

Remembering the Gospel

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- [0 : 0 0] The scripture reading comes from Romans 1 and 1 Corinthians 15. Please follow along in your bulletin or on the screen. In Romans 1, we read, For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you, that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine.
- I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that I may have often intended to come to you, but thus far have been prevented.
- In order that I may reap some harvest among you, as well as among the rest of the Gentiles, I am under obligation, both to Greeks and to the barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish.
- I am eager to preach the gospel to you, also who are in Rome. For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for the salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jews first and also to the Greek.
- For in it, the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith. As it is written, the righteous shall live by faith.
- [1 : 3 9] And in 1 Corinthians 15, we read, Now, I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you, unless you believe in vain.
- For I delivered to you, as of first importance, what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.
- Then he appeared to more than 500 brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. This is the word of God.
- Great. Thank you so much. Will you join me as we pray together? Heavenly Father, loving Savior, gracious Lord, we do come before you this morning because we want to encounter you, the living God.
- We've come, God, not just to fill our minds with information, not just to be taught some knowledge, but to really meet with you and to encounter you, to have our hearts aligned to you and softened by you, and to find our hope in you once again.
- [3 : 0 1] God, thank you as we've sung these songs of the gospel, and watched the reenactment or the dramatization of the gospel and communion before us.
- As we've listened to your word, how Paul says, I long to remind you of the gospel. God, thank you that we this morning have been reminded of the gospel. And we do pray, God, that as we look at your word, you will speak to us.
- God, we so long for you to speak to us this morning. We don't need to hear the opinions of man or some cute ideas. We want the living God to speak to our hearts and our souls, to arrest our fears and the lies that we believe, to give us hope, to speak to our insecurities.

God, come and speak to us this morning, we pray, Lord. Come and have your way, God. Father, this morning we also think of our city, this wonderful city in which we live and which we've come to love.

And, Father, as we start out the new year, we bring our city before you. And, God, we ask that somehow the stalemate and the tensions in our cities will reside this year, God.

[4 : 08] We ask that somehow, God, those that are on both sides, or all sides that are so angry, that, God, somehow our hearts will find rest and peace, that somehow, God, we will be willing to admit where we've been wrong and to say sorry, God.

God, I really do pray that this year, God, that Hong Kong will be different to what so many of us are expecting it to be like, God. Let peace reign in our city. We pray for politicians and police and protesters, God, and everyone in between.

Oh, God, let peace rest in our hearts, Lord. God, we also just think of the teachers and the scholars and the students that are going to go back to school either this week or maybe have gone back already.

Think of people like Iris and Dave and other teachers in our midst, Justin, God, and the other teachers that are back at work and teaching. We pray, God, once your spirit rests upon them.

We pray, God, as our students go back to school, that you will lead them and be with them. We pray for teachers and students and scholars alike to be a salt and light unto our city, God.

[5 : 14] And so we really do pray for those that are working in the education sector. Christians in our city, God, as they go back this week, won't you go with them, Lord, we pray. And finally, Lord, we want to pray for the churches of Hong Kong.

We pray for ourselves and we pray for our brothers and sisters, the English churches, the Chinese churches, all the churches across Hong Kong, Filipino and Indonesian and Japanese and everything else.

Oh, God, won't you send your spirit and rest in our midst, God, and draw us closer to yourself and make us more like you, God, we pray. We pray that as followers of Jesus, we will love you and trust you and obey you more, God.

God, just as Paul says in Romans, I long to impart the gospel to you. We pray that the gospel will get deeper in our hearts. The church in Hong Kong will be formed and centered on the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And so we pray for our great city, Lord. May it be in Hong Kong as it is in heaven, God. And so we pray, start with us. We pray these wonderful things in your amazing name. Amen.

[6 : 11] Amen. Amen. Okay, well, if you are new to Watermark, one of the things that you'll quickly realize is we've got a bunch of values that we talk about all the time.

There they are. Gospel, community and mission. They are on our website. They are on the bulletin. They are on the banners. We are constantly talking about these three things. And today we're going to start a series for a couple of weeks looking at these values.

Gospel, community and mission. And we're going to dive down a little bit deeper and explore them. Now, if you've been coming to Watermark for any length of time, one of the things that you hear us talking about again and again and again is the gospel.

Always talking about the gospel. And what exactly is the gospel? What does it mean to be a church that is centered on the gospel? What does it mean to be a believer that is centered on the gospel?

