

Why Do We... Always Talk About the Gospel?

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[0 : 0 0] The scripture reading today comes from 1st and 2nd Corinthians. Please follow along the screen or in your bulletin. Starting from in 1st Corinthians 15 verse 1 we read, Now I will remind you, brothers of the gospel, I preach to you which you receive, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved.

If you hold fast to the word I preach to you, unless you believe in vain. For I deliver to you as of first importance what I receive, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scripture, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance to the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve, then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep.

Then in 2nd Corinthians 12 verse 9, But he said to me, My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.

Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities.

For when I am weak, then I am strong. This is the word of God. Great. Thank you, Kristen. Thanks, Kristen. Let's pray together briefly as we come to this passage.

[1 : 3 7] Heavenly Father, as we come to your word this morning, we want to hear you speak to us. We want to be encouraged in the gospel. We want to encounter you in a real way.

God, I pray that as we look at your word, God, you will speak to each one of us in a deep and a profound way. Lord, won't you open our eyes to see the depth of the beauty of what you did on the cross for us.

Reassure us, God, of your love and our standing in you. And help us, God, to live these lives that really are centered on you. We pray this in your awesome name. Amen. Amen. Okay.

Let's start off playing a little word association game. Okay. So I'm going to say a word. And I want you to think of the first word that comes to your mind when you hear the word that I'm going to say. Okay. You can say it out loud if you want.

Or you can just say it under your breath. It's up to you. But when I say the word sport, what's the first thing? Okay. Tennis. Netflix. Okay.

[2 : 3 7] Food. Burger. Okay. Hong Kong. Okay. You don't have to say that if you want. Celebrity.

Home. Watermark. Watermark. If you are new to Watermark Church, when I say Watermark, one of the first things that comes to mind might be church or Ebenezer or the 970 bus or something like that.

But if you have been part of our church for a little while, some of the words you might say, you might say friendly, hopefully. Hopefully you'd say that, not unfriendly.

That would be a problem. But you might say, my guess is one of two words comes to mind. One is probably community. Yeah. I don't know how many of you thought of that. The other one is maybe the word gospel.

I don't know if anyone thought of that. In fact, in our mission statement, yeah, Marilyn just pointed it out. We talk about our three values, our gospel, community, and mission. And our mission statement talks about seeing the growth of gospel communities, disciples of Jesus raised up and released to impact Hong Kong for the glory of God.

[3 : 52] And about 20 or 30 years ago, in kind of Christian circles, there was this movement called the gospel-centered movement, where suddenly everybody started talking about the gospel and being gospel-centered, right?

And it seems like every church around the world, if you wanted a sign of authenticity, all you had to do was put the word gospel somewhere in your website or on your brochure. And the more times you said the word gospel, the more kind of authentic or legitimate you were.

Does that make sense? Anyone recognize that? Okay. And then Christian authors, right, they wanted to sell lots of books, so you had to have the word gospel in your title somewhere, and then you would sell lots of books.

In fact, if you wanted to sell anything, right, duvet covers, coffee mugs, underwear, you just put the word gospel on there somewhere, and some Christian out there is going to buy it. But the word gospel became this kind of like Christian buzzword, that everything Christians spoke about was just gospel, gospel, gospel.

And maybe if you come to Watermark for a while, you feel like that's true of us as well. That's all we ever talk about. Well, we're doing this four-part series called Why Do We Do That? And last week, Chris looked at why do we come to church on Sundays.

[5 : 07] Today, I want us to look at the question, why do we talk about the gospel so much? And in order to do that, let's just go and define some of our terms. Okay.

So the word gospel in the Greek is the word evangelion, where we get the word evangelist or evangelical from. And in original languages, it meant the announcement of some good news.

Okay. So it was used in the ancient world of a town crier. So the emperor has a son. There is a next one in line in the throne, and he will cry out in the town. I have some good news, some gospel, some evangelion.

The emperor has had a son. Or maybe your armies go off to war, and they are victorious, and someone comes back heralding the good news. Our forces have won the battle.

