

# Expressing the Gospel of the Kingdom

**Scripture:** *2 Cor. 5:14-6:2 & Mathew 5:13-16.*

**Exegetical Big Idea:** God is the *author* of our reconciliation with Himself, with Christ as the *agent* of that reconciliation. This compels us to *express* the gospel of the Kingdom to others as the *ambassadors* of God's reconciliation.

## Introduction

Two Sundays ago we began a series of three sermons on the theme of *The Gospel of the Kingdom*. The topic of our first sermon on the first Sunday was *Explaining the Gospel of the Kingdom*. In that first sermon we explained what the gospel is, and what the Kingdom is. We also considered how we personalize in our lives the gospel of the Kingdom.

Last Sunday, the topic of our second sermon was *Experiencing the Gospel of the Kingdom*. In that second sermon, our main text was **Romans 8**, from where we saw that we experience the Gospel of the Kingdom, first through a tangible change in our spiritual profile, second, through the outworking in our lives of God's primary purpose for Christians, and third, through the assurance of God's provision of all of our spiritual and material needs.

This morning, in this third and final sermon, we are reflecting on how we *express* to others the gospel of the Kingdom. Our primary texts are **2 Cor. 5:14-6:2** and **Matthew 5:13-16**. These passages help us to see that we express to others the gospel of the Kingdom, first, on the basis of what God, the *author* of our reconciliation with Himself, has done in our own lives, second, because this is what the love of Christ, the *agent* of our reconciliation with God, compels us to do, and third, because, as those who are beneficiaries of God's reconciliation with Himself, we have ourselves now become *ambassadors* of God's reconciliation through our words, and our works.

So, we'll read the two passages now and then look at what these **3A's** teach us about expressing to others the gospel of the Kingdom.

### I. Author of Reconciliation (Verses 18-19)

- 1) In verses **18** and **19** of our **2 Cor. 5** passage, Paul reminds us of the foundational basis of the gospel, which is that God is the author, the originator, the one who has taken the initiative, of reconciling sinners like ourselves, to Himself.
- 2) In our first sermon two weeks ago we saw that God's original Kingdom purpose for us was that human beings would be God's people living in God's place under God's rule, and therefore enjoying God's blessing of peace and wellbeing. We saw from the first two chapters of the Bible that our first parents were indeed God's people living in God's place in the Garden of Eden, under God's rule, and enjoying His blessing of peace with one another, peace with nature, and most important of all, enjoying peace with God Himself.

- 3) We also saw how, in **Gen. 3**, our first parents, with all of us spiritually inside them, turned away from God's original Kingdom reality for His creation by obeying the voice of Satan instead of the voice of God.
- 4) Because they did this, our first parents, with all of us spiritually inside them, were expelled from God's presence in the Garden, and we all became spiritually estranged from God so that all of us are born into this world spiritually alienated from God. Bible scholars call this *the Fall*, meaning our falling away from God's good original purposes for us.
- 5) So, here in **verses 18 and 19** of our **2 Cor.** passage, Paul is reminding us of the basic gospel, which is that, God chose to reconcile us back to Himself, no longer counting our sins against us, and welcoming us with wide open arms back into His Kingdom.
- 6) So, the first truth from this passage is that whatever we express to others of the gospel of the Kingdom is on the basis of the fact that God is the *author*, the originator, the initiator, of our reconciliation with Himself.
- 7) This is our **first A** from this passage.

