

Why Is the Gospel Glorious?

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One of the things about having a church our size is that you can take a moment to speak pastorally after seeing such a wonderful baptism from Jessica's testimony and there are just a couple of things that are on my mind and heart to say in response to that before we get into today's message and it actually will function as a good introduction to what I have to say today as well. If you were listening closely and I'm hopeful that the sound was sufficient for you to be able to hear everything that Jessica was saying, is that she spent her life, she grew up and moved on in life and moved into college as a false convert based on her own testimony; that she said that she was a Christian, she thought that she was a Christian, but she was actually dead in sin. She was not a Christian at all and it was shown by the way that she lived.

And knowing that we have many young people here who are growing up in Christian homes, let that be a caution, a word to you to examine yourself to not assume that you're a Christian simply because you're at this church or that you grew up in a Christian family. The question for you is: have you been born again or not? And to not simply take these things for granted and to not think that it's okay to be a hypocrite, to live a life that says one thing but actually the corresponding reality is much, much different. Jessica's testimony was an opportunity for you to say, "Wow, I need to look at my life." And if you are realizing that, you know, I'm not a real Christian, let Jessica's testimony also be an encouragement to you. It's not too late. Christ will save you if you come to him.

And it's also a word of encouragement to parents as you see your children grow and you're not real sure where they're at spiritually and even if you see them start to drift, you continue on being faithful in those prayers that you have been offering to God for the salvation of their souls. God isn't done with them yet. God's final word hasn't been issued. God hasn't exhausted his grace. His Spirit hasn't run out of power in order to bring people to a saving knowledge of Christ. Christ still saves when his cross is lifted up. Christ still saves through the presentation of the Gospel. And so for all of us, we have seen in a little bit of an illustration given to us here at the beginning of the service, we've seen the hope and the power of the Gospel on display so that none would walk away in despair. At the same time, we see a word of warning that would caution us not to take salvation for granted or to take it lightly and to examine your life not just your lips as you test your claim to see whether you're a Christian or not. Scripture says, "Examine yourselves to see if you're in the faith"; test yourselves, 2 Corinthians 13:5. So as we gather together, we

are not here just to go through some motions and to be good Christian people in the upper realm of the Bible Belt and to conform ourselves to cultural expectations. We don't care about any of that. What we care about is that the spiritual reality would be true in your heart and that you would truly know the Lord Jesus Christ; that you would have truly repented of sin, not simply made a verbal profession that had no impact on your life.

So with those things in mind, we're going to come now to Scripture and what I wanted to do this morning, I wanted to take a one-week break from our study in the book of Ephesians and there's a lot of calendar reasons for this. Taking this little break now is going to help me set up the sequence of our pulpit exposition for the next two or three months and the fifth Sunday here in November was kind of affecting the sequence of the way that things would fall. We have coming up just ahead in Ephesians God's teaching on the family, on marriage and on parenting and I want to spend some time on that and to go through that. We've got a lot of young families, some who are first-generation Christians. We want to spend some time helping you with that and that's probably going to start right after the first of the year, but the way that things were laying out in the sequence of the text, it was going to come right during the Christmas holidays and I didn't want anybody to miss that that needed to hear it so we're taking a little break now to give us an opportunity to set things up down the road.

The beautiful thing, as I've said many times, and I've thought even more times than I've said it, is that no matter what passage of Scripture you go to, God has something to instruct us because all Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching and for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness. So any Scripture that we would go to would be profitable. Today we're going to go to the book of 1 Thessalonians 1 and I would invite you to turn to that book which is just a little bit to the right of Ephesians in your text and we want to answer a question here today, especially in light of having seen a baptism take place, believer's baptism which is what we practice at Truth Community Church. We've seen the glory of the Gospel on display in an individual life and the question becomes, we want to step back and ask a broader question: why is the Gospel glorious? Why is it that we delight in preaching the Gospel even though we have said it many times? Even though we preach the Gospel week after week, why is it that we never get tired of it? Why is it always new to the redeemed heart? Why is there such a richness to it? Why is it that the Gospel is so wonderful and we never tire of telling the old, old story of Jesus and his love? We're going to look at a passage today that will put this on great display for us.

Let's read 1 Thessalonians 1 together here. Follow along as I read it.

1 Paul and Silvanus and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace. 2 We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers; 3 constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father, 4 knowing, brethren beloved by God, His choice of you; 5 for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and

in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. 6 You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit, 7 so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. 8 For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything. 9 For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, 10 and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.