Victory has been determined. Right? So it is the announcement of some good news. And as we've often said in this church, it's not good advice. It's not telling you what to do.

[6 : 06] It is the proclamation or the announcement of something that has happened that is very good news. Well, what is the good news that the Bible talks about? Well, our passage today tells us.

So look at 1 Corinthians 15 with me again. Paul writes and he says, Now I would remind you, brothers and sisters, of the gospel, this evangelion, the good news, that I preached to you, which you received and which you stand, by which you are being saved, if you hold fast the word that I preached to you.

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

So here in our passage, Paul actually defines what he means by the gospel. He says, I announced it to you that Christ Jesus died for our sins, that he was buried and he raised again on the third day.

Now, we could spend many weeks unpacking this and looking at many elements of it, but one of the things I want us to see here is that according to Scripture, the gospel, the good news, is not just a worldview, it's not just a philosophy, even though it will shape your worldview, it's not just some wisdom or advice, though it will make you wise.

[7 : 32] The gospel is a historical event. It's something that has happened. Something that has happened that changes the course of human history, that changes the course of the history of those that believe it and receive it.

And what is this event? Well, Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Son of Man, fully man and fully God, came to earth as a man and died on a Roman cross on Easter Friday.

He was buried in a tomb, but he didn't stay dead. He rose again on Easter Sunday. This is the good news, the gospel.

Now, why is this good news? I mean, that's maybe an unfortunate event. Maybe it's a miraculous event. But how does that help us today, you and I, in 21st century Hong Kong?

Well, as you said, I'm so glad you asked that question. I've got four answers for us. Four reasons why this historical event of something that happened to Jesus 2,000 years ago in Palestine, in the Middle East, is good news for you and I today.

[8 : 37] Firstly, the gospel is good news for sinners. Look again at verse 3, I think it is, in our passage. I left something out. Jesus died on the cross not just as an example of selflessness and servant-heartedness.

Jesus died on the cross not just as suffering, as a political martyr. He didn't just die to demonstrate the brutality of the Roman Empire. Now, look at what it says.

Jesus died for our sins. Jesus' death on the cross is what the Bible calls an atoning sacrifice. Now, if you're new to church or you're new to Christianity, this may be unusual for you, but the Bible's diagnosis for the problem with our world, the Bible's assessment, is not just that mankind is selfish.

I mean, that is true, but that's not the main problem. It's not just that, you know, corruption in the world. It's not just economic inequality, that the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer.

It's not just that we marginalize and abuse the poor in our world, or that we take advantage, don't steward our world. It's not just the education problem, though that may be a challenge, or mental health or social media.

[9 : 55] The Bible says that all these problems in the world that we experience, is actually, these are symptoms of a far deeper problem, a far deeper root problem. It's like when you go to the doctor, right, and you say, I've got this pain in my chest.

Well, a poor doctor would just give you an aspirate, or give you something just to take away the pain. And a good doctor would say, let's go under the surface, let's do an MRI, let's see what's happening underneath there.

The root cause for the symptoms of my world is that God, who created us for Himself to know Him and love Him and trust Him and walk with Him and be in relationship with Him, we've rejected Him.

We've rebelled against Him. Rather than loving and trusting and serving Him and knowing Him and being in relationship with Him, rather than finding our identity in Him, we've pushed Him aside and we've wanted to love and trust and serve created things rather than the Creator.

We put our hope and identity in things around us, whether people or people's approval or the praise of man or ourselves. The world is working against its design and its designer.

[11 : 05] We've rebelled against God and we've set ourselves up as our own gods. And the Bible calls this sin. Sin in the Bible is not just lying or stealing or doing something you shouldn't do.

Actually, the Bible says those again are symptoms. The root cause is that we've wanted to set ourselves up as our own God. Do you remember Martin Luther famously said, No one breaks any of the Ten Commandments, like not honoring your parents or lying or stealing, without first breaking the first commandment, which is to have no other gods before me.

And so what the Scripture says is that despite our sinfulness, that all of us are in this category, God has made a way to rescue us, to redeem us, to restore that which is broken.