And what are the gospels anyway? Sometimes we think the gospels are just the first four books in the New Testament. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. That's certainly true. But another question is if you are a follower of Jesus, let's say you really do believe what the scriptures say about who Jesus is and what he came to do, is the gospel relevant to your life?

[7 : 28] Maybe the gospel is just something that you believed once upon a time, but now you've got to just try and be a good Christian. How does the gospel have any relevance to our lives as followers of Jesus?

Well, that's what we're going to try and answer in the coming weeks. And my hope is that as we do this, rather than maybe having a wide but a shallow understanding of the gospel, my hope and prayer is that the gospel and its implications for our lives, both if you are a spiritual seeker this morning and as well as if you're a Christian, we'll get deeper into our hearts and we'll understand the richness and the depth of it and the complexity of it and why it matters for us individually and as a church.

Okay? So that's where we're going for the next couple of weeks. And I've got to just tell you, I've just got to warn you, I might get a little bit excited today. I am like frothing with excitement to share this with you today.

Okay? So if I'm a little excited, I do apologize. It's just the way it is. So let's dive in. Okay? Firstly, what is the gospel? What is the gospel?

Part of what makes this question so confusing is that the Bible doesn't actually give a simple or simplistic one-sentence answer. Now, I know Tim Keller's given us a one-sentence answer, but the Bible actually has a very complex answer.

[8 : 48] The Bible talks about the gospel in a myriad of different ways. It's kind of like a diamond, right? A diamond is multifaceted, and every time you look at a diamond from a different angle, a different facet, you see a different color or different clarity.

Some aspect of the diamond is revealed to you, depending from what angle you look at it. The gospel is similar in that there are a thousand different ways to look at it, to understand it, a thousand different aspects from which to appreciate it, and every time it reveals something different about who God is and about who we are.

That being said, I'm going to try and give us a simple answer. The word gospel actually means the good news, and many of us might have known that. In the ancient world, a king bears a son.

Good news! There is an heir on the throne, or an heir waiting. And so some government announcement will come into the town square, blow his trumpet, I bring you good news!

Announcement! The king has had an heir! And everybody cheers and celebrates. A herald will bring a gospel announcement, announcement of good news, the king has had a son.

[10 : 04] Or maybe another example is your little town, or city is at war, and there's the enemy, and this day there's a big battle going on just over the hills, and your town or city, your army wins the battle.

And so a messenger rides back on his horse, comes into town, I bring you good news! A gospel announcement! Our men in arms have won the battle!

We have been victorious! The gospel means good news! It is an announcement of some good news! In the same way, God has an announcement, some good news of great joy.

And what is this good news? It is the good news that God, the creator of the world, has made a way for humanity, you and I, to be saved from the consequences of our sin, through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

This is exactly what Jonas read to us. Look at how 1 Corinthians says this. He says, I delivered to you of first importance what I also received, the gospel.

[11 : 08] I want to remind you of the gospel. That Jesus died for our sins, in accordance with the scriptures. That he was buried, but he was raised on the third day, also in accordance with the scriptures, and he made himself known to us.

Or said another way, the gospel is the good news, that God is not leaving the world as it is. He is rescuing the world, from the consequences of the brokenness of sin.

And that he has done this by sending himself, in the person of Jesus, to die on the cross, to rise again, and God is now at work putting the world right again.

Okay? So the gospel is this announcement of good news, and the way the Bible, but the way the Bible tells it, is not just a government official with a white paper. I don't know if we do that in Hong Kong, when the government wants to announce something, they put out a white paper.

God didn't just put out a white paper, in the government gazette, saying I bring you good news of great joy. The way the Bible tells this good news announcement, is actually in the form of a story.

[12 : 08] And that's what the whole Bible is about. The Bible is this good news announcement, in story, in narrative form. And this narrative of the Bible, has five chapters, or five divisions to it.

And actually, as you read every little story in the Bible, David and Goliath, Jonah and the whale, Daniel and the lion's den, Jesus healing the blind man, all these little stories, are all not just good advice, how to live your life.

These are stories that are all telling us, they are microcosms, of the big story of the Bible. Okay? And so what is the big story of the Bible? Well, let's go through those five chapters.

So it starts off like this. The first part tells us, where we came from. God has created us. I think we've got, there we go, creation, number one. The world came into being, because God created the heavens and the earth.

Not by mere accident, or chance, it is the willful design, of God. He is uncreated, and He has created, everything that does exist. Part one, creation.

