

Draft Teaching Overview: "Have We Got News for You!"

...blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him.

Jeremiah 17.7

Introduction:

This series is foundational.

All of us would speak about our commitment to the gospel, the good news. It is an announcement of what God has done not a 'to do' list to for us to complete...

In our recent 'Acting it Out' series, we quoted Tom Wright, who explained the good news and its announcement in connection with the Kingdom of God:

In the world of the first century when someone was enthroned as king, that new authority would take effect through heralds going off through the territory in question with the news, 'We have a King! the disciples' calling is to announce and inaugurate Jesus' sovereign rule. This will come into effect through their witness to him, their summoning people to repentance and faith and assuring them of their salvation in the renewed world that will be completed on Jesus' return'

The good news of the gospel is about Jesus Christ, who restores the image of God broken by sin and commissions a new humanity, released from the power of sin and death, to live as witnesses to the wonder of God's redemptive work and to what it is to be truly human. The good news of the gospel is about not only the restoration of a broken image but also the restoration of a broken relationship. It deals with the barrier of sin and death and creates the church as a new people in Christ. It communicates that God is with us. It speaks to the present and opens the future. And it does much more... It is wonder-full.

It affects how we treat each other, how we view our embodied present and our embodied future, it re-orientes us around Christ and makes our life about the glory of God not self, it turns people from idols to true worship.

It is big. All-encompassing. Transformative. It is hope for the world. And for individuals.

CS Lewis wrote of his response to the good news, *"I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else."* So, this series looks not just in the achievement of the good news but its transformative effect in the lives of those who receive it,

This series speaks about the intention for humanity, the fall of humanity and a new humanity.

It speaks not just of what we have been saved from, but what we are saved for...

It centres on the unique work of Christ at the cross and through the resurrection.



Approach:

The aim here is not to turn from our heritage or diminish the sacrificial death of Jesus for our sin, but to expand the horizon and see different dimensions of the atonement. It does that by re-visiting God's intention for creation and for humanity and by exploring the transformative power of the resurrection and the gift of the Holy Spirit.



The good news is expressed through the cumulative message of these ten weeks- speakers should acknowledge and encourage listeners to see the good news in this complete picture.

We have sought especially to emphasise the themes of being made in the image of God with a mission to represent God in creation, and the notion of God being with us.

It seeks to do all this with reference to contemporary UK society. Speakers are encouraged to consider who each week's material reflects and responds to the struggles, issues and idolatries of our day.

It does all of this with a view to discipleship, to the life we are called into through the gospel which is an expression of the gospel. It looks for a response.

It is suggested that speakers seek to frame their conclusion around the following questions of application:

- How might we share this aspect of the good news?
- Why is this particular aspect of the good news so good?
- How might this aspect of the good news shape a conversation?

Week by Week:

Sunday September 6th, Made in the Image of God for God

Genesis 1-2, especially 1.26-28

Summary of week: We begin with creation and the foundational mission of human beings created in God's image to steward creation and bring glory to God in doing so. This original commission does not disappear with the problem of sin but is distorted by it. It is restored in Christ, who is 'The image of the invisible God', the true human being.

Key Thought: Made in the image of God

We begin our look at the good news by remembering the creation intent of God to make human beings in his image. This speaks both to our value, to our identity and to our security. It also suggests something of the mission of humanity as a society of people made in the image of God. How does

this lead us to view our fellow human beings. At this stage God is with human beings in creation where a peace and blessing are enjoyed.

A New Testament perspective looks forward to the centrality of Christ in our good news as the true human being made in the image of God, with a mission to restore the image of God and relationship with human beings.

Contemporary Context:

In a culture searching for identity and meaning, the Gospel offers a secure identity: we are made by God, for God, and with God.

Sunday September 13th, Broken Image, Broken Relationship

Genesis 3.1-13

Summary of Week: If the good news begins with the reminder that we are made in the image of God for God, its application becomes sharp by seeing the image shattered by sin and the harmony of creation, based on an intimate relationship between God and humanity broken. This has consequences for us as individuals, now and in the future, and for the world. The good news is about God's desire to restore what is destroyed by sin.