God has made a way for those that are unrighteous, that's me and you, to be counted righteous. Those that are rebels to be brought back into relationship with God. Those that are declared in rebellion and guilty of sin to be declared innocent.

Those who are at enmity with God to be reconciled. And how does this happen? Well, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came to earth as a man, died on the cross, took our penalty for us, in our place, so that we don't have to bear the penalty for our sin, that we are no longer counted unrighteous, but are considered righteous in God's sight.

[12 : 33] Jesus died in our place so that we don't have to. Jesus took the penalty of our sin. Jesus bore our sin. And Jesus was counted unrighteous instead of us.

By receiving Christ's atoning death as our own, by receiving His sacrificial death as our own, we are reconciled to God. It's like our sin is completely done away with, washed away.

I think it's in Micah, it says that our sin is cast into the depths of the sea, removed as far as the east is from the west. We are reconciled to God.

Do you remember what John the Baptist says when he sees Jesus across the Jordan? He says, Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. And how would Jesus do that? Well, He wouldn't just sweep them under the rug.

He wouldn't just redefine sin and say, Well, let's talk about this. He wouldn't just say, Let's go for some inner healing. No, no. Jesus went to the cross.

[13 : 33] Jesus had the sins of the world poured out on Him. The wrath of God poured out on Him. So that all who come to Him will be justified, set free, reconciled.

Jesus, the author of life, would die so that we who are dead in our sins may be made alive together. And why did He do this? Well, Cynthia read it for us earlier.

Ephesians 2. As for you, as for me, we who are dead in our sins, but God who is rich in mercy because of His profound love for us, made us who are dead in our sins alive in Christ.

It's because of His love for people like you and I. It's because of His profound love for us. Friends, God's love for us is not a feeling. It's a commitment, a devotion, a dedication to us.

In the modern world, we tend to think of love as a feeling, right? When I feel in love, then I love you. But in the Bible, love is a decision. It's a devotion. It's a dedication. Because of His profound love for us, Jesus went to the cross.

[14 : 42] And did Jesus go to the cross because you're on the right track or you're a good person? No, no, no. When we were God's enemies, He loved us by sending His Son to die on the cross.

Friends, this is the gospel. This is the good news. Jesus died on the cross for sinners like us. I don't know if you know the words of that old hymn, Man of Sorrows.

Man of Sorrows, what a name. For the Son of God who came, ruined sinners like me, like you, to reclaim, oh, what a Savior. Bearing shame and scoffing ruin, in my place condemned He stood.

By His, sealed my pardon with His blood. Hallelujah, what a Savior. Friends, why do we talk about the gospel so much? Because the gospel is good news for sinners.

For people like you and me, people who are at enmity with God, Jesus reconciles us and brings us into His family. But if that is true, and it is true, you can understand why we talk about it out there, right?

[15 : 53] In the marketplace, in schools, why maybe somebody wants to tell his neighbor or his colleagues or his friends about the good news of the gospel? But why do we talk about it in here so much?

I mean, my guess would be that many of us would have already believed that, understood that, received that, accepted that. Why is it that we as a church, those of us that have already received the gospel, why do we talk about it so much?

Well, look at what our passage says again in 1 Corinthians. Look at what Paul says here in verse 1. He says, I would remind you, brothers and sisters, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved.

Now, who's Paul writing to here? He's writing to the Corinthians, that's true, to Christians, those who have come to put their faith in Christ.

They're already Christians. They're already born again and saved, reconciled, redeemed. And yet he writes to them to remind them of the gospel. In fact, we see this throughout the New Testament.

[17 : 02] In the book of Romans, Paul writes, and look what he says in Romans chapter 1. He says, To all you in Rome who are loved by God, called to be saints. Okay, the word saints there doesn't just mean those that are very righteous and very wonderful, like Niels and Chris and Claire.

Okay, okay. Those that have got it all together and don't make any mistakes. The word saints actually means anyone that is a Christian. Anyone who loves and trusts Jesus, who has been reconciled.

So Paul writes here, he says, To all who are in Rome, who are loved by God, okay, that's the motivation for the gospel, and called to be saints, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is proclaimed throughout all the world.