The Gospel, when we preach the Gospel we are declaring certain historical facts with a theological interpretation to them. We are declaring that Jesus Christ is God incarnate and that he came into the world and lived a perfectly sinless life before his Father. We declare that Christ gave his life as a sacrifice on the cross of Calvary for guilty sinners just like you and he did that to satisfy God's wrath against them and we declare that his resurrection, his rising from the dead, shows that he is Lord of all because he alone has conquered death in that way. We declare that this Christ has ascended into heaven and will one day return for his own and will bring judgment on this rebellious world. And based on those biblical realities, those historical facts, we offer forgiveness of sin to everyone who would turn from sin, who would repent and believe in Christ for forgiveness of their sins, that Christ will save them and deliver them from that coming wrath if they will only come and humbly bow the knee and receive him as their Lord in their life. The Gospel, that Gospel, is glorious. It is the reason that we exist as a church and it is the one true hope for sinners. Anyone who rejects this, anyone who ignores it is eternally lost and faces eternal damnation. Jesus said himself, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father but through me." No one comes to Christ. "No other name has been given to us under heaven by which we must be saved." So there is one Gospel, there is one true religion, there is one true hope and it is preached out of the Bible here this morning. Every other religion that offers a hope is offering a false hope that can only lead to destruction. There is salvation in no one else except in our Lord Jesus Christ.

So this Gospel is glorious in its exclusivity. It is glorious in its promises. It is glorious in its eternal scope. And so we ask the question: why is this Gospel so glorious? We're going to give you seven distinct reasons that the Gospel is glorious from our passage this morning and as a Christian, this should cause you to draw near, fresh to Christ again in thanks and praise and with a new and a renewed sense, I should say, of confidence that where you have placed your faith is not in vain. And if you're not a Christian, beloved, if you're not a Christian here this morning, this message is another invitation from a gracious God to you saying, "Come to Christ and be saved. Come out of this rebellious world. Come out of the darkness. Come out of the realm of salvation." A free and full forgiveness is offered to you in Christ and Christ will receive you if you will only repent and receive him. Why would you turn away? This message is another invitation from

God to those of you who do not know Christ. It is another pleading with your soul to bend the knee to Christ and be saved. And so there's something for everyone in what we have to say here this morning.

Why is the Gospel glorious? Here is point number 1: the Gospel is glorious because the Gospel changes lives. The Gospel changes lives and we're going to take these points in the order in which they present themselves in the text, rather than trying to conform them to a more systematic outline that perhaps you would see in a systematic theology. We're just going to follow the text and walk through the text here and let it speak to us. The Gospel changes lives. What we saw in baptism today was how the Gospel changed the life of a young woman who was pursuing a sinful life and changed her heart completely so that rather than continuing in a stubborn life she now speaks from the condition of a broken heart that is grateful that Christ saved her. That is a miraculous change. That's what the Gospel does.

As we read this passage in 1 Thessalonians, Paul is giving thanks for the Thessalonians. He is thanking God for this group of believers in the city of Thessalonica, which is on the northern end of the country of Greece, modern Greece, and he's thanking God for what the Gospel had done in their lives. These people that he was writing to, they used to be pagans. They used to serve false idols and yet now here they were, a vibrant congregation of true Christians. Now they are thriving and Paul, as he writes to them to instruct them in the Christian faith, is full of gratitude to God as he writes to them and we see this right from the start in verse 2.

Look at verse 2 with me again and we're just going to touch on these seven points for 50 minutes. It doesn't give us much time to go into much detail but we're going to see an overview of why the Gospel is glorious. The Gospel changes lives. Look at verse 2, "We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers; constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father." So as Paul opens this and as we hear what God's word has for us here this morning, understand that there is a glad and grateful spirit that permeates everything that's being said. Paul here is not rebuking these people. He's not reproving them as sometimes is necessary in other letters that he writes or as he writes later in this book of 1 Thessalonians. Here he's starting out on a note of joy, of peace, of love and gratitude for the people that are receiving this letter.