[13 : 11] But, pretty soon after God made mankind, things go horribly wrong. We rebel against God, and sin enters the world. And this has disastrous consequences, for everything that is created.

Not just us, but all of creation. Everything now is fallen, or flawed, or a broken version, of the intended version, that God had planned for us.

It's a blemished version of itself. And we see this most clearly, in our relationships. So now, as human beings, we have a flawed, or broken relationship, with creation.

Rather than, serving creation, and shooting it, for our well-being, we now use, and abuse creation, for our own benefit. We use it for ourselves, and creation itself is broken.

Particularly those in Australia, at the moment, are feeling the consequences of this. Right? So we have a flawed relationship, with creation. We have a flawed relationship, with one another. Rather than, serving, and loving one another, and looking out, for each other's interests.

[14 : 11] What do we do? We now use, and abuse each other. We look at how, I can use you, for my benefit. And the result of this, sexism, racism, anger, animosity, wars, and disagreements.

We have a flawed relationship, with ourselves. Rather than living at peace, with ourselves, we now battle, insecurity, and anxiety, and depression, self-doubt, self-loathing, or maybe, self-exaltation, self-worship.

Our relationship, with ourself is broken, as a result of sin. But most significantly, our relationship, with God, the Holy God, is broken. So once we are designed, to live in relationship, with Him, by enjoying Him, and worshipping Him, now we are under, His just judgment, and His holy wrath.

Now, as any one of us, can attest, the world is out of joint, and we desperately need, to be rescued. But where the Bible differs, from every other, moral philosophy, is that God tells us, the problem with the world, is not primarily horizontal, me and you.

The main problem, with the world, is vertical, me and God. And every, that has consequences, that overflow, into our relationships, horizontally. And so we look around us, the problem with the world, is racism, and sexism, and wars, and creation has fallen, and global warming.

[15 : 36] These are all symptoms, of a deeper problem, which is that, we are out of sync, in our relationship with God. And the problem, it's a disastrous thing, to deal with the symptoms, not with the real problem.

Imagine you go to your doctor, and you say, I've got this fever, and I was walking, you know, I was hiking on the peak, and I cut myself, and I've got this cut, on my leg, and it's all swollen, and it looks red, and there's some stuff, coming out of it, and I've got this fever, and your doctor says, okay, well here's Panadol, for the fever, and here's a plaster, for the cut on your leg.

That's not a good thing, right? Now there's an infection, inside, you need to deal with the cause, don't just put a band-aid, over it, and we need to deal, with the cause. The Bible tells us, that all the problems, we see around us, are symptoms, of a deeper cause.

We've got to deal, with the cause. Chapter two. Chapter three, God in his great mercy, and his grace, he doesn't leave the world, in that state. He does something about it.

And this is what, most of the Bible is about, or most of the Old Testament. God is showing his people, the significant consequences, for sin, and rebellion. And he's promising, to rescue, and redeem, our fallen world.

[16 : 47] And so that's the third chapter. God's redemption, his rescue plan. And God rescues the world, by reversing, the effects, of sin, and the fall, and brokenness.

But the way that God does this, is not just by, pulling out a magic wand, waving it over the world, and saying, abracadabra, be right again. The way that God does this, is he sends himself, in the person of Jesus, to come and take, the curse, or the effects of sin, upon himself, by dying on the cross.

And rising again, for our sin. Jesus did for us, what we could not do, for ourselves. Jesus dies, in our place. Jesus was born, in order to die.

Jesus is born, in a wooden manger, in order to die, on a wooden cross. Jesus dies, as our substitute, not just as our example, but he doesn't just, die as our substitute.

He actually comes, to reverse the curse, to undo, the effects of sin, by rising from the grave. And that leads us, to the fourth part, of the gospel, which is that, God is restoring, or healing, the world.

[17 : 57] Those who trust in him, by putting the world, right again. But how does God do this? Well again, he doesn't pull out, his magic wand, abracadabra. He actually does that, by getting the gospel, into our hearts, and through the church, getting the gospel, into the world.

And so God sends us out, with his gospel message, and by that, he is healing the world. The gospel changes lives, it heals division, it soothes anxiety, it humbles the proud, it brings our hearts, shalom, and peace again.

God is at work, healing, and fixing, our broken world. But God doesn't end, the story doesn't end there. Fifthly, and finally, Jesus returns, and he wipes away, all wickedness, and all evil, and he consummates, his redemption plan.

