

Sermon 3 January 2021

Year for evangelism.

27 February training event for the whole parish

Some are gifted as evangelist others not. Yet we all are called to share the Gospel

Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, ¹⁵ but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, ¹⁶ having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.¹

But there are barriers.

Practicing Christians are not convinced of the need to evangelize

Nearly half of Millennial practicing Christians say it is wrong to evangelize (47%).

In fact, they are more likely than non-Christians (20%) and lapsed Christians (17%) to *strongly* agree that “it is wrong to share one’s personal beliefs with someone of a different faith in hopes that they will one day share the same faith” (28%).

At the same time, two out of three Millennials believe being a witness about Jesus is part of their faith (65%)

and strongly agree that “the best thing that could ever happen to someone is for them to come to know Jesus” (68%)—a strong majority, but a smaller proportion than among older adults (82%).

Seven in 10 say they are not “on a quest for spiritual truth” (71%).

Three-quarters of lapsed Christians (76%) and two-thirds of “nones” (67%) say so. However, about half of non-Christians who belong to another religion think of themselves as on a spiritual quest (46%).

The top qualities they would look for in a person with whom to talk about faith are “listens without judgment” (62%) and “does not force a conclusion” (50%).

However, only a minority would say the Christians they know personally possess these qualities (34% listens without judgment; 26% does not force a conclusion).

Some non-Christians say they might be more interested in Christianity if they had more evidence (44%) and the faith had a better reputation (34%).

¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (1 Pe 3:14–16). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

Practicing Christians, however, tend to underestimate the importance of evidence (14%) and reputation (23%) to non-Christians' interest.

¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.²

Perhaps the largest barrier is not being certain as to what the Gospel is

1 reason for uncertainty – Gospel that is “shared” today is often not the same Gospel that the church proclaimed at the start.

J I Packer, in his introduction to John Owen's book, *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*, writes, “one of the most urgent tasks facing evangelical Christendom today - the recovery of the gospel.”

Packer goes on to explain that we have moved from a God-centred Gospel to a man-centred Gospel.

This is just to say that the old gospel was *religious* in a way that the new gospel is not. Whereas the chief aim of the old was to teach people to worship God, the concern of the new seems limited to making them feel better. The subject of the old gospel was God and his ways with men; the subject of the new is man and the help God gives him. There is a world of difference. The whole perspective and emphasis of gospel preaching has changed.

What was the Gospel?

What did people hear? What do people hear?

¹⁶ Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols. ¹⁷ So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there. ¹⁸ Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also conversed with him. And some said, “What does this babbler wish to say?” Others said, “He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities” —because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection.³

² [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Mt 28:19–20). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

³ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Ac 17:16–18). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

ὅτι τὸν Ἰησοῦν καὶ τὴν ἀνάστασιν εὐηγγελίζετο⁴

Jesus – Resurrection

Paul's introduction to Romans

Familiar with:

¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.⁵

But what is the Gospel of which Paul is not ashamed?

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle,

set apart for the **gospel of God,**

² which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures,

³ the gospel **concerning his Son,**

who was descended from David according to the flesh

⁴ and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead,

Jesus Christ our Lord,⁶

Perhaps the clearest account is to be found in 1 Corinthians 15

15 Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, ² and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.

³ For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.

⁴ Nestle, E., Nestle, E., Aland, B., Aland, K., Karavidopoulos, J., Martini, C. M., & Metzger, B. M. (1993). [*The Greek New Testament*](#) (27th ed., Ac 17:18). Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft.

⁵ [*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*](#). (1989). (Ro 1:16). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

⁶ [*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*](#). (1989). (Ro 1:1–6). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

⁶Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. ⁸Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. ⁹For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. ¹⁰But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. ¹¹Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed. ⁷

What about the other NT writers:

Mark:

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.⁸

Matthew:

1 The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.⁹

John:

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. ⁴In him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. ¹⁰

¹⁴And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.¹¹

³⁰Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹but these are written so that you may believe that

⁷ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (1 Co 15:1–11). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

⁸ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Mk 1:1). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

⁹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Mt 1:1). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

¹⁰ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Jn 1:1–5). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

¹¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Jn 1:14). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.¹²

Writer of the letter to the Habrews:

1 Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, **2** but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. **3** He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, **4** having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.¹³

Why would anyone be ashamed of this Gospel?