Look at what he says. He says, "We give thanks to you and we give thanks always. Our spirit of gratitude to God for you is unbroken. Your changed lives, the testimony of your church, is an ongoing, enduring part of gratitude in my response to God and I thank God for you as I pray for you." He says, "When I pray for you, I'm praying with a spirit of gratitude for what God has done in your life. I am grateful to see that there is fruit of the Gospel evident in your life." You know, I can tell you that as I pray for you and as I pray for this congregation as a pastor as we as elders pray for you, there is the same similar sense of gratitude for what God has done in your lives and the fact that the Gospel is reflected in your perseverance through trials, reflected in your commitment to Scripture,

your commitment to be a part of the fellowship, to walk in truth, to be people of true doctrine and of true love for one another. What can you do as a pastor, as an elder of a church like that except to be grateful? And as I stand before you here today, I am thankful to God for the people gathered together in this room, the people of Truth Community Church because you reflect as well what Paul is describing here in 1 Thessalonians 1. And why is this glorious? Not because of you. Not because of me. It's because the Gospel is glorious. It's because of the work that the Lord Jesus Christ does in individual believers and changes them and conforms them increasingly to his image and makes them more and more like himself.

What is Paul looking at when he says this? Look at verse 3. Why is he giving thanks and how is that their lives have changed? It shows up in the way that they live, in their work of faith. Their faith produced a life of works that were consistent with the claim to know a holy God, that were consistent with having been reconciled to God through faith in Jesus Christ. There wasn't a bifurcation. There wasn't a duplicity. There wasn't a hypocrisy where this church said one thing with their mouth but their lives were marked by something else. Paul says, "Your life shows a work of faith that is manifested in the way that you live." It's a work of faith. Look at verse 3, "a labor of love, a steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ."

Beloved, that's the visible fruit of the Gospel. The works that conform with a faith that is professed. A love that is unlike the love of the world. That is not self-centered but is self giving. A sense of hope that rather than being mired in an exclusively earthbound worldview, a hope that looks forward to the future, that looks forward to heaven, that says, "My hope is not in this life but in a life yet to come. That I am resting, I am confident, I am looking forward to an eternal life that is yet to be given to me and I simply enjoy the firstfruits of it now." All of that is the mark of a transformed life; it's the visible fruit of the Gospel. And those of you that seek to live in a way of pursuing a sanctified life, those of you that are hoping in Christ and looking forward to the day when you see him face to face, those of you who give yourselves in relationships with other Christians in love and self-sacrifice and seeking the good of those around you, you're manifesting the visible fruit of the Gospel, and as you're doing that, you're manifesting why the Gospel is so glorious, it's because the Gospel changes lives. You weren't like that before you came to Christ, were you? You didn't care about the word of God. You wanted nothing to do with the people of God. You lived according to your own selfish desires. That's true of every one of you; to one visible degree or another, that marked our lives. We were dead in sin and yet the Gospel, Christ himself, came into your life, burst into your life by the power of the Holy Spirit and the result of your conversion was you now live differently than you used to do. That is a display of the power of the Gospel. That is a display of the glory of the Gospel. It is why we so joyfully proclaim the Gospel week after week, it's because we know that the Gospel changes lives. We know that Christ changes lives when he saves them. So that's why the Gospel is glorious, it has a power that is found nowhere else.

Well secondly, what else can we say about the Gospel? Why is the Gospel so glorious? Secondly, the Gospel is glorious because the Gospel displays God's love. The Gospel

displays God's love. John 3:16 is the most famous verse in the Bible and rightly so in part because it displays the kindness of God. It displays the fact that God sought the good of sinners who were in rebellion to him. That God graciously, kindly, set about to do good for those who were rejecting him because he is simply a loving God and it is in his nature to do that. If you're a Christian here today, you are on the receiving end of the love and undeserved mercy of God and the Gospel displays that love. It puts it on notice. It puts it on display in a way that is undeniable. A God who had been offended by your sin, nevertheless sent Christ into this world to be the Savior of the world. John 3:16, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son." For reasons that can only be found in his own immutable perfect character, God is favorably disposed to sinners, even though they are not favorably disposed to him. The Gospel, when we offer Christ to you, we are saying God is favorably disposed to you and God will receive you if you come to Christ in faith because, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whoever believes in him would not perish but have everlasting life."

The Gospel displays the love of God. Look at it here in 1 Thessalonians 1:4, Paul says, "We pray for you, we give thanks to you, knowing," verse 4, here it is, "brethren beloved by God." My brothers in Christ you are on the receiving end of the love of God. You are beloved. God loves you. God has shown his favor and his kindness to you and gathered you into his family through the proclamation of the Gospel. Through the saving work of Jesus Christ, God has saved you, brought you into his family. Paul says, "Beloved, I know that based on the visible fruit of your life, that you are now securely in the kingdom of God and that you are the recipients of God's love, his undeserved goodness, his kindness. God is after your best welfare in the way that he's dealing with you and it is shown in the fact that he has saved your eternal soul."