He brings it to completion, when he comes again, in glory. Okay, there's the five chapters, divisions of the gospel story. Now I'm sure many of us, have heard that before.

But the climax of the story, the focal point, the high point of the story, is Jesus dying on the cross. Jesus' redemption work on the cross. That's what the Bible is about, again, and again, and again, is that, this is where hope lies.

[19 : 12] This is where salvation lies. This is where redemption lies. This is where it all comes back to. This is not only a part of the gospel story, this is the focal point, that Jesus hung on the cross, in our place, atoning for the sins of the world.

As Paul writes in Corinthians, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to each other. Once he was divorced between us and God, he is reconciling, redeeming, healing, and restoring us, not counting humanity's trespasses against themselves.

Friends, that one aspect, the climax of Jesus' death on the cross, that aspect of the gospel, is so broad, and wide, and deep, and profound, that a lifetime of sermons, could not even cover, the depth of it, or the richness of it.

And that's why, every page of the Bible, from Genesis 1, right to the end, every page, is dripping, with the proclamation, of God's good news, of the gospel.

It all points back to Jesus. And so you read the stories, in the Old Testament, they are all telling the story, of how one day, Jesus will come, to rescue the world. So just think of Daniel, in the lion's den, right?

[20 : 24] Daniel is hopeless. He is facing death in the face. He's got no hope, of rescuing himself. There he is, death is staring at him, how is he going to save himself? Oh well, God saves him, God does for him, what he could not do for himself.

That's a picture of Jesus. There we were, facing death in the face, God's judgment, God did for us, what we could not do, for ourselves. This is the gospel message.

Aha! But now, many of us, might know that. But one of the dangers, is, especially if you've been a Christian, for any number of years, subtly, very subtly, all sorts of, counterfeit gospels, or false gospels, or anti-gospels, very easily, creep into our understanding.

Let me, highlight a couple, of anti-gospels for us. A couple of ways, in which we, miss the clarity, or the, the sharpness, of the gospel. The first way is this, sometimes we think, the gospel, is good, good advice, rather than, good news.

Think about that, what's the difference, between good news, and good advice? Let's say, somebody comes to you, and says, I've got good advice for you.

[21 : 43] I have found, there's a, a tax free, saving investment. And you should put all your money in there, and you don't need to pay taxes. My advice to you, is invest in this vehicle, and you will make a lot of money.

Okay? Good advice, is saying, here is some theoretical information, but the agency, is upon you, to act upon it. You've got to do something about it, in order to, actually, act upon it, or make it a reality.

Right? Good advice, says, here is some information, but actually, whether anything is going to happen, is up to you. Good news, somebody comes to you, and says, I've got good news.

I've just got off the phone, you've got some long lost relative, that you didn't know about. They've died, and they've left you \$10 million, and it's already in your bank account. Have a happy day. Right?

That's good news, not just good advice. Good news, says, something has happened. It's already been done. All you need to do, is receive it. You might need to go to the ATM, and draw the money, but it's already happened.

[22 : 46] Friends, the gospel, is not good advice, how to clean up your life, how to make yourself, a better person, how to make the best, out of 2020. The gospel, is good news.

Something has happened. Jesus has died, on the cross, to save you, to rescue you, to cover your sins. The gospel, is not just, good advice, about how to, make ourselves a better person, meditate on this, develop right thinking.

It is an announcement, of good news. Though you and I, were dead in our sins, under God's curse, facing his judgment, Jesus died on the cross, taking our punishment, upon himself, so that we can be declared, free, from the punishment of sin.

Okay, does that make sense? Okay. Sorry, you are not as excited, about this as I am. I'm just going to keep on going, okay, and hope that the excitement, wears off.

Okay, so, one anti-gospel, is we confuse good news, for good advice. Second anti-gospel, is this. We confuse the gospel, when we think that it means, grace, means we don't need, to talk about sin.

[23 : 52] Okay. Joel Spurgeon, once said this, the nearer, a man or woman, gets to God, the more intensely, he or she will mourn, over their own sinful heart.

Oh my goodness, that is so true. That is true of my life. The more I see of God, and understand of him, the more I see, my own depravity, in my own heart, and the more I mourn, over just how wicked, and rotten I am.

Friends, the gospel doesn't deny, or cover over sin, like it's not there. It doesn't pretend, that it's not there. Grace doesn't throw, a blanket over sin, and pretend it's not there.

