

SERMON: "SHAPED BY THE GOSPEL: *The Good News is Not Advice.*"

Rev. Geoff Ross, Sunday, October 24, 2021, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church

[LW:Talked about Gospel. Literally means:OE: 'God'/'Good'– 'Spel'/'news'/'story' = Good News! Not an accident!/Was God's plan/Promise – for us/welfare/future/revealed in/through the birth/life/death/resurrection of Jesus, who became one-of-us/die-as-us/save us:has been fulfilled! This was the Good News the founders of this congregation 174 years ago proclaimed/embodied – same commission/mission they handed to us to live out in all we say/do, wherever you/I/we are/out of our gratitude/thanksgiving to/for God for what God has given/done for us!]

I repeat this, because as simple/strange as it might sound – it's essential/crucial/important for us to be clear about what it is we're talking about. We do this because the "Gospel" is not a simple thing. But one of the simplest/precise definitions of what the Gospel is comes from Timothy Keller who defines the "Gospel" as the "announcement of God's saving work in Jesus Christ." And that's what it is: it's the message/news/story/telling/teaching of God's saving plan carried out on our behalf in/through Jesus Christ. Yes, it is the message that Jesus/Himself proclaims/proclaimed that God loves us despite our sinfulness/will transform/redeem/save us – It's great news!/worth sharing/life changing/But – as I said last week: Many think it's the "Gospel" that saves us – but it isn't: the Gospel "announces"/ proclaims the unconditional/unilateral/unmerited gift of our salvation.

["Unilateral":Adjective:(an action/decision) performed by only one person/one-sided/one-direction – a defining example/attribute/quality of the one acting toward another. Grace:a gift given/not earned/or deserved – like salvation:The Gospel pronounces/reveals that God/Trinity is the subject/source/initiator of the plan/promise/saving action that we can only receive.]

But the gospel also isn't a simple message – in its scope/message it means/costs not less than everything! While not everything in the Bible is the "Gospel" – the Bible/all 66 Books/both Old/New Testaments/31,102 verses/784,000 words all announce the Gospel/proclaim the Good News. In fact, the Gospel helps us 'see'/'hear'/'understand the Bible as a whole/helps to frame the Bible into 'chapters:' focusing on God/Creation, our Fall/Sin, introduces Christ through the incarnation/death/resurrection, and on our response/salvation through faith/God's grace. Strictly speaking, Chapter 3 contains the whole of the Gospel – the fulfillment of God's plan/promise; the unilateral movement/action of Jesus' coming down to be-with/die for/save us – that provides the lens/light to reveal the Gospel throughout the rest of the Bible.

[As Colleen said:The Gospel/Good News – THE message about how we have been rescued/saved from eternal condemnation by a loving/act of God. As such/the Gospel/not something we join/get – it's something we've received/offered/given to us/or even advice on how we are to live:It is all about God/God's saving love/grace experienced through Jesus' saving work on our behalf.]

Did you hear that? More importantly; do know/understand/believe it? The Gospel is the Good News report of THE life-altering event – done/finished/given/offered to us/you/me – that has already happened! God's grace is yours/mine/ours – regardless of who you/what you've done/where you are – and is something we must respond to. But do we? As I said yesterday online: God's saving grace is something that should stop us in our tracks/wreck us – it wrecks me/it's something that I know I don't deserve/that it's the source of who I am/what I believe/how I try to live/love:I can't imagine life without it. What wrecks you? Is it knowing that everything you have

comes from a God who loves/loved you SO much that He sent His Son for YOU? How do you respond to this amazing grace/wonderful love/rich mercy?

Our reading this morning – subtitled “*From death to life*” – sums up the truth of the Gospel (that “*God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us/even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ – that by grace you/me/we have been saved...*”) and it reminds us that this transforming act is “*not the result of works, so that no one may boast;*” but was all part of the God’s plans/promises for us / “*prepared beforehand to be our way of life.*” The reading from Deuteronomy gives us God’s instruction on how we’re to live out our response to this grace: in the moment/ever-present remembrance/thanksgiving/gratitude – praise/worship. The Gospel/Good News we proclaim is the call to this remembrance/worship/being present in that still-point/moment of transcendent/ecstatic joy/rapture.

And, friends, this is what it means to be shaped by the Gospel! Yes, the Gospel/Good News proclaims the rescuing/saving action/work of God – it announces what God has done AND pronounces God’s continuing plan/purpose to make us ‘new’ – but it also calls us to be still in that ‘new-ness’/to remember/re-live what it felt like/meant/to be re-made/shaped by the Gospel/give yourself wholly as Christ gave Himself to us – all in/for His glory/not ours. Friends, may you/we/St. Andrew’s be shaped by the in all we say/do. Amen.