The Gospel displays God's love and I dare say, especially knowing the backgrounds that some of you come from, legalistic, works oriented, righteousness, rituals and all of that, that you need to hear this because that system of works that superficially appeals to the pride of man and says you can work your way to God, it distorts the view of yourself that you think that, "Okay, I can do it on my own. I can follow this and be saved." That's not true. But it also distorts ultimately the picture of God as someone who is grudging and unwilling to receive sinners until they measure up to a certain standard and God is portrayed as someone who is grudging in his kindness and is unwilling and is eagerly angered. Well, the Gospel sets all of that straight. The Gospel displays that God on his own initiative showed love to the world by sending Christ. That you being in Christ shows that God loves you by name. That God has sought your good by name.

So we should think high and lofty thoughts about the love of God. We should not think that he is stingy in his kindness. He is abundant. He is giving. He is gracious. He overflows in his goodness toward us and that is indicated by the fact here in verse 4, "Brethren, you're beloved by God." A great God loves greatly and to be on the receiving end of that great love is glorious and where is that love made known? Only in one place. Not in the testimony of creation, that doesn't reveal the love of God; it reveals the power of God but it doesn't reveal the saving love of God. False religions who hide Christ and appeal to the pride of man, they don't display the love of God. They display a love of self.

They display a love of pride, a love of humanity. They don't display the love of God. Only the Gospel that says God in mercy has sent Christ to be the Savior of the world puts the love of God on display because it puts it in contrast to the sin and rebellion of men, upon rebellious men who reject the Gospel just like you and I used to. God showed grace and love and kindness to such a one as you and the love of Christ offered to someone who only deserves eternal judgment and Christ says, "Come to me and I will give you rest. Come to me and I will cleanse you of all of your sins," that is the love of God on great display. And, beloved, if we exalt God for nothing else on this morning, we ought to exalt him for his love. We praise him for his holiness, we praise him for his sovereignty, we praise him for his multiplied attributes but let's just focus at this moment on his great love and that we are on the receiving end of kindness that goes beyond anything that we could have asked or thought. Think great thoughts about the love of God. The Gospel displays that ever so clearly, that unworthy sinners can be adopted into his family through faith in Christ.

Thirdly, what else can we say about the Gospel? Why is the Gospel glorious? Well, first of all, we said it changes lives; it displays God's love; thirdly, the true Gospel does this: the true Gospel highlights God's sovereignty. It highlights God's sovereignty. That's point 3 in your notes. Paul continues on in his thanksgiving. What he does is he's thanking God for the life of these Thessalonians, the lives of these believers, and he says, "I see the fruit of true conversion in your lives." He keeps going on and he says, "That's a mark of God's love on your life," but he pushes it further and gets to what the source of that was. This is so critical. He traces the source of their salvation to God's electing choice in the lives of the Thessalonians. It's not because there were many wise or many noble, it's not because they were smarter than other people there in Macedonia. That's not it. That's not why you're saved either. It's not because you were smarter or better than someone else. Let's get that off the table. If we are in Christ, if you are in Christ today, it is because God chose you before the foundation of the world. It pleased God to have favor on you and that is where the ultimate source of salvation comes from and therefore it's where the ultimate praise for salvation goes.

Look at verse 4 with me again. Paul says, "Knowing, brethren beloved by God," what does you know? "Knowing, brethren beloved by God, his choice of you." Notice the flow of thought here. In verse 2, he says, "we give thanks to God." Why do we give thanks to God? Because as you follow it through, because he chose you. He's not thanking God because they chose God, he's thanking God because God is the source. He directs his thanks to God because God is the one who has done the work that makes Paul thankful and it is traced to, look at verse 4, "His choice of you." Choice refers to the divine choice of someone. It is God choosing them that Paul is thankful for, not the reverse and as we've said many times and we'll say without apology many times again, God willing, salvation originates in God's will, not in yours. Your faith is a response to God's electing choice of you. God did not choose you because you had faith in him. It is so critical for us to get that sequence right. It was God's sovereign purpose. We love because he first loved us. He first loved us. The originating motivation, the originating choice came from God himself and not from the heart of man. It could be no other way. Salvation is the gift of the Lord. Salvation is of the Lord. It belongs to him. It is his to give.