Grace exposes sin, but then it helps us, deal with it. So picture this. Okay. Men, you have got some people, coming over for dinner, for a dinner party, and your wife asks you, to set the table.

No problem. Or maybe your wife, does set the table. Beautiful. There's candles, and it's all looking lovely. Okay. And you reach over, and you knock over, a glass of red wine, and it spills, on the beautiful tablecloth, that your wife, just got for Christmas.

[24 : 56] Okay. So what do we do? Well, we get a placemat, and we quickly put it over, the stain. Right. We cover over it, so that our wife doesn't see it. Right.

Anyone else done that? There. Okay. Thank you. Honest man. That's not what the gospel does. The gospel doesn't say, okay, let's just cover your sin, pretend it's not there, so that you can feel better, about yourself.

Friends, that's what religion does. Or maybe, religion that says, religion uncovers it, says, ah, I see we've got a problem here. You're a sinner. What are you going to do about it?

That's not what the gospel does. The gospel uncovers it, and says, my dear friend, we've got a problem here. There's this problem with our hearts. But Jesus has come, to help you.

Jesus has come, to rescue you. Jesus has come, to deal with the sin of our lives, to wash us clean. You see, the temptation is just to cover over, and say, let's not talk about sin. Let's just pretend it's not there, and just talk about the happy things.

[25 : 54] Religion says, oh, you've got a problem. Now sort yourself out. Fix yourself. Clean up your act. And when you've cleaned up your act, then you can come to church, and be with us, right? Us, righteous people.

That's what religion says. Jesus says, welcome, sinners. I've come to help. I've come to accept you, to love you. Let's deal with what's going on, under the surface.

Okay, so the second way, is we think that grace, means we don't need to talk about sin. The third way, in which we confuse the gospel, for a false gospel, a counterfeit version of the gospel, is we think that salvation, is some kind of JV, joint venture, between us and God.

Like, we're partners in this joint venture. Okay? Okay, God, you can be 60%, I'll be 40%. You can be 80%, I'll take a 20% share, in this venture. Friends, the gospel tells us, it is all of God, and none of us.

The gospel is not, God's grace, plus my goodness. God's grace, plus my morality. God's grace, plus my effort. The gospel, is all of God.

[26 : 58] There is nothing I can do, to earn or deserve, God's grace, or his love, or merit, or warrant, his forgiveness. Friends, if you and I, rely on anything other, than his undeserving grace, for his acceptance, and love, it is like building our lives, on a house of cards, or on a sand foundation.

It's just a matter of time, before it's going to be washed away. The one sure foundation, is God saves us, because he is gracious. Because of, for some reason, he's chosen, to love us, and forgive us, all of God, not of us.

Jonathan Lehman, who's a pastor in the US, he tells the story of, when he was in his 20s, he was grappling with this. And so he goes to his pastor, and he says, Pastor, I get that it's mainly God, right?

But surely I did some of it. Like, let's say I'm drowning in my sins. And there I am, I'm drowning in my sins, and Jesus comes along, in his speed boat, and he reaches down, and says, here I am, I'm offering you salvation.

He puts his hand down, surely I needed to grab hold of his hand, I needed to do something, to be saved, right? And Jonathan Lehman's pastor, Mark Dever, takes him to Ephesians chapter 2, and he says, let's just read this together.

[28 : 16] As for you, you were dead, and you're trespassing, and sins, in which you previously lived. But God, who is rich in mercy, because of his great love for us, made us alive with Christ, even when we were dead in our sins, you are saved by grace.

And then he turns to Jonathan, and says, my dear brother, you weren't just drowning, you were drowned. You were dead at the bottom of the sea, with no life in you. And Jesus dived down, and brought you up, and breathed life into you.

You didn't save yourself, Jesus saved you. You see, sometimes we can think salvation, the gospel is, me plus Jesus. Jesus does most of it, but I bring my good works, I bring my effort, I hold on to him.

No friends, Jesus, when we had nothing, Jesus breathed life into us, and saved us, completely of his own accord. And that's what Paul says here, in Romans 1. He says, I'm not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God.

There's a power that breathes life, into our dead souls. And it's a power that comes from outside of us, not from inside of us. You see, most religions or moral philosophy will say, you want to be a good person?

[29 : 24] Well, look inside of you, well up the effort, be a better person, think of your dreams and your goal, envision a better version of yourself. Muscle up the resources to try and be a kind, and nicer person this year.