Key Thought: Sin distorts the image of God in humanity and destroys our relationship with God.

Sin is a complex matter. It is not merely about disobedience, though it certainly includes this. It involves a re-orientation self as the centre and the end of our life. Sin rejects God's presence and purpose in our lives, and issues in performative crisis expressed in guilt and shame, hiding and covering up in stead of intimacy and communion- both in our relationship with God and with other human beings. Its impact is felt in creation.

A difficult question is the role of the serpent in all this...through whom comes deception and denial of consequence/responsibility.

God's story has a comedic narrative arc, beginning with crisis, encountering a problem in sin and resolving in fresh hope; the human story without God begins with the problem of self-expression, moves to an attempt to resolve that but ends in tragedy, death and separation from God.

The good news is that God is at work to restore and this even begins in Genesis 3 with the provision of the covering of clothing and with the promise of the defeat of the serpent.

Contemporary Context: Anxiety, isolation, fractured relationships, and mistrust in society reflect humanity's alienation from God. The good news does not shirk from naming the foundational problem of sin or from asserting God's involvement in resolving this through Christ.

NOTE: This may be the first week we are visited by new students...

Sunday September 20th, Accommodating God

Exodus 25.8-9; Exodus 33.12-17; 1 King 27-30; Isaiah 43.1-13

Summary of Week:

Where does the idea of the image of God and God's presence with his people go in the Old Testament after the events of Genesis 3? In Genesis 12 God calls a people to be his own, through whom the world will be blessed- the notion of stewarding and representing is carried in this commission. The texts this week speak about God finding a way to be at home with his people through the mediation of sacrifice in the Tabernacle and the Temple. God's presence is at the heart of his people. They are called to be people centred on the presence of God, light to the nations and witnesses to the wider world. So, the creation mandate is carried through...

Key Thought: God's presence remains with his people in the tabernacle and the Temple, but these structures are accommodations not the free presence and relationship of Eden

There are a lot of texts this week and the speaker should choose where they want to focus. The key themes are about God's continuing desire to be with his people, but in these texts that is usually distant and impersonal. The apparatus of sacrifice in the Temple and Tabernacle express both God's desire to be with and the limitations that sin presents on this. God's desire is to make a way.

The presence of God with his people, or at least at the centre of their living allow for the continuation of the commission to represent, glorify and signpost God in creation.

Contemporary Context: The world is suspicious of institutions and inauthentic spirituality. The Old Testament speaks of a community that remains flawed but presents a model of community and compassion derived for the presence of God among and shaping his people. Do we live centred on the presence of God? What would that look like?

Sunday September 27th: The Perfect Image of God, God with us.**John 1.1-14, Colossians 1.15-20, Hebrews 1.3a**

Summary of the Week: The good news is delivered through the coming of God in human form, Jesus Christ the Messiah. These texts present Jesus as come and living with his people, in amongst his people. The good news is that God did not remain distant but came to reveal who he was in Jesus Christ. The good news simultaneously reveals who God is and what it is to be truly human as Jesus is the perfect image of God.

Key Point: Jesus is the revelation of God and the true human being.

The good news of the gospel is Jesus, expressed through the entirety of his life, death and resurrection. His earthly life is an expression of the love of God and the missional method of God- he lives in creation truly reflecting the image of God; he shows God and models humanity living the life human beings were intended to live and the life to which they are called in Christ.

In the Old Testament this idea of image bearing and witness is expressed in the idea of Israel being a 'light to the nations'. Jesus says that he is the light of the world- and this notion is expressed in the prologue to John's gospel. This before he commissions the church, his Body to be the light of the world.

God is glorified in this life.

Contemporary Context: In Christ God draws near, he offers not an escapist spirituality but an earthed and engaged spirituality that takes both the wonder of creation and its troubles seriously by restoring the image of God in human form and re-commissions humanity to live God-glorifying lives in creation.

Sunday October 4th, Dead to sin raised in Christ

Ephesians 2.1-10

Summary of the Week: The first of two weeks looking at the work of the cross (and the resurrection) and the outworking of salvation in Christ. The good news is about a new humanity in Christ, where there is forgiveness for sin and a new creation raised in Christ. The impact of this good news is restored relationship with God, the restoration of the image of God through incorporation into Christ and the potential for a new humanity restored and reconciled to each other in Christ. This is described as a new temple, a new dwelling for the presence of God with his people.