So here's a church that's pretty mature. Their faith is so mature that actually it's got a track record. It's talked about throughout the known world. He says, I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual strength.

I'm eager to come to you to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome. Why does Paul want to go to these Christians and share the gospel with them?

[18 : 09] I mean, surely Paul should go to places where they don't know the gospel and tell them the good news of Jesus. Why does he want to write to Christians? Well, the reason is because the gospel is not only good news for sinners, it's also good news for saints.

When you look at the New Testament, the evidence is overwhelming that the apostles are constantly writing and applying to believers the gospel again and again and again.

If you look at the book of Romans, one of Paul's greatest books, right? 16 chapters long. The first 11 chapters are all about the multifaceted wonder of the gospel.

So Paul writes and says, well, let's consider it from this angle. And he applies it to their life. And he says, well, but your objection might be this. So let's see how the gospel deals with that. Oh wait, well, let's see how the gospel deals with this issue.

Oh wait, you got a problem here? Let's see how the gospel deals with it from that issue. Paul spends 11 chapters writing to these Christians who are mature, showing them how the multifaceted dimension of the gospel speaks to every area of their life, even as Christians.

[19 : 24] Now, one of the reasons we often say this is because the gospel is not just the way into the kingdom of God, it's the way of the kingdom of God. It's not just the doorway or the entrance, it's how you become a Christian, it's the pathway you walk along until you get to glory.

And so what that means is that if you're a Christian here this morning, one of the ways that you're going to grow as a Christian is to keep on applying the gospel ever deeper into your heart and to the challenges you face.

Why do we keep on talking about the gospel? Well, one of the reasons is because we forget. Look at what Paul says here in verse 1. He says, Now I want to remind you, brothers, of the gospel.

We spoke about this two weeks ago when we looked at Deuteronomy 6, right? Remember Deuteronomy, Paul, not Paul, Paul wasn't born yet, Moses, okay? Wrong testament. Moses writes and he says, He says, Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, strength.

Teach this to your children. And then he says, when you go into the promised land and you count these houses and vineyards and everything is wonderful, take care lest you forget the Lord your God who delivered you out of Egypt.

[20 : 38] And we spoke about the fact that in the Bible to forget doesn't mean to have a lapse of memory. It means you start to assume something. You start to take it for granted. What was once front and central in your mind starts to move to the periphery.

And you say, Yeah, yeah, I understand that, right? Well, Paul writes to remind them of the gospel because he wants to bring it front and central to their lives. Friends, when we tend to assume the gospel, take it for granted, we tend to think that God saved us from our sins but then salvation is a means of self-help.

Like God just giving us a help up. God, God, we need some of His help. We don't quite have it all together and so we need God just to help us get our lives together. We need God to help heal us from our hurts or we need God to help us sort out this area of our lives.

In other words, what we do is we start to trust ourselves for our salvation along with God. But when we do that, we rob the gospel of its power. It becomes like a shell of what it originally was.

In Romans 1, Paul says, I'm not ashamed of the gospel for it's the power of God for salvation. It has the power to change your life, to revolutionize your life. But when we think of the gospel as a means to self-help, as good advice rather than good news, it disempowers the gospel of its very essence, its power.

[22 : 07] And it becomes just the advice of how to live our lives. And so the one reason we keep on talking about it is because we tend to forget. But the other reason is because, as I alluded to earlier, the gospel is also the way you grow as a Christian.

For those of us that are already Christians, justified, forgiven, we need to keep on hearing the good news of the gospel and ever dive into the richness of the treasure of who Jesus is and what he's done on the cross in order to grow and mature as Christians.

Christians. We see this throughout the New Testament. The Apostle Paul is constantly applying the gospel to every area of life. In other words, Paul in Ephesians chapter 5, he wants to help some of the Christians with their marriages.

And so what does he say? He writes and he says, Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the church. Well, how did Christ love the church? He gave himself up for her, laying down his life on the cross.

