

God's Gospel is for all of God's People

(Revelation 14:6-7 / Preached at Grace, Tucson, February 15, 2009)

God's gospel is for all of God's people. If you happen to have the chance to attend the Bible study hour, part of what you will hear me speak about is the multi-language ministry that goes on at Risen Savior where I serve in Milwaukee. Our grade school, for example, is comprised of a little more than 200 students, 46% of which use Spanish as their primary language. 50% of our school is African-American, and just 4% could be classified as Caucasian.

It's quite the motley crew when you consider the stark differences both in color and cultural background all being brought together under one roof. It's a lovely sight. I give much of the credit to your own Pastor Clemons' son who was our school's principal for its first five years. It's amazing what the Lord does through his people.

Now when you take into consideration that 95% of our students come from homes that are at best nominal Christians, I want to say there are certainly a lot of opportunities to proclaim the gospel in that type of setting. I often say that the children who go there don't realize how fortunate they are. They don't happen to think they're that fortunate. Kids at that age think that school is about the most severe form of cruel torture a human being can receive. I say, "Think of it from God's point of view." Think of it from the Apostle John's point of view here in Revelation.

This is John's fifth vision (fifth of seven) that he receives concerning the end times. Here he looks up into the sky and sees an angel flying in midair calling out for all people to worship the Creator who made them. He writes: "*Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people. He said in a loud voice, 'Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and the springs of water'*" (vv. 6-7).

Now it's important to keep in mind as we make our way through this material, that what the Lord is seeking in this world more than any other is to make worshipers for himself. It's a fairly basic concept if you take a moment or two to think about it, one that summarizes the message of the entire Bible. God creates the world and mankind to bring him glory. Sin enters into the equation and shifts that glory onto something or someone else. God in his love and wisdom sends his Son Jesus to take away the sin of the world. The result being that mankind is now able to worship its Creator the way God intended it.

As I say it's a very different way of looking at the purpose for our existence when we do so from God's vantage point in heaven: that in eternity God's plan and purpose for bringing me into this world was ultimately so that he could make a worshipper out of me! That he has as the psalmist says, picked me up and lifted me out of the miry pit, that he's called me out of darkness and into his marvelous light, that he's put a new song in my heart—so that now when I go through my day, I no longer worship myself, I worship Jesus! And Jesus wins.

I want you to think about the tremendous amount of glory that God receives when he is worshiped not just by you and me individually, but also by men and women, boys and girls, from all over the world collectively. For his intention was never that he might make worshipers out of some, i.e., the Jews, or as some mistakenly think today, the citizens of the United States (it's amazing how many people think of God as belonging only to themselves) but rather as John puts it from "*every nation, tribe, language and people.*"

How does he do it? How does he accomplish his plan and purpose for this world? How does the Lord Jesus wage war against Satan (which is really what the book of Revelation is about) so that he comes out on top as winning? The answer is through the preaching of the gospel.

Notice how John describes it as an "eternal gospel". A message that has never changed ever since it originated in the mind of God and that will never change as long as God endures. Which, you know is a really long time! It's forever. The fact that the gospel is eternal also means that it isn't confined to any one language, tribe or nation. Its promises transcend all that. Its promises go beyond all that. What God said to John over 2000 years ago in Greek are the exact same words and promises that he makes to you and I today in English! Or for that matter in Spanish! Oh, the circumstances may be different. The culture may be different. The language may be different. His promises still have the power to save.

I think of a young woman who just 4 days ago for the first time heard the presentation of God's Great Exchange. Some of you may be familiar with it. It starts off with two basic questions: If you were to die tonight do you know where you would go? And, if you were to stand before the throne of God and he were to ask you, "Why should I let you into my heaven?" What would you tell him?

Do you know what her answer was? She said this: "Well, last week I would have answered that I was going to hell because of the sins I've committed. But now I would say that I'm going to heaven because you said that Jesus came and took away those sins by dying on the cross."