Look over at 2 Thessalonians where Paul also makes this point. 2 Thessalonians 2 which kind of gives an outline of the whole of salvation, really. 2 Thessalonians 2:13, he says, "We should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because," here's the reason for our thanks, "because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation." We should thank God because of what he did. What did he do? He chose you for salvation. He chose you from the beginning, that you were ever in the present intentions of God for salvation, and so God chose you, he saved you in time, Paul goes on and says, "through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. It was for this He called you through our Gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." See the pattern. See the timeline, as it were. God, before the beginning of time, chose you for salvation before you had done any good or bad, before you had exercised faith or not. Out of something originating in his own mind, he chose you for salvation and through something completely undeserved and unearned on your part, you are now in his family. God chose you for salvation and that's why we thank him. That's why he gets the praise. So he chose you, he saved you at the moment of your conversion, continuing on, there is this life of sanctification that develops that ends up in glory with our Lord Jesus Christ. That's the Gospel. That's the glory of the Gospel. It highlights the sovereignty of God and the certainty of his purposes for those whom he redeems. He chose us, he saved us, he keeps us, he will glorify us, all by his sovereign power.

Now, let me just say a word to address the objection that comes, "Oh, that's not fair. What about the others? What about those that God didn't choose?" And the accusation is quickly and wrongfully and sinfully brought against God that he is somehow unfair in the way that he handles his own gift of salvation. Let's deal with that head-on and think rightly about it. No man has a right to salvation. Every man, woman and child who has ever lived has forfeited any claim on God because they are sinners by nature and they are sinners by choice. They are guilty. You were guilty. There was no claim that you had on God whatsoever as if he owed you something after you had turned your back on him and rejected the Gospel for the nth time. On what basis does any man, woman or child assert that they have a right, a claim on God for his salvation? We're all destitute. We're spiritually bankrupt. We're beggars. We have nothing that we can set forth by which we would make any kind of claim on God. No man has a right to salvation because we all individually and collectively as a human race, we've sinned our way out of any expectation.

So the Gospel is glorious because it highlights God's sovereign love. Watch this, God is under obligation to no one and yet in his grace he chooses to save many from their sins. The whole lot of them could have been condemned, God instead sends his Son to be the Savior of the world and saves many to share glory with him throughout eternity. That's sovereign love. That's glorious. Let this also be said, that when the Gospel is presented, we present it to all men everywhere without condition. We say, "Christ died for sinners just like you and if you will only believe in Christ, if you will only come to Christ, he will receive you too because he said, 'The one who comes to me, I'll never cast away.'" So there is an unconditional offer of the Gospel that is made to everyone who would hear and Christ offers and presents himself to everyone to be saved and so when a man turns

away from that Gospel, there is no blame to be assigned to God for that because it is his own unbelief and his own rebellion that motivates him to turn away. How is that God's fault? No, no, the Gospel displays God's sovereign love. It highlights it. It displays how wonderfully good and gracious he is to his people and shows forth the glory of God in the glory of the face of Christ and if you are a Christian here today, you join with the Spirit of the Apostle Paul, "O God, I thank you for your sovereign love in my life. I was undeserving. I was unwilling and yet your Spirit worked in my heart and freed me from the bonds of sin so that I came to Christ. Thank you for working in my life. Thank you for causing me to be born again so that I could come to Christ and be saved." And we abound in gratitude and thanks.

You know, think about it, I know that at heart your testimony is just like mine that you were in sin and you were unwilling to come. You were settled in your opposition to Christ and yet God worked on your heart and changed and as the Gospel was brought, the Spirit of God did a work in your heart that changed your perspective and you came to Christ and found him more than willing to save you and he saved you completely, washed away all of your sins and set you on a course that leads to heaven. Isn't that glorious? Isn't that like the most wonderful thing that could ever be? That a sinful creature like you could have an eternal hope that you did not deserve and it came to you because God first sought you, God first loved you, not because you were seeking God yourself? It's awesome. It's glorious, really. That's why the Gospel is glorious. The sovereign love of God on display that changes lives.