Week one focuses on restored relationship with God and has an individual focus. Week two sees the effect of this restored relationship in the society of the reconciled people of the church and has a social level.

Key Point: We are made alive and raised in Christ- the broken image is restored

The focus this week will be the making good and reconciling of the cross and resurrection as expressed to the church in Ephesians. The point is the making of a new humanity where the power of sin, which has led the old humanity to a living dead existence, which finds its life in Christ. The end of this good news is the new creation and new commission of humanity, all achieved by God in Christ and to his design. Ephesians 2.8-10 both speak of the wonder of what God and only God has done for us and the commission to new creation living into which we are re-born.

Contemporary Context: We have spoken previously about a culture looking for identity- this week speaks of an identity in Christ- a radical dependence which humbles and a new purpose which fulfils.

Sunday October 11th, Reconciled to each other and at Home with God

Ephesians 2.11-21, (2 Corinthians 5. 16-21 esp. verses 19-20)

Summary of the Week: That which is described of each individual in verses 1-10 finds an expression in community in these verses. The impact of the cross and the resurrection is the creation of a people not only reconciled to God but also reconciled to each other and called to a ministry of reconciliation. This is all set in the context of the relationship of Jew and Gentile in the Ephesian Church- this situational setting is a challenge to us as we consider what new people Belmont is called to be together and what challenges we face in living that out.

Key Point: In being reconciled to God we are also reconciled to each other- the image of God that we are called to offer is of God with is together

The heart of this week is found in these words, *'His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the*

cross, by which he put to death their hostility.' The gospel not only restores us to relation with God but creates in Christ a new humanity, whose call is that of the humanity created in Genesis 1- to live stewarding creation and bringing glory to God as those made in the image of God. The good news is not only for us but through us.

These verses also bring us back to the Old Testament teaching we had about the presence of God in the Temple. Here God is with his people through the Spirit in the church...all of this is done as we identify with Christ, as we are found in Him.

Contemporary Context: As trust in institutional answers are increasingly dismissed or discounted, the church must embody genuine community across generations and backgrounds and social divides- a living sign that reconciliation is possible in Christ. That which is true 'vertically' is lived out and demonstrated 'horizontally'.

Sunday October 18th, Come Home

Luke 15.11-32

Summary of the Week: This week is less about the whole parable and more an opportunity to focus on how we identify with Christ, connect with his salvation, find his forgiveness and take our place at home with God. This parable does not really present a picture of the atonement- we have done that in the last two weeks, and the speaker should draw upon that for context. However, this parable does present in affecting narrative form the compassion of God and possibly the Bible's best illustration of the good news as homecoming, coming home to be with God.

Key Point: Repentance and humility lead us back to God- BUT that is dependent on his extravagant grace and forgiveness.

The focus for this week will be creating an opportunity to respond to the good news as we have discussed it thus far. The mechanism of that described in terms of remorse, repentance, confession, grace and new creation life is conveyed in the exchange between the returning son and the father in verses 17-24.

Focus may also switch to the fact that the way to life with Father is to responds to his hospitality- to be dependent on him. The contrast with the elder son is a contrast with those of us who tend to think about what we deserve and have earned rather than know the joy of grace. That is the good news.

Contemporary Significance: In a world where resentment and comparison are rife, the grace of God comes in a new spirit reminding us of what it is to be human. We find our acceptance and significance in the love of God that is poured out on us through the cross and resurrection in Christ.

Sunday October 25th (HT), Life in the Spirit- God with us

Romans 8.1-17

Summary of the week: This week straddles three subjects: a recapitulation of the work of the cross and the resurrection (another chance to talk atonement), life in the Spirit and the obligation we now have as those controlled by the Spirit. The focus this week is on the Spirit. That which Christ has

achieved is worked out and applied through the Spirit. All of Paul's writing in the letters and certainly the driving force behind the narrative of Acts is the work of the Spirit. The church, the new creation people of God are fundamentally people of the Spirit.