One of my goals for this year, that I'm praying for, is to be a better husband, and a better dad. Man, I've got to be a better dad this year. But religion will say, Kevin, look inside of yourself, how you can be a better dad.

Jesus says, Kevin, I've come to change your heart. I've come to rescue you. There's a power in the gospel, that changes us, from the outside inside. The gospel cuts right across, and says, as for me, I was dead in my sins.

But Jesus came, when I had no hope to myself. Jesus came to me, who was guilty, helpless, powerless state, and he did for me, what I could not do, for myself. He died the death, I deserve to die, and now he breathes his spirit into me, changing me from the inside, to make me the person, that he's called me to be.

That's the gospel. Okay, so all of that, what does that mean for us, at Watermark Church? Who cares? Right? How should that actually impact 2020?

[30 : 36] Well, again, you know what I'm going to say, right? I'm so glad you asked that question. Okay, that joke's getting a little old, I know, but, as long as Ed laughs at it, I'm going to keep on using it.

Okay? What does that actually mean for us? One of the things you'll notice, as we said earlier, that at Watermark, we are constantly going on, and on about the gospel.

Every Sunday, our hope, is to be, that we flood each other, with the gospel. In everything we do, from the call to worship, up front, Iris did an awesome job this morning.

Where are you, Iris? Awesome job. Isaiah 53, just flooding us, with the good news of the gospel. The songs we sang, Man of Sorrows, what a, every song is, is just full, flooded with the message of Jesus, and the gospel.

And then we take communion, almost every week, to reenact, to dramatize in front of us, in picture format, the gospel. This is Christ's body, broken for us. This is his blood, shed for us.

[31 : 36] Hopefully, every sermon is full, of the message of the gospel. And if you do, the members class, in a month's time, the first week, is just all about the gospel. And then you do, the baptism class, the first week, is all about the gospel.

Everything we're on about, is the gospel. Why? Why is it such a big deal for us? Well, let's look at our passages, that we read to us earlier. Look at what Paul says, in Romans chapter 1.

Paul writes this letter, to a church, in Rome. So here's a bunch of believers. They're really believers. They're not spiritual seekers, that are trying to make sense, of the claims of Christ. They are followers of Jesus.

And he says this, I very much want to come, and see you, my brothers and sisters, that I may impart you, some spiritual gift. That is, that we can be mutually encouraged, by one another's faith. I don't want you, to be unaware.

I've often planned to come to you, but have been prevented, until now. I am eager, to preach the gospel to you, who are in Rome. For I'm not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God, for salvation, for everyone who believes, Jews and Greeks, etc.

[32 : 41] Now why does Paul, want to go to the Rome, to the Christian church, and preach the gospel to them? Surely they know the gospel already? Well look at what happens, in Corinthians. Paul says again, he writes this amazing letter, and he says, now brothers, let me just remind you, of the gospel, that Jesus died for our sins, that he was raised on the third day, and made himself known to us.

That's what we're trying to do. As a church, we're trying to remind one another, week in and week out, of the gospel. Why? Well, let me give us a couple of reasons. There's a myriad of reasons, but let me just focus on three of them, and then we're going to land.

The first one is this, because we forget the gospel so easily. Now when I say forget, I don't mean we forget the data points, right? Like, it's Thursday afternoon, and you're trying to think, who is the guy that died on the cross again?

We don't forget the data points. We know that, but the gospel, we forget the potency of it. It's no longer vivid, and real, and powerful, and beautiful, in our minds.

And part of the reason for that, is, 60 hours a week, you're at the office, in the marketplace, and you're being hammered, hour after hour, by a false gospel. That your hope is in money.

[33 : 57] That your hope is in your children's education. That your hope is in that promotion, or that career, or that idyllic house, in the Maldives, or something. Every hour, you're being hammered, by a false gospel.

And one hour a week, we come here, and are being reminded of it. And so, most often, when we live our lives, and the potency, and the power, and the vividness, of what Jesus did for us, kind of, that fades away.

And as a result of that, false gods, and false idols, become increasingly more vivid, and real to us. Friends, I see this in my life, all the time. When the potency of the gospel, is no longer vivid, and real to me, when it's leaking from my heart, I start to operate, out of all sorts of insecurities, and fears.

I feel like I need to prove myself. I need to put my best foot forward. I need to put an image, project an image. I feel like, I get defensive. In my mind, I start to magnify, the faults of others, make them bigger than they really are, and I minimize my own faults, and make other people, to make myself feel better about myself.