There's another reason, a fourth reason why the Gospel is glorious. Why is the Gospel glorious? Let me give you a fourth reason: the Gospel magnifies God's word. The Gospel magnifies God's word and we could ask the question this way: if God has chosen who will be saved and that that is an outcome that he determined before the beginning of time, why is it that we even go through the motions of preaching the Gospel? Why not just let God do what he does? Well, this passage helps us understand and answer that question. If God has chosen who will be saved, why do we preach the Gospel? Look at verse 5, going back to 1 Thessalonians 1:5, Paul says, "For our Gospel," that word as you know means good news, the best news, "for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake." Yes, God saves sinners. Yes, God chose who would be saved. Understand that God also determined the means by which sinners would be saved and the means that God appointed is that human messengers would preach the glorious Gospel to other humans who needed to hear it and that God would work through that, at one level, human interaction in order to accomplish his great eternal purposes in the salvation of those who would believe.

Paul says there inverse 5, look at it with me again. On a human level, how was it that they came to be saved? It's because Paul came and preached the Gospel to them and he says, "As we preached the Gospel to you, it wasn't simply in word only." It wasn't simply a human event. It wasn't simply human interaction according to natural human ability. That's not the preaching of the Gospel biblically speaking, because when the Gospel is proclaimed, the Holy Spirit himself attends the preaching of the word and the hearing of

the word so that the purposes of God are accomplished when it is proclaimed. Paul says, "When I preached, I know that the power of God was at work. It was at work in me. It was at work in you." There was power. There was full conviction and Paul says and he appeals to their knowledge of that recent historical event, he says, "You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake."

So we preach the Gospel not because we can save sinners ourselves. I was speaking recently with someone and we were talking about how the tendency in some independent circles are for pastors to talk about, "I got 45 souls saved last Sunday." That's despicable to talk that way No man saved in any man's soul and to appropriate the claim for yourself as if it was something in your native power as a preacher, that's despicable to talk that way. No, no, the glory for salvation goes to God alone. It goes to the Holy Spirit who works in the hearts of men and opens their eyes to the glory of Christ. God gets the glory for salvation, let no man claim the credit to himself. Paul says, "Our Gospel didn't come to you in word only but in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction." He's placing God right at the center for the credit of what happened.

Why do we preach the Gospel? Well, let me ask you this: why do farmers plant crops if God has determined what the outcome of the crops are going to be? God provides the harvest to the farmer but you won't find any farmer that says, "Therefore I don't need to sow seed. I don't need to fertilize. I don't need to reap because God is going to provide it all." Just in a human realm you see how ridiculous and silly that is. Yes, we give credit to God. We thank God for the harvest that he gives, especially on a Thanksgiving weekend like this but we understand that there is a human element involved in doing that which God has appointed us to do, that he provides the harvest through means. Well, in like manner, we preach the Gospel not because there is any power in our ability, but because that's what God has appointed for the salvation of sinners. It is the means by which he saves sinners is that when the Gospel is preached through a human tongue to a human ear, God takes that process and accomplishes his purposes. Scripture makes this very clear. God determined who will be saved but his people still must preach his word.

Look at Romans 10. You see, the Gospel, the word of God is practical in this sense The electing sovereign love of God doesn't render preaching irrelevant, it's what makes certain that there will be results to the preaching. It's what allows a preacher to get up week after week and preach the message again and again and again. Sometimes there is fruit, sometimes there's not. Romans 10:14, you say you believe in the electing love of God. Good for you, but understand how it is that he brings about salvation in individual lives. Verse 14 of Romans 10, "How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? How will they preach unless they are sent?" You can just see Paul working it back step-by-step just as it is written, verse 15, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news of good things." Verse 17, "faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ."

So God has appointed that salvation will be accomplished in time by the proclamation of his word as his Spirit takes the word that is shared, the word that is preached, and works

in the hearts of those who hear. Otherwise if no one tells them, they are not going to be saved. If the farmer doesn't plant seed, there's not going to be any crop. So we see the divine element of sovereignty at work and we also see the realm of human responsibility that he has assigned to us to carry out. The Gospel magnifies God's word because God's word is central in the conversion of sinners, and when the Gospel works in a sinner's heart, when a sinner comes to Christ, its glory is displayed.

Fifthly, going back to 1 Thessalonians again. I say that as much for my benefit as for yours because when I turn, sometimes I forget to turn back and so turning back to 1 Thessalonians 1, why is the Gospel glorious? Here's a fifth reason for you: the Gospel shows forth God's power. It shows forth God's power. It displays it to men, in other words, not simply in the heart of the sinner who is converted, but it is made known to men as well. Look at one Thessalonians 1, beginning in verse 6. He says to these Thessalonian believers, he said, "You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia." Those are two Roman provinces that basically made up modern Greece, to just give you a geographic sense of where he's talking about. Macedonia to the north, Achaia to the south. Look at what he says in verse 8, "For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything."