Key Point: The Spirit that raise Jesus from the dead is also the Spirit that raises us to new life as we embrace the good news. He transforms us more and more into the image of Christ (2 Corinthians 3.18) and he is the way that we experience God with us today

The good news is an announcement of Gods work on our behalf in Christ that restores humanity and recommissions us as those re-made in the image of Christ. The good news is all the work of God, but there is an expectation that for this good news to be deemed authentic it should issue in a different way of life that is no longer driven by selfish desire, by sin, but is shaped by the Holy Spirit and becomes an expression of his love. Ther Spirit then is part of the good news and the life in the Spirit is the sign of the good news- it is good news now and an anticipation of the life that is to come (this is explored more in the second part of Romans 8)

This passage concludes with us being described as adopted children in Christ through the work of the Spirit. This adoption is another way of expressing the good news, another way of saying what it is to be made in the image of God (family resemblance) and another way of speaking about how God is with us as our Father. None of this is cheap grace. Romans 8.17 makes it clear that we share in glory as we share in suffering; we come alive by dying.

Contemporary Significance: Many people today speak of a search for spiritual experience. The good news is a spiritual matter, but its centre is not us but God. We do not make God in our image, but we are confirmed to his in Christ and this is all the work of the Spirit- ours is a spirituality that leads to becoming truly human and glorifying God.

Sunday November 1st: MISSION SUNDAY

Sunday November 8th: Salted

Matthew 5.13-16; 1 Peter 2.9-12

Summary of the Week: Before we move to conclude our series next week by looking at our hope for the future, we look at these verses from the New Testament that connect us as church back with the Old Testament idea of being witnesses and light to the nations. That which Jesus said in John about being the light of the world is offered to the church as a commission. That idea was present as well in John 1.

Key point: Our call in Christ is to mission and that mission is everyone's responsibility and joy- we are called to share Christ, to share what it is to be made in the image of God, what it is to be human and how all are called into that through the saving work of Christ, through which we find our home in God.

The images in Matthew speak of what it is to offer good news by being salt and light- critically this is not about something we do but about sharing who we have become in Christ. We are light because we have been lit by Christ; we are slat because we have been seasoned by him and our deeds-

important as they are- are not to point to us but to God and to his glory. This was the original commission of humanity.

The verses in 1 Peter tie very directly the new creation that is at the heart of the good news with the call to live out an expression of life that glorifies God. Verses 11-12 give some indication of what it means to declare the praise of God among people who do not acknowledge him

Contemporary Significance: We have engaged with LICC's frontline teaching and its emphasis on whole life discipleship. Christian faith is about not just believing but following, not just conversation but discipleship. It offers the world an in person earthed and faith-filled hope. Each of us carry that wherever we go and that is our expression of the good news. This is the most authentic and unpretentious expression of the good news- daily life offered up to God for his glory in Christ; life with God at the centre; life that reflects his image and his intentions.

Sunday November 15th, Home for Good

Revelation 21.1-5, 22.1-5

Summary of the Week: The good news is expressed in the present as people's lives have been transformed in Christ through the Spirit, but it also looks forward and anticipates an end to the story in the completion of new creation in a new heaven and a new earth where there will be personal and complete communion with God. He will be with us. Revelation carries this hope in the midst of a text directed at a church suffering under persecution. It speaks not simply of wishful thinking. But robust and resilient faith that is sure of what it hopes for and sometimes certain of what it does not see.

Key Point: The Bible ends where it began: humanity restored in Christ made in his image; God dwelling with his people. The Good news is not about escaping from the world but about the transformation of the world in and through Christ.

This week will seek to reflect back on the trajectory that we have travelled, all of which has sought to express the good news that we are made in God's image, restored in Christ's image and that God wants to be with us. Much of the hope that is offered at the end of the Bible speaks of the fulfilment of all that has been expressed along the way.

The hope of the future is forged in the past through the new creation of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. His death and resurrection are the basis for our hope; these words imagine its fulfilment. Our present mission as church flows from our future hope, when we will be home for good.

Contemporary Significance: Our culture lives with anxiety and uncertainty about the future. The church is called to live with confident hope. God is making all things new and our labour in him is not in vain (1 Corinthians 15.58).