Paul wants to help people who are not getting along so well to get along in the church. And so what does he do? He says, Have this mind which is yours in Christ Jesus who though he was God didn't count equality with God something to be grasped but emptied himself becoming a man, humbling himself to the point of servanthood, even death on the cross.

[23 : 31] You see, when there's conflict in the church, Paul doesn't just say, Listen, you've been Christians for 10 years, sort yourselves out now. What does he do? He says, Remember the humility of Jesus and let that humble you of your pride so that you can receive and love one another.

Later on in Ephesians, Paul writes and he wants to help two Christians forgive each other who are struggling to forgive each other. And he says this, Let all bitterness and anger be put away from you. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another just as God in Christ forgave you.

Friends, isn't that amazing? Let's say, Claire and I are not getting along so well. Marriage is hard. Paul doesn't just say, Kevin, you're the man, sort yourself out. Okay?

Have you guys seen that skit where the counselor says, I've got two words for you. He says, just stop it. Someone comes in and says, I've got a problem. He says, okay, just stop it. That's not what Paul does.

He says, Kevin, I could tell you to stop it. But remember how Christ treated you when you were his enemy, when you were shaking your fists at him, when you were saying, stuff you, God, I want to be my own God.

[24 : 42] How did Christ forgive you? He went to the cross. Let that melt your heart and forgive the one that has hurt you. When Paul wants to help Christians be generous with their money, what does he do?

He says, remember Jesus who was infinitely rich in heaven and yet for your sake became poor so that you who are poor have become infinitely rich in him.

Paul massages the kindness of Jesus, the grace of Jesus, the indestructible love of Jesus into the hearts of those that are followers of Jesus and he applies it to the exact area of their lives where they are struggling.

But did you notice, for Paul, the gospel is not just a theory of atonement or of how, you know, Paul doesn't just say, let me tell you the doctrine of propitiation, okay?

He doesn't just throw a textbook at them. What does he do? The gospel is always a person. You see, it's the love of Christ that secures our anxious hearts.

[25 : 49] It's the forgiveness of Christ that helps us to forgive one another. It's the gentleness and kindness of Jesus that melts our hearts. Remember, Romans 2 says, it is the kindness of God that leads us to repentance.

As Paul massages the wonder of Jesus and who Christ is and what Jesus did on the cross, it so melts the hearts of those that are receiving it that it actually changes them from the inside out.

In other words, the more we come to see and realize the depth of the chasm that lay between us and God, how utterly hopeless our situation was, how despairing and desperate our situation was apart from the mercy of Christ, the more we see that, the more our hearts will melt, the more we'll understand the love of Christ for us, the more that God will change you.

Friends, when we see the wonder of Jesus and the good news of the gospel, let me put it this way, when that is not vivid and real to us, when it's not clear to us, when we assume the gospel rather than treasure who Jesus is and what he's done, what happens when things come into your life?

What happens when you come up against issues in our life? I know what happens in my life, I get defensive. I start to say, well, it's not my fault. If that person hadn't done that, I wouldn't have acted this way.

[27 : 16] When the gospel is not real to me, I find someone else to blame. I start to come up with all sorts of excuses why things that have gone wrong in my life are not my fault. It's my parents' fault.

It's the government's fault. It's global warming's fault. It's the church's fault, right? It's Claire's fault. But when the wonder of Jesus and what he's done for me, that I, a sinner, he rescued, ransomed, healed, forgiven, that when I was at my worst, Christ went to the cross for me.

It gives me an identity. It changes me. It makes me the kind of person that can face my flaws and my flaws no longer define me because I'm defined by the love of Christ.

Friends, if you're a Christian today, you, like me, need to appropriate the gospel ever deeper into your heart in order to grow. Friends, are you a Christian and you've become stagnant in your faith?

Are you no longer growing in your faith? Have you become bored and blasé? Have you, maybe you became a Christian a few years ago and your life changed and God blew up your life and it was all amazing, but over the last few years you've just plateaued and you walk with God.

[28 : 33] You don't need to just understand more stuff or read more books. You need to marvel at the wonder of what Jesus did on the cross for you. That you, a sinner, condemned and unclean, could be welcomed and ransomed, healed and restored because Christ loves you.