The Thessalonians' testimony in that region in the first century was widespread. It was sounding forth. The general population knew that a work of God had taken place in their city and was resident, was evident in that local assembly there. The testimony was widespread and Paul sees their spiritual witness to men as another reason to give thanks for them. God's work amongst them was an incontestable fact. It was undeniable in their time and so the testimony of their conversion, the testimony of their corporate witness, hung in the air like a trumpet blast that resounded and echoed even after the horn had been blown. There was this reverberating effect that was evident to all around and it was a display of the power of God in their lives. Their testimony was obvious and, you know, as you see that, as you remember that these were Gentiles responding to a Savior who by human lineage was Jewish, you realize that the Gospel transcends racial boundaries, it transcends geographic boundaries, racial boundaries in the sense that it was for more than just the Jews, and it displays God's power in salvation that pagans like them could be saved and live a transformed life. And it's no different 2,000 years later. The pagans, like you, now belong to Christ and your testimony of conversion echoes and resounds to all those who know you and it's a display of the power of God. There is not one of you rightly thinking who would say, "I take credit for that." Not in light of a passage like this. You know, the more that you study Scripture and the more that you come to understand how the Gospel is a display of the grace and the prerogative of God, it makes you withdraw all the more in ever more certainty. And I'm not taking any credit here. I don't want any credit. Why would I rob God of his glory for saving a sinner like me? Why would I put myself in the middle of that? No, the Gospel is a display of the power of God, not of the power of men.

That leads us to our sixth point. Why is the Gospel glorious? It's because the Gospel humbles man. The Gospel humbles man. It exalts the power of God and yet it humbles the pride of men at the same time. And you all know what it's like to talk to an arrogant, boastful person either in talking about the Gospel or just interacting in life, it is like banging your head against an iron fence that is immovable. You can't do anything to penetrate that arrogance no matter what you do, no matter what you say. The Gospel doesn't face that same restraint. The Gospel humbles man and it humbles him in this way: the Gospel comes to a sinner and says, "You cannot save yourself. You are guilty before God. His wrath is upon you. There is no good or merit in you whatsoever and you cannot save yourself. There is nothing that you can do to save yourself. Jesus Christ alone must save you or you will be eternally lost." Do you know what that is? That's humbling. That takes human merit, human pride completely off the table. And for those of us that have been saved now, we look back and say, "Yeah, that's true. There wasn't anything meritorious in me. It was an act of God's grace, not of my deserving or achievement," and the true Gospel has a humbling effect on man.

Look at first 9 as we consider these things. Paul says, "For they themselves," that is the surrounding populace as they testified about the work of God at the Church of Thessalonica, "they themselves report about us what kind of reception we had with you and how," watch this, "how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God and to wait for His Son from heaven whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come." What does this say about the Thessalonians' former way of life? It was empty. It was pagan. There was no good about it. They served dead idols, lifeless gods, is what they had devoted their lives to, and they turned like Ruth as we studied on Tuesday nights, they turn from their people. They turn from their religion. They turn from all of their sins and they turn in simple faith to Christ in order to receive salvation.

Well, what Paul is saying by implication is that there was nothing deserving in your prior way of life. There was nothing of value there. There was nothing of eternal consequence in the former way that you lived, in your former way of life, in your former way of thought and the Gospel says that to every sinner. There is no eternal consequence of any good in your life apart from Christ. When you reject Christ, you are sealing the eternal lack of value in your existence and it only leads to destruction. There is no lasting good to come from your way of thought, your way of life, your separation from God. It's humbling. It reduces a man to spiritual bankruptcy and that's where every man needs to come if he is to be saved, to come to Christ as a beggar. "Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to thy cross I cling. Have mercy on me, the sinner," said the tax collector in Luke 18. "God, have mercy on me, the sinner. I have nothing else to offer. Save me by mercy, not according to merit." That's all very humbling and these Thessalonians repented from their empty lives. They turned from all that they had loved before in order to be vessels of God's glory.

The Gospel is great because it humbles proud men at the foot of the cross. It puts man in his place. That is glorious. Thank God that there is one place in the world where all of the boasting, vain glory of man can be reduced to rubble and we don't have to live under the

insufferable boasting of men about how great they are because the Gospel wipes all of that away and says there is no such thing as spiritual greatness in any man apart from Christ. And I am so grateful to God for the Gospel that there is a place where all of that is exposed for the empty boasting that it is and that there is one place in the universe, in the Gospel, where the currency of man's pride buys nothing. Praise God for that, that there is a place where man is humbled. That place is in the Gospel of Christ and for that reason the Gospel is glorious. It sets man in his place like nothing else does.