Friends, you've got to know, this might be shocking to you, most Sundays, I come to church, full of weakness, and insecurities. Most Sundays, I come to church, feeling like, I'm not good enough, is anyone going to like my sermon?

[35 : 19] I've got a brief confession. In the first year, that I came to, that I was here in Hong Kong, every Sunday, I'd come to church, and think, this is the Sunday, when they're all going to see, who I really am.

This is the week, right? And every Sunday, I'd come to church, thinking, this week, I'm sure, is the week. They've all decided, to go to another church, okay? This is the end.

Every week, I came full of insecurities. This thing's going to fall apart. Now, I've worked through some of that, and I'm a little bit better, but honestly, most weeks, I come to church, full of weakness, aware of what a lousy husband, and father I am, aware of my sin, and my brokenness.

I just come feeling like, oh my goodness, God, how can you ever love me, accept me, never mind, allow me to stand up, and speak on behalf of you, never mind, pastor this amazing church. Friends, what I need, every Sunday, is not to come to church, and being told, you can be a better version, pluck yourself up.

I need to come, and being told, yes Kevin, it's true, you are a sinner, that's true. But God loves you, not because of your performance, not because of how good you are, how bad you are, he loves you, because he's chosen to love you, because he died on the cross for you.

[36 : 28] Kevin, your identity, is in Jesus, and his death on the cross, not in your performance. Friends, every week, I come, and I need to be reminded, of the extravagant, good news of the gospel. It needs to flood my heart, week in and week out.

Now, just by the way, this is one of the reasons, why I really don't like being called, Pastor Kevin. If you want to call me, Pastor Kevin, that's okay, I won't fight with you. But secretly inside, I die.

And the reason is this, because, I feel like, when people call me Pastor Kevin, it puts me on a pedestal, like, there's normal Christians, and then there's the pastor, right? He's like, somehow better than the rest of us.

And that's just not true. Friends, this church, 100%, from the preacher in the front, to those of us that are somewhere else, maybe you've come and hung over this morning, and you're not feeling your best, 100% of us, are sinners, in need of Christ's grace.

And Jesus says, I love you, not because of your performance, not because of what you've done for me, but simply because I've chosen to love you, and I died on the cross for you. And so, the reason we come, and the reason we make a big deal of the gospel, is because we forget it, and we need to be reminded of it.

[37 : 34] Second reason is this, because when we forget the gospel, we are robbed of its spiritual power. Now, we're going to look at this more next week. But, when the gospel sinks into our hearts, there really is a power to it.

It transforms us, and it changes us. And the way it does that, is it changes the driving motivations, and ambitions of our hearts. It changes our desires. When we forget the gospel, when it's not vivid to our hearts, we are robbed of that spiritual power, that potency, that changes the motivations, and the driving force of our lives.

God really does want us, to live lives of holiness. But we can do so, from the wrong motivation, from wicked motivation. The gospel gives us a power, to live the lives, that he's called us to.

And so friends, how are we going to become the people, that God's called us to? How are we going to overcome, the idols in our hearts? The idols of people pleasing. How many of us have struggled with that? I do. How are we going to overcome, the idol of sexual sin and addiction?

How are we going to overcome, the things like, gossip and slander, or anger and unforgiveness, in our hearts? Scripture says, you don't beat those things, just by telling yourself, be a better person, try harder.

[38 : 43] We beat those things, as the gospel gets into our hearts, and melts our hearts, there's a power, that changes, the control center of our lives, and makes us the people, God's called us to. Here's a third and final reason, and then we're almost done.

Why we go on, and on, and on, and on about it, is this. Because the consequences, of neglecting the gospel, are disastrous. D.A. Carson, said this amazing, amazing thing.

I want you to think about this. One generation, believes the gospel, the second generation, assumes the gospel, the third generation, denies the gospel. Just think about that, for a second.

So let's think about, us as a church, Watermark Church, let's just say, hey guys, we know the gospel, okay, we believed it, that's good, now we've got to be good people. Let's just focus on, growing our Christian knowledge, and our understanding, and being righteous people.

Okay, we believe it, let's just be good people. In five, six, ten years time, what happens? We kind of just start to assume it. So yeah, we know it's there, it's on our website somewhere, I'm sure, somewhere in some document, we believe the gospel, but it's no longer vivid, and potent, it's no longer beautiful to us, we're no longer humbled by it, it's no longer challenging our lives, it doesn't melt our hearts, and our insecurities.