Grapple with, marvel with, wonder, preach the gospel to yourself. Okay, quick story.

C.S. Lewis, I only discovered this two weeks ago. C.S. Lewis, the great C.S. Lewis, the guy who wrote Narnia and Mere Christianity and Screwtape Letters and all these wonderful books, became a Christian in 1931.

He grew up in a Christian home. He rejected his faith in his 20s, became an ardent atheist and he was friends with J.R.R. Tolkien, the guy who wrote The Lord of the Rings at university.

Tolkien was a Christian and Tolkien preached the gospel to him and led him to faith in Christ. And so he became a Christian in 1931. And he wrote these amazing books like Narnia and C.S. Lewis and Screwtape Letters.

[29 : 37] 20 years later, on the 21st of April, 1951, he has a life-transforming encounter. the realization of the forgiveness of God's sin became real to him in a way that had never become real previously.

And even though he had been a Christian for 20 years, as the depth and the wonder of the gospel became real to him in a way that it had never been real, it changed his life. Listen to how he describes it.

He writes to some lady three years later, 1954, he says, he had this experience, he says, perhaps this is the most blessed thing that has ever happened to me.

Oh, how little people know of Christianity, those who think the story ends with conversion. Two years later, 1956, he's writing another letter and he says, I'd always believed in my mind the doctrine of God's forgiveness of sins and I said I believed it but then one blessed day it suddenly came to me and it made me realize that previously what I had called belief was absolutely unreal.

Two years later, 1958, he writes this, I had been a Christian for many years before I really believed God's love for me in the forgiveness of sins or more strictly before my theoretical belief became a reality to me.

[31 : 00] Friends, is that true for you? Maybe you've been a Christian for 20 years. So yes, I know Jesus died for me, yes, I know he loves me but has the gospel captured your heart? Is it changing you?

Is it today, this week, reassuring you of God's love? Is it melting the pride and the ego? Is it destroying the defensiveness? Is it making you more lovely and kind and gracious?

Is the gospel real to you? Friends, why do we always talk about the gospel? Because it's not only for sinners, it's also for saints. Now, I've got two very quick things to say as well.

This is not going to be too long. Thirdly, the gospel is not only for sinners, not only for saints, it's also for sufferers. Every religion, every secular worldview will tell you that it's the strong, the devoted, those that have got it all together that obtain the favor of the gods or make a success in life.

But Jesus says, it's those of us who come to him in weakness, those who come to the end of ourselves, those who are despairing that find the grace of God. Chris reminded me of this this week, that what makes suffering so intolerable is not just the suffering itself, that's part of it, but it's the stories we believe about our suffering.

[32 : 16] When you're suffering, the story in your mind that says, I'm suffering because I've done something wrong, because I must have done something to earn this displeasure of God. Or maybe we tell ourselves that this suffering will make me unlovable, I'm now damaged goods, no one will ever love me.

Or we think this is the way it will always be. Or we take that on as our identity. But Jesus Christ came with the broken world, suffered unbelievable, infinite rejection, not only by his disciples, not only by the Romans, but by his father on the cross.

Jesus suffered in order to give you and I an identity that does not change with our successes or our failures. That does not change when life is amazing or when life is suffering.

Jesus gives you an identity that is based on his profound love for you. And so look at what Paul says here in 2 Corinthians. He says, God said to me, Paul's going through his sorrow time, suffering unbelievably.

He cries out to God and says, God, is this ever going to change? And look at what God says. My grace is sufficient for you. My power is made perfect in your weakness. Therefore, says Paul, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

[33 : 31] For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weakness, insults, hardships, calamities. When I am weak because of Christ and the gospel, then I am strong.

Friends, no one likes suffering. None of us choose suffering. But Jesus' death and resurrection transform suffering from a sentence into a steward that will lead you to the grace of God.

Just this week, I was sitting with a man who is going through unbelievable suffering. The kind of suffering that I hope I will never experience in my lifetime. And as I sat across the room from him with tears streaming down his face, he said to me, this is the hardest thing I've ever gone through in my entire life.