## II. Agent of Reconciliation (Verses 14-17 & 21)

- 1) Still in **verses 18 and 19** of our **2 Cor. 5** passage, Paul explains why and how God reconciled us to Himself by stating that God reconciled us to Himself through Christ. In other words, Christ Jesus was God's agent of reconciling us to Himself.
- 2) Paul begins to explain this in **verse 14**. Here, referring to Christ, Paul writes that *one died for all, and therefore all died*. As I have already explained, all of us, spiritually speaking, were in the first Adam in the Garden of Eden when he sinned and turned away from God. In Hebrew, the name *Adam* means *mankind*. Adam was the first and representative man. In a number of places in his epistles, such as **Rom. 5:12-19**, **1 Cor. 15:20-22**, and **45-49**, Paul contrasts the first Adam, with Jesus Christ, by referring to Christ as *the last Adam*, and also as *the second man*. Bible scholars offer different explanations for Paul's reference to Christ as *the last Adam*, but the essence of Paul's meaning is that, because on the cross, Christ took to death our sin heritage from the first Adam, He permanently ended that sin heritage, and no one need have that heritage of sin from the first Adam anymore. Christ is therefore *the second man* because, in the same way that the first Adam was the first and representative man who sinned and fell away from God, Christ Jesus was the first and representative man who was without sin, and whose death and resurrection began a second race of human beings who are now reconciled to God.
- 3) In **Rom. 6:3-4** Paul explains that, when by faith, we personalize the gospel of the Kingdom in our lives, God performs a spiritual operation on us in which he spiritually removes us from the First Adam, and spiritually baptizes, immerses, us into the Last Adam, Christ Jesus. This means that, just as we previously spiritually shared the sin legacy of the First Adam, we now spiritually share the righteousness of the Last Adam, Christ Jesus.

This is why in **verse 21** Paul proclaims that God made Christ Jesus who had no sin, to be sin for us, so that, in Him, we might become the righteousness of God. This is also why Paul uses this expression, *in Christ*, more than 100 times throughout his epistles to describe Christians, as I explained in the sermon last Sunday. In **verse 17**, Paul uses this expression again by declaring that: *If anyone is in Christ, that person is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come!*

- 4) Paul uses the word *creation* in this verse instead of the word *creature* because, in Christ, we are now part of God's work of re-creating broken and sinful human beings through Christ's death and resurrection. The Greek word that Paul uses for *new* here, *kainos*, refers to *new in kind* rather than *new in a series*. Eg: Not a new model of a motor vehicle, but a new kind of means of transportation, like an aircraft that operates on principles that differ significantly from that of a motor vehicle. In this same way, our being in Christ results in our being a renewed people who act on renewed principles, who live by new rules, who have new goals, who have a new heart for God's righteousness.
- 5) This is why, earlier on in **verse 15**, Paul had written that Christians should no longer live for themselves but for Christ who died for them and was raised again. The idea here is a transfer of ownership; we are no longer our own, because we now belong to Christ who laid down His life for us, as Paul again explains in **1 Cor. 6:19-20**. Frances Havergal appropriately expressed this spiritual transfer of ownership in her hymn that we just sang: *Take my will and make it thine, It shall no be longer mine; Take my heart, it is thine own, It shall be thy royal throne.*
- 6) I don't know if any of you have heard or read the true story of a young couple in the U.S. who, a number of years ago, knowing that a hurricane was upon them in their Florida home, and not having time to take cover in a hurricane shelter, laid their baby on the floor of their living room and covered him with their own bodies. The hurricane struck with devastating force and leveled a row of homes, including theirs. The next morning, as rescue workers rummaged through the destroyed homes, they heard muffled crying. They came upon the lifeless bodies of the young couple, with their baby still alive and safe beneath their bodies. This young couple gave their lives for their child. This is what Christ did for us on the cross to become the agent of our reconciliation with God.
- 7) So, we can summarize our **second A** by saying that we express the gospel of the Kingdom to others because, as Paul reminds us here in **verse 14**, this is what the love of Christ, the **agent** of our reconciliation with God, compels us to do.

### **III. Ambassadors of Reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18-20 & Matthew 5:13-16)**

- 1) From **verses 18 to 20** Paul tells us that having reconciled us to Himself through Christ, God has now committed to us this message of reconciliation, and we have become the ambassadors of Christ through whom God now makes His appeal to non-Christians to come to be reconciled to Him.
- 2) An ambassador is a person appointed by one country to represent that country, and its interests, in another country. He or she is an alien in that other country.

