwhelmed by the grace of God proclaimed in the gospel. But as time passes by, we sometimes forget that it is by grace we've been saved and revert to a law-centered life. Especially when you feel like you haven't been growing spiritually, there's that temptation that you need to do something; causing more doubt and emphasizing a works-based faith. Some of us may feel like when we're in a spiritual slump, we need to serve more and that'll get us back on track. But perhaps it's more about going back to the true gospel which reminds us of the truth that Christ loves us and gave Himself for us.

The law is meant for good. It's a gift from God that allow us to know God and reveals our need for salvation. But here's the relationship between grace and the law. Listen to what Trevin Wax has to say:

Too many times we think, Of course, we are saved by grace, but... That "but" is deadly. It indicates that we think something other than grace will bring life transformation. It doesn't matter what good activity you put after that "but" (now you need to tithe, now you need to give up this or that, now you need to evangelize) ... Life transformation doesn't follow "but"; it follows "so now." You are saved by grace, so now you are free to live for God in this way and that. Life change is grounded in the gospel alone (Wax, 113).

We must focus the gospel announcement on the life of Christ, His death and resurrection. Any other focus and it'll morphed into something that it's not, causing a counterfeit gospel. To sum up everything we just went through about the moralistic gospel, here's where we can be led astray:

The gospel story is that our sinful condition is seen as the individual sins we commit. Redemption comes through the exercise of willpower with God's help. The gospel announcement is that the good news is spiritual instruction about what we can do to win God's favour and blessing upon our earthly endeavours. Therefore, the gospel community, the church, is a place where people who believe like us can affirm each other in keeping the standards of the community. Do you see how the shift of focus is on us rather than on Christ?

This counterfeit gospel is attractive to many people because it is safe. How? The Bible teaches us that that we are born with sin and our hearts are wicked. But what the moralistic gospel attempts to do is to say that we are "good people" who are battling sin. But we don't tackle every sin. We only tackle the ones we can handle because we are in control. It's safe because if we are trying, that's good enough. But that's not true. God commands perfection and holiness. Not just an improvement in behaviour. "Too many Christians profess Christ with their lips but deny Him by the way that they live." So what's the solution? Teach them how to behave. It's about behavioural change rather than focusing on the gospel." But must always remember, good works are the fruit, never the root, of the gospel transforming us.



So, how do we counter this counterfeit gospel? Four things:

1. **Recognize that true transformation comes from the biblical gospel.** The gospel gives us grace. And this is grace: that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 6:6-8). Illustration: The two sons in the story of the Prodigal Son (Two ways to run from God).
2. **Repent from a heart broken by sin and overwhelmed by grace.** We need a transformation of the heart. Charles Spurgeon wrote, “Repenting of the evil act and not the evil heart is like men pumping water out of a leaking ship but forgetting to stop the leak!” We must come face to face with the gravity of our sin. Only then will we turn to Christ for help. Jesus is our rescue. Repentance is “being broken over our sin and being gripped by the marvelous grace of a God who has chosen to save us.”
3. **Give up your rights and rest in God’s finished work.** Romans 6:12-14 commands us, “Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to Him as an instrument of righteousness. For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.”
4. **Bask in the glory of God’s grace.** The moralistic gospel may fill our churches with well-behaved people. But grace leads to a changed heart.

COUNTERFEIT GOSPEL #2: THE QUIETIST GOSPEL

Ok, that was the first counterfeit gospel. The second one is the Quietist gospel. What this false gospel focuses on is “the church for the church” mentality rather than “the church for the world”. The quietist gospel takes the history and the good news of Christ, which was made public, and turns it into something only personal. The cross and resurrection addresses the individual, not the world. The Church loses the heart for mission and is more about caring for the people who gather in the walls of their church.

We’ve been studying the Lausanne Covenant in our weekly book study. I wish that more of you were able to join us. But at the heart of this wonderful document is that evangelism must be the priority of the church. The whole Church bringing the whole Gospel to the whole World. But, that’s not the only thing the church must do. We have a social responsibility to care for the needs of others. In both evangelism and social responsibility, it causes the church to go outside of the confines of like-minded Christians and obey the command of the Great Commission to “Go!” and the Greatest Commandment to “Love God and love your neighbour as yourself.”

This is how we spot this counterfeit gospel. The gospel story is that the grand narrative of Scripture is personal and applicable primarily to those areas of life that we define as spiritual. The gospel announcement is that Christ’s death and resurrection is a private and personal message that changes individual hearts. It is not concerned with society and politics. And the gospel



community, the church, focuses on self-preservation, maintaining its distinctiveness by resisting the urge to engage with culture.

Now you may be thinking, “Tim, I don’t do that.” But if we were to pause and really consider whether our actions resonate with this, we may be challenged that we’re tempted to lean towards this type of gospel.

So how can we counter this counterfeit gospel?

1. **Demonstrate the gospel in your active concern for the poor and needy.** Illustration: a plague ravished the Roman world in 260 AD. When victims showed symptoms, unbelievers would push the sick away, even abandoning their own sick family members. Survival was the priority. But most of the Christians stayed, attended the sick. Some died. But they showed unbounded love towards their neighbour.
2. **Maintain a prophetic witness.** Bonhoeffer wrote, “Flight into the invisible is a denial of the call. A community of Jesus which seeks to hide itself has ceased to follow Him.” We must, as a community of believers, both condemn sin in the world and proclaim the life-saving gospel to the world. Illustration: Think of all the sinful things happening around the world. Christians must stand against evil and be ready to bring the good news of Jesus to those haven’t heard.
3. **Be missional instead of tribal.** It is good to gather like this to worship our God, for discipleship and growth, for fellowship. But we must be sent out! It’s comfortable to be amongst ourselves; to be tribal. But God intends for us to live according to the gospel announcement. We are not country club. We are to be salt and light! Matthew 5:14-16 calls us to be light: “You are the light of the world. A town [or city] built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify Your Father in heaven.”
4. **Hold fast to the truthfulness of the gospel announcement.** Who Christ is and what He has done is true. And it happened. Christ died and he rose from the dead over 2000 years ago. When you’re sharing the good news of Jesus, do you share believing that Christ did all this, not just for you, but for everyone who believes? The true gospel is life-saving and life-changing.

CONCLUSION