And yet, I would not change it for the world because in this hardship, I have experienced the intimacy and the closeness of Christ that I never thought was possible. Friends, are you suffering this morning?

Yes, you're in a battle, but the battle doesn't define you. Jesus' death and resurrection gives you an identity that defines you. Your battle will be won because the ultimate battle was won on the cross.

[34 : 45] Yes, destruction and danger and even death will come close, but they won't consume you. They won't overwhelm you if you're in Christ because Christ's death and resurrection changes suffering from a sentence into a servant.

But then, not only is the gospel good news for sinners, not only is it good news for saints, not only is it good news for sufferers, it's good news for sojourners. I'm sorry about the four S's, but, you know.

You see, the good news of the gospel is that, yes, Christ is with us in our suffering. He's with us. He doesn't abandon us. But actually, the ultimate good news is that one day our suffering will end.

If you're new to church this morning, the Bible talks about Christians as being sojourners or pilgrims. And what that means is that this world is not our home. We are kind of pilgrims in this world as we make our way towards our final home, which is glory for all eternity in Christ.

You see, as wonderful and as precious as it is that the risen Lord Jesus Christ is with you in your suffering, the Bible says there is coming a day when every bit of suffering, every bit of brokenness, every bit of wickedness, every tear that you encounter in this world will be done away with if you're in Christ.

[36 : 03] There is a world that is coming that is your true and lasting home, your final home where there will be no more tears, no more pain, no more death, no more sorrow, no more suffering, no more agony.

Friends, the day you become a Christian, God saves you from the penalty of sin. In this lifetime, God is saving you from the power of sin in your life. There is coming a day when God will deliver you from even the very presence of sin and brokenness and wickedness in our world.

And so Paul goes on and he says, if we are Christians, he says, if as Christians we have hope in this life only, but then after this life that's just the end, we of Christians are the most of all people to be pitied.

But in fact, Christ died and raised from the dead so we also will raise with him when he comes again. Friends, for those of us that are Christians, as it was with Christ, so it will be with you.

Yes, you will suffer in this world. Jesus said, in this world you will have hardship and difficulty. But just as Jesus died and rose again, if you are in Christ, that is going to be your story too.

[37 : 12] Because Jesus will give us an identity, a hope, a home, a glory that no one and nothing can take away from you. Friends, this is why we talk about the gospel.

This is why we sing, pray, delight, celebrate the gospel. gospel. This is why we are not ashamed to call ourselves gospel-centered. Friends, I pray that at Watermark, when in years to come you think of Watermark, you don't just think of a friendly church.

You don't just think of community, as wonderful as that is. You don't just think of gospel-centered because that is on everything we ever write. But I pray that as you think of Watermark, you will think of the wonder of God's love.

That though you were a sinner, lost and dead in your sins, because of His profound love for you, Jesus Christ went to the cross, took your sin upon Himself, that you can be rescued, healed, restored, forgiven.

I would remind you, brothers and sisters, of the gospel that I preached to you, says Paul, in which you received, in which you stand, by which you are being saved, as you hold fast to the word of life.

[38 : 24] Let's pray together. Lord Jesus, I do pray, God, for us as a church, Lord.

I pray that one of the marks of Watermark Church is that we will be so rooted and anchored, that we will not just know the good news of the gospel in our head, but that it will infiltrate every area of our lives.

It will shape every area of our lives. It will change us, God, that we will be so anchored and grounded and established in the profound good news of what you did on the cross, that God, we will be a taste of heaven on earth, that in this little community and as we spread out into Hong Kong, that we, God, will be almost an enclave of heaven on earth.

Christ, I pray, come and do that. Lord, I pray for those of us here that are maybe not even Christians. We've never come to experience the life-transforming power of God.

God, won't you come and open eyes to see the gospel. Won't you come and help us to see what you did for us, that your death on the cross wasn't just a historical event, it was a power.

[39 : 35] It was an event to change the course of human history and to change our lives too. Christ, come and have your way in our lives and in our church, we pray. Amen.