Well, there's one final point, point number 7: why is the Gospel glorious? Point number 7, after we said first of all the Gospel changes lives; it displays God's love; it highlights his sovereignty; it magnifies his word; it shows forth his power; it humbles man; seventh and final point here this morning: the Gospel points to final redemption. The Gospel points to final redemption. It points to a time where everything will be set right. As it displays the sovereignty of God, it guarantees us that the outcome will be correct in the end no matter what kind of setbacks seem to occur along the way because God will punish this world for its evil, he will punish the world for rejecting his will.

Look at verse 10 again where it speaks about how the Thessalonians came "to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come." Are you weary of what you see in the news? are you weary of betrayal in human relationships? Are you weary of the utter weight of darkness and sin in the world around you? Well, beloved, the Gospel should be glorious to you then because the Gospel says this is not the permanent eternal state of affairs. God will come and judge. Come will judge sinners. God will turn around at the wickedness of this world and put it in its place. He will judge it forever in hell and sinners will not have the final word in the universe. God will. The same, holy, gracious, loving God who saved you from sin, he has appointed that he will have the final word and for the world it will be a time of wrath. Wrath where God's settled opposition to evil will be fully displayed. Wrath where sinners will no longer have sway.

But the Gospel's glory is not only because of that, the Gospel is glorious because you and I who know Christ, we don't have to fear that wrath. The Gospel is glorious because it assures us of deliverance from that awful judgment. Look at verse 10 with me again, "Jesus rescues us from the wrath to come." You and I can look on a wicked, distorted, twisted world with hope. You and I can look on the coming judgment of God without fear when we know Christ because we are safe in the arms of Christ who delivers his people from God's wrath. That's a whole lot better than having Jesus fix your earthly life, isn't it? To know that there is an eternal purpose that is being worked out. God in grace has included you in the purpose and when he judges the world, he will remember you by name and not allow you to enter into it. That's glorious. That's worth waiting for.

Look at 2 Thessalonians 1:9-10 as we close. 2 Thessalonians 1:9-10, Paul speaking about those who do not know God, to those who do not obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus, he says, "These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power." Make no doubt, there is eternal destruction that is embedded in the reality of the Gospel for those who reject Christ. Verse 10, "when He

comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed - for our testimony to you was believed." A day of redemption is coming for you who know Christ; a day of glory; a day when Christ is on display; a day when he will receive you fully into his kingdom and there will be no fear, there will be no sin, there will be a perfection of the ultimate purposes of God's redemption in your life.

Yes, the Gospel is glorious. That is the climax of the glory of the Gospel when we see Christ face to face, when we are with him and all of God's purposes for history are accomplished, all of sin and sinners who rejected Christ are banished and what is left, you will be there to share in the glory. Why is the Gospel glorious? There you go. The Gospel is glorious because the grace of God has been shed abroad in your heart and he has eternal purposes for you which cannot be altered. You can trust in that. You can rest in that You can give praise to God for that.

Let's pray together.

Sinner, we would ask you one last time, come to Christ and be saved because he is calling you. Why would you plunge into further darkness at the risk of your eternal soul when Christ says, "Come to me and I will give you rest"? Some of you, I want to call you out by name but just know that the Spirit of God knows you by name and calls you by name to come to Christ. Christian, whatever else is happening in the world and in your life, can't you remember the glory of the Gospel? Can't you thank God for his mercy and the hope of heaven that is yours? Can't you respond to the glory of the Gospel with a renewed sense of hope and confidence about the purposes of God for your life?

Father, thank you for the glory of the Gospel. Thank you for the glory of Christ. Lord Jesus, thank you that no one took your life from you, you laid it down on your own initiative. Why? Because you loved your people, because you wanted to save us, because you wanted to be with us, because you knew us by name, because you're a good shepherd. O Lord, we honor you. We thank you. We give you praise for the glory of the Gospel and we pray that you would turn this church and us individually into those who have beautiful feet and carry this Gospel to those around us as well. Lord, we look forward to the day that we'll see you face to face. What a day of rejoicing that will be. How great you are, our God. Thank you for having mercy on us in our Lord Jesus Christ. We pray in his wonderful and matchless name. Amen.

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