No lie. Those were her exact words. And I sat there thinking: "You know right here, right now, God is calling this young woman to himself." She was barely 20 years old; she doesn't have a high school education; the only thing she really knows about the Bible is what I just told her. And yet God through the gospel made a worshiper out of her.

That's why it's such a sad thing then when people choose to reject the gospel. Just two weeks ago I stopped giving classes to a certain family. After four months of weekly classes they finally had the courage to tell me: "You know, Pastor, we hear what you're saying but we cannot give up our trust in the Virgin of Guadalupe. We do believe in God, but we believe that Guadalupe is the one who takes us to him." And I had to tell them, "Well then you don't believe in God. And you need to know that unless you come to him, through and exclusively through his Son Jesus, then you will never ever enter the kingdom of heaven. Because what you're saying to me goes in direct contrast to what the

gospel tells me and if you just use your logic you'll realize that they cannot both be right."

So the angel continues to fly in the sky and shouts out for all to hear: "*Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come.*" Ask yourself: How many men and women really understand who Jesus is and why he came to this earth? The more I enter homes and speak to the Hispanics in our neighborhood, the more I realize not many. Not many. Because, you see, there were no Hispanic Christians in our congregation when I got there four years ago. There was no core group of Hispanic believers to start of with. Just me, a couple of prospects, and my wife!

And I remember that we'd go to these birthday parties to which people would invite us and there would be 70 people all cramped into this apartment building basement. The music is blasting. You can't even hear what the person next to you is trying to say. I look around and realize that my wife and I are the only white people in the room. And of course, then I remember that my wife is half Mexican which makes it even worse because that means that I'm the only white person in the room! What a dork, right? That's how I felt! What an awkward situation when you're the only two Christians in a room of so many.

I remember one time that I sat down at a table at a party and introduced myself as the pastor, and the three men within 20 seconds got up and left me there all by myself. So, I said: "Hey, nice to meet you too!" What are you going to do? Go home and cry? No you get out there and you go try again. Why? "Because the eternal gospel" says the angel, "must be proclaimed."

Now I realize that my time is up, so in closing I'd just like to impress upon you one more time the great lengths that God goes to, to get the gospel of Jesus Christ out to the people of this earth. The more I am involved in it the more I am forced to simply bow my head in humble awe and realize that God's plan of salvation is too wonderful and too mind boggling to fully understand, at least this side of heaven.

I think of the students in our school who while being born in Mexico find themselves sitting in one of our desks. And as I walk past a classroom I'll often say to myself: "These children have no idea how fortunate they are." For the amazing thing to me is that, unbeknownst to them, these children have wound up in a place where they are going to be bombarded by the gospel of Jesus Christ every day. It truly is an awesome thought in every true sense of the word.

Who would have ever thought that ninety-six grade schoolers would first learn of Jesus in a country not their own, in a language not originally their own, and of all the places that a family could immigrate to, in our neighborhood of Milwaukee, WI? It's something I often remind the people I work with. "How is it," I ask them, "that of all the places you could have moved to in the United States of America, that you ended up in this city, in this neighborhood, where there just so happened to be a Spanish speaking church, that just so happened to be orthodox in its teaching, and that at of all the people that you could

have heard the gospel from, you heard it from a blue-eyed, Caucasian Spanish speaking pastor with fat cheeks! And now you believe! Wouldn't you say that God had a hand in it? So serious is God about sharing the gospel with his elect that if we who have the gospel cannot go to them, he'll use some way to bring them to us.

All we have to do is preach. Can you preach? Well then, by God's grace, open your mouth and go out there and preach. Not necessarily as a pastor. Not as one of those guys who stands on the corner with a bullhorn in his hand. Rather by sharing the message of Jesus with those whom God puts in your life. If you do that I can tell you that you will find rich meaning and deep satisfaction. You will worship that one who has made a worshipper out of you. For God's gospel is for all of God's people. And you're one of them. Pray then that he might bring others to know him as well. Amen.