



WORDS MATTER: The Gospel

What the words we use truly mean.

Opening Prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ, your Gospel is the power of salvation to all who believe. Grant that we might believe in the Good News of your death for the forgiveness of our sins and your resurrection that gives us salvation. In Your Name, Amen.

Q: How is the word “Gospel” used in daily life? What do people refer to when they use the word “Gospel”?

A: Outside of its usage in the church, the phrase “the gospel” is not used by most people in daily life. If they use it, they might refer to something as “the gospel” to convince someone of the importance or truth of what they are saying. Some people also believe the Gospel is whatever makes them feel better. In the Church, we use the word “Gospel” in a variety of ways. We talk about Gospel books of the Bible and Gospel readings during worship. We also use the word Gospel in contrast with the Law.

Q: How would you quickly explain what the Gospel is to someone else?

A: Answers will vary.

Q: What’s the dictionary definition of Gospel?

Part of the first definition for freedom at Merriam-Webster is:

- the message concerning Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation
- one of the first four New Testament books telling of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ
- an interpretation of the Christian message

Q: What does God’s Word teach us is essential to know about the Gospel? Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-4.

A: 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 says, “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 believed 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.” Paul lays out the Gospel very clearly that the Gospel is the news or proclamation of what Jesus has done for us.

Q: Why is it so significant that we get this right? Read Romans 1:17 and Revelation 14:6.

A: Romans 1:17 says, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes." God's Word makes it clear just how important the Gospel is. Revelation 14:6 says, "Then I saw another angel flying directly overhead, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and language and people." It teaches something else about the nature of the Gospel. Since the Gospel of Jesus Christ is eternal, it is far more significant than the things of this world.

Q: What are we to do with the Gospel? Read Acts 4:20 and Luke 24:46-48.

A: Acts 4:20 says, "we cannot but speak of what they have seen and heard." These are the Apostle Peter and John's words. They remind us that our mouths should always be ready to proclaim the Gospel, no matter the opposition. Luke 24:46-48 says, "[Jesus] said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.'" Jesus commands that His Gospel is to be proclaimed through all the world. Clearly God wants us to speak the Gospel, the Good News of Jesus Christ, in our daily lives and in the places where we live.

Q: Since that is true, how would you now quickly explain what the Gospel is to someone else?

A: It is easy to quickly summarize the Law by referring to the Ten Commandments. We want to also have a quick way to summarize the Gospel of Jesus so that we can share the news with others. Martin Luther says it well and succinctly, "The gospel is a story about Christ, God's and David's Son, who died and was raised and is established as Lord. This is the gospel in a nutshell." (Luther's works, vol. 35: Word and Sacrament)

Closing Prayer:

Almighty God, through the death and resurrection of Jesus you have opened the Kingdom of heaven to all who believe. We ask you to strengthen us in our faith and enable us to share the Gospel with others so that through your Spirit even more may come to believe that Jesus is the Savior of the world. In Jesus' name. Amen.