[40 : 01] And then a couple of years goes by, and maybe somebody, maybe one of the leaders say, you know, all this talk of sin, it's a bit negative, the world is negative as it is, let's not, let's just focus on the positives, let's not talk about sin so much, let's talk about how, Jesus came to die as a good example for us, to show us how to forgive our enemies, and just assume the gospel, and then a couple of years goes by, five, ten years, and maybe someone says, you know, if Jesus died as our example, maybe he wasn't divine, he didn't need to take on the judgment of God, maybe it's just a good moral man, that showed us how to be good moral men, you see, one generation believes it, and it's vivid, but when you assume it, a generation goes by, and we just kind of, it's in the background, but before we know it, another generation goes by, and we start to deny it, and Jesus wasn't really divine, he was just a good man, helping us to be good men, one generation believes the gospel, the next then assumes it, the third denies it, friends, this is why at Watermark, we love the gospel, but it's also why we never, ever want to become a second generation gospel church, we as elders, pastors, members, those of us that are visiting us, we must be a church, which is founded upon, centered upon, constantly rejoicing, hoping, delighting, singing, praying, telling people about the wonder, of the good news, of great joy, that Jesus died for us,

John Piper put it like this, this is my prayer for us, as a church family, for my personal family, and for my own heart this year, John Piper says this, seek to see, and to feel the gospel, as getting bigger, as the years go by, rather than smaller, our temptation is to think, that the gospel is for beginners, and then we go on to greater things, but the real challenge, friends, is to see the gospel, as the greatest thing, and getting greater, in our lives, all the time, the gospel gets bigger, when in our heart, grace gets bigger, Christ gets greater, his death gets more wonderful, his resurrection, more astonishing, the work of the spirit, gets mightier, its power is more pervasive, its global extent, wider, your own sin gets uglier, the devil gets more evil, the gospel's roots, into eternity, go deeper, and its connections, with everything in the bible, and in the world, get stronger, so keep this in mind, never, let the gospel, get smaller, in your heart, pray that it won't, read books about it, sing about it, tell someone, who's ignorant, unsure about it, but whatever you do, never let the gospel, get smaller, in your hearts, friends, as we start this year, it may be a good time, for us to evaluate, where are our hearts at, have we assumed the gospel, have we forgotten, the seriousness, and the importance of it, but also the great wonder, and the good news, of great joy, friends, is Jesus and his death, on the cross, still vivid, and real, and potent, to our hearts, is the kindness, and the patience, and the gentleness of God, still calling us, to confession, and repentance, is the cross of Jesus, convicting us, of the seriousness, of our sin, and calling us, back to him, is the excruciating cross, of Jesus, still announcing, good news, that because of God's, profound, and inexhaustible love, for us,

Jesus willingly, and gladly, went to the cross, for you and I, friends, is God's redemption story, melting our hearts, so that we are humble, and not judgmental, gracious, and forgiving, extending to others, the same grace, that we've received ourselves, friends, is God's great redeeming, and rescuing story, melting the insecurities, and our fears, are quietening, the accusations, and the lies, and drawing us, to greater levels, of loving, trusting, and obeying Jesus, for instance, is the cross of Christ, still glorious, and wonderful, is God's mercy, still good news, to us, I want us to close, in a time of prayer, and the way, we're going to do this, is a little different, I've written a prayer, for us on the screen, and I'd love us, to pray this together, maybe the musicians, can come, up to the band, and, it's up on the screen, there's two slides, but let's just take, a minute or two, and then I'd love, to ask us, to read this out loud, together, and, we'll pray it, together, so, maybe we can just, put the second slide on, for a few seconds,

Let's go back to the first one.

Let's pray this together. Heavenly Father, thank you for the incredibly good news of the gospel. That though I was dead in my sin without any way of rescuing or saving myself, you, God, did for me what I could not do for myself.

[45 : 14] Father, I confess that so often I forget this good news. I take it for granted, looking to myself rather than you for my hope, my justification, and my life.

Father, forgive me, you pray. Father, help me never to forget the gospel, drive it deeper into our hearts. May your life and death speak to our insecurities and our fears, our hopes and our dreams, our disappointments and setbacks.

God, may your great love and your unceasing kindness melt our hard hearts, call us to repentance, soften our attitudes, and humble our pride.

God, may we build our life on you, your love, your astoundingly good news, we pray.
Amen.