- He or she has a different worldview and a different lifestyle from that which prevails in the country in which he or she now serves as an ambassador. This is true of ourselves as Christians because, as Paul has already informed us in **verse 17**, we are now part of God's new creation, and as such, we are now aliens in this world. Our new life in Christ differs from the life and values of the world around us. The Apostle Peter emphasizes this truth in **1 Peter 2:11** where he refers to Christians as aliens and strangers in this world. To use more modern language, we can say that, in Christ, we function with a different internal operating system.
- 3) Our **Matthew 5:13-16** passage helps us to see how, as the ambassadors of Christ, we express the gospel of the Kingdom to those around us.
  - 4) In this brief Matthew passage, Christ uses the expressions *the salt of the earth* and *the light of the world* as metaphors to describe Christians. The basis of Christ using these metaphors is found in **John 9:5**, where He said this: *While I am in the world, I am the light of the world*. On the cross, He, the light of the world, willingly allowed the darkness of our sin to put Him to death. After His resurrection and His ascension, His people became *the light of the world* because the Holy Spirit imparts His life into us. By using *salt* and *light* as metaphors to describe His disciples Christ was saying that in the same way in which salt was used during the days of His earthly ministry to prevent meat from decaying, and in the same way in which light confronts darkness, because we are there in our residential estates and in our places of work, things ought to be less rotten and less dark in those places because God has placed us as the ambassadors of Christ in these places to have a tangible God-reconciling impact on the people around us.
  - 5) You see, if a piece of meat gets rotten, it is no use blaming the meat because that's what happens when the bacteria in the meat do their natural work. The question to ask is, where was the salt that was supposed to preserve that meat? If a house gets dark at night, it's no use blaming the house. That's what happens when the sun goes down. The question to ask is, where is the light? In this same way, if our world is becoming a more corrupt and a darker place, it's no use blaming the non-Christian people and non-Christian leaders of the world because, left unchecked and unchallenged, that is how they will naturally behave as fallen human beings who are not in Christ. The question to ask is, where are the Christians who are supposed to be the ambassadors of Christ, and God's salt and light in their world?
  - 6) In **Luke 4:18**, at the beginning of His earthly ministry, Christ quoted from **Isaiah 61:1-3** to declare that He had come into the world to preach good news to the poor. At the end of that **Luke 4** chapter, in **Luke 4:40-44** Christ healed the sick and cast out demons as tangible expressions of the gospel of the Kingdom. This is because poverty, sickness, and demon-possession are real signs of the curse of sin in this world. In **John 14:12** and **20:21** Jesus said He has sent Christians into the world to carry on His mission by doing the same things He did. So, whenever Christians tend to the needs of the poor as Christ did, and whenever Christians bring about healing for the sick, and deliverance for those who are demon-possessed through our prayers, we are expressing to others the gospel of the Kingdom as the ambassadors of Christ in our world. *Mothers praying out pornography vendor from their community*.

- 7) So, to sum up our **third A**, we can say that, we are **ambassadors** of Christ when, first, with our *words*, we implore non-Christians in our world, to come to be reconciled to God. Second, we are ambassadors of Christ when, with our works, that is, by how we live, we let our light shine before others, so that they may see our good deeds, and glorify our Father in heaven by being drawn to be reconciled to Him. We do well, therefore, as those in Christ, to always remember that, as ambassadors of God's reconciliation, the life of Christ in us is always on display to the world around us.

### **Conclusion**

So, I hope you see how these **3A**'s show us how we express to others the gospel of the Kingdom.

In the concluding verses of our **2 Corinthians** passage, **2 Cor. 6:1-2**, Paul quotes from **Isaiah 49:8** to make this declaration: *As God's co-workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain. For He says: In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you. I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation.*

When Paul writes in these verses that *now is the day of salvation*, he means that today can be the day of salvation for anyone here today who has not yet personalized in their lives this gospel of the Kingdom and who chooses to do so today, through a genuine prayer of repentance to God.

Let us pray!

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Tigoni,  
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