

Good News Week 1 Sunday

We have a negativity bias, which means that bad news gets our attention quicker than good news. Perhaps this is why so often religion and Christianity have come across as negative. In trying to get our attention, teachers or preachers presented bad news. They emphasized sin and immorality or hell and so, for many people, Christianity is seen as just another piece of bad news. And in a sea of bad news about politics and natural disasters, people don't need more when it comes to faith or religion.

While human nature is drawn to bad news out in the world, we are all personally hungering for some good news in our lives. This is why we constantly check our phone for texts, open our e-mail, or look for cards or checks in the mail. We hunger for good news – something that will make our lives better.

The four basic books that tell us about the life of Jesus are Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. They all tell us the same story about his life, but from four different perspectives. We call these books the Gospels. The word Gospel derives from the Greek word *Euangelion*, which means, literally, news that brings joy. In other words, "Good News." Over this series, we are going to look at the Good News the Gospels present so that we can grow in our faith and share the Good News with others.

Pray today that, through the course of this series, you will grow both in your mind and heart to see the Good News of Jesus' life.

Monday

And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory as of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth.

John 1:24

The four Gospels tell us about something that had never before happened in the history of the world. Unlike the breaking news we often see on news channels that are telling us in the same way about the same old same old – another fire, another story of corruption, another fight between the Democrats and Republicans – the Good News of the Gospels tell us of an event that was truly groundbreaking; in fact, all of human history turns on it.

This is what makes Christianity different from many other faith traditions. Other faith traditions offer good advice on how to get to God. They teach that there is a way to God or a way to connect with the divine and this is how you do it. While Christianity does offer advice for us, at its heart it is not about good advice. It is about an event in history. It is the life, death, and, most important, the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Good News is that God so loved the world that he sent his only Son into the world. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. The good

news is that we don't have to figure out how to get to God, we don't need advice on how to get to God, because God has already come to us.

Thank the Father that he sent his Son to you. Thank Jesus that he came to this earth. Thank the Holy Spirit that he now dwells with you.

Tuesday

May you have the strength to comprehend with all the holy ones what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Ephesians 3:18-19

A second key fact to remember about the Good News is that it is good, meaning that it is good for us personally. This is what is so sad about people's perception of Christianity and the Gospels. So many people reject Christianity because they believe it is just more bad news. In fact, most people who have rejected Christianity have rejected it because of misinformation or a misunderstanding of the Gospels.

Here's how you can know if the version of the Gospels you have heard is wrong — if it has not spoken to your deepest desires and longings, then it is not the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Here's another litmus test to know if you have truly heard the Good News. If there is never a temptation to say, "That sounds too good to be true," then it isn't the Gospel of Christ. God's ways are so much greater than ours. They surpass all our knowledge and understanding.

Pray today that you will come to appreciate just how good the Good News is. Ask God to fill you today with the joy that comes from knowing how deep, how wide, how great is his love for you.

Wednesday

May the eyes of your heart be enlightened that you may know what is the hope that belongs to his call, what are the riches of glory in his inheritance among the holy ones, and what is the surpassing greatness of his power for us who believe, in accord with the exercise of his great might.

Ephesians 1:18-19

Here's a third truth about the Good News – it changes everything. The Good News is multi-faceted. It changes everything about the world and about our lives. When we look back in history, certain events stick out because everything changed as a result. They altered the course of human history or they ushered in a brand-new world. Those events changed the way people lived their lives, how they thought about the world, and their hopes for the future.

From a purely historical perspective, we can see how Jesus' life and the movement of the Church altered the course of history. On a personal level, when we understand and appreciate the Good News that God has sent his Son into the world, it changes everything for us. It changes our attitude toward life, how we spend our time, how we spend our money, how we approach relationships, and the hopes we have for the future.

The Good News, unlike much of the news on TV or newspapers or on social media, is not meant to entertain us but to change us. It has a power to transform our minds and hearts and ultimately our actions.

Pray today that the eyes of your heart will be opened to see how the Gospel changes everything about your life.

Thursday

Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the Gospel of God: "This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the good news."

Mark 1:14-15

Fourth fact about the Good News: The Good News needs context and humility to truly appreciate it. To appreciate and understand the Good News, we have to know the larger story of human history. To appreciate and understand the Good News, we have to understand and have insight into our own history.

The Gospel is Good News but, at times, it has to deliver some bad news so that we can truly appreciate and understand the Good News. For example, the larger story of humanity is that we rebelled against God. We turned our backs on God.

But that's not just the story of humanity. It is our story. We have personally turned our backs on God. To appreciate the Gospel, we have to know and truly understand our story and our personal sin. As human beings, we like to live in denial and be blind to our sins. It is difficult for us to admit them.

To repent is simply a change of mind that leads to a change in our direction. We recognize the ways we have turned our backs on God and then turn back toward him. The Good News is that God welcomes us back. We need to believe that God's love and mercy is greater than our sin and rebellion and failures.

What do you need to repent? Where have you turned your back on God or others over the last 24 to 48 hours? Renounce it and believe the Good News that God's love is greater than your sin.

Friday

Jesus said to them, “When you pray, say: Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come.”
Luke 11:2

The Good News unfolds over time. The impact of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection is still being felt through the course of human history. Ultimately, it will not be fulfilled until the end of time.

The Good News is that God is building his kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. This is what we pray in the *Our Father* – thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Those words are not just empty words but an agreement with God that we want him to establish his kingdom on earth, that we want the world to be ruled by his justice and his values.

History is moving toward that moment when this earth will no longer be ruled by the values of our fallen world. God is building his kingdom and that began when he sent his Son into this world. As New Testament scholar N.T. Wright notes, “The Good News is that God is establishing his kingdom on earth as it is in heaven, through the work of Jesus Christ, and is inviting people of all sorts to share not only in the benefits of this kingdom but also in the work through which it will come to completion.”

Pray today for the coming of God’s kingdom in your life and in our world.

Saturday

The Lord remembers his covenant forever.

You descendants of Abraham, his servants,
sons of Jacob, his chosen ones!
He, the LORD, is our God;
throughout the earth his judgments prevail.

The Lord remembers his covenant forever.

He remembers forever his covenant
which he made binding for a thousand generations –
Which he entered into with Abraham
and by his oath to Isaac.

The Lord remembers his covenant forever.

For he remembered his holy word
to his servant Abraham.
And he led forth his people with joy;
with shouts of joy, his chosen ones.

The Lord remembers his covenant forever.

Psalm 105