Jesus was a Jew who was executed by crucifixion by the Roman authorities. This person is Lord?? This person is the real ruler of the universe.

1 Corinthians 1

18 For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. **19** For it is written,

“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,
and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.”

20 Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? **21** For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. **22** For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, **23** but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, **24** but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. **25** For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.¹⁴

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Proclaiming Christ Crucified

¹² [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Jn 20:30–31). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

¹³ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Heb 1:1–4). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

¹⁴ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (1 Co 1:18–25). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

2 And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. **2** For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. **3** And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, **4** and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, **5** so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. ¹⁵

The Resurrection of Christ

15 Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, **2** and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.

3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, **4** that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, **5** and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. **6** Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. **7** Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. **8** Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. **9** For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. **10** But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. **11** Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed. ¹⁶

Peter's Sermon at Pentecost

14 But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: “Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. **15** For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. **16** But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel:

17 “ ‘And in the last days it shall be, God declares,
 that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh,
 and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
and your young men shall see visions,
and your old men shall dream dreams;

18 even on my male servants and female servants
in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.

19 And I will show wonders in the heavens above
and signs on the earth below,

¹⁵ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (1 Co 2:1–5). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

¹⁶ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (1 Co 15:1–11). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke;

²⁰ the sun shall be turned to darkness

and the moon to blood,

before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day.

²¹ And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.'

²² "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know— ²³this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. ²⁴God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.

²⁵ For David says concerning him,

" 'I saw the Lord always before me,

for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken;

²⁶ therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; my flesh also will dwell in hope.

²⁷ For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption.

²⁸ You have made known to me the paths of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence.'

²⁹ "Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ³⁰Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, ³¹he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. ³²This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. ³³Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing. ³⁴For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says,

" 'The Lord said to my Lord,

"Sit at my right hand,

³⁵ until I make your enemies your footstool." '

³⁶ Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified."

³⁷ Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" ³⁸And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹For the promise is for you and for your children

and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”⁴⁰ And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation.”⁴¹ So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.¹⁷

Paul in Athens

¹⁶ Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols.¹⁷ So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there.¹⁸ Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also conversed with him. And some said, “What does this babbler wish to say?” Others said, “He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities”—because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection (ὅτι τὸν Ἰησοῦν καὶ τὴν ἀνάστασιν εὐηγγελίζετο¹⁸).¹⁹ And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, “May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting?”²⁰ For you bring some strange things to our ears. We wish to know therefore what these things mean.”²¹ Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new.

Paul Addresses the Areopagus

²² So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: “Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious.²³ For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription: ‘To the unknown god.’ What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you.²⁴ The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man,²⁵ nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.²⁶ And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place,²⁷ that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us,²⁸ for

“ ‘In him we live and move and have our being’;

as even some of your own poets have said,

“ ‘For we are indeed his offspring.’

²⁹ Being then God’s offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man.³⁰ The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent,³¹ because he has fixed

¹⁷ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Ac 2:14–41). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

¹⁸ Nestle, E., Nestle, E., Aland, B., Aland, K., Karavidopoulos, J., Martini, C. M., & Metzger, B. M. (1993). [The Greek New Testament](#) (27th ed., Ac 17:18). Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft.

a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”

³² Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, “We will hear you again about this.” ³³ So Paul went out from their midst. ³⁴ But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them. ¹⁹

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FF Bruce:

“The basic elements in the message were these: 1. the prophecies have been fulfilled and the new age inaugurated by the coming of Christ; 2. he was born into the family of David; 3. he died according to the Scriptures, to deliver his people from this evil age; 4. he was buried, and raised again the third day, according to the Scriptures; 5. he is exalted at God’s right hand as Son of God, Lord of living and dead; 6. he will come again, to judge the world and consummate his saving work.”
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How are we to respond?

Repent and believe

¹¹ He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. ¹² But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, ¹³ who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. ²⁰

5 For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them. 6 But the righteousness based on faith says, “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’ ” (that is, to bring Christ down) 7 “or ‘Who will descend into the abyss?’ ” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). 8 But what does it say? “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); 9 because, **if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.** 10 For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. (2016). (Ro 10:5–10). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

¹⁹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Ac 17:16–34). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

²⁰ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Jn 1:11–13). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

Next week we will look at the context of the Gospel.

The Old Testament, the love of God, and the future resurrection.