

# The Exclusive Gospel

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[ 0 : 0 0 ]     The life-changing gospel of Jesus is not just a saying, it changes lives.

! When Christ came to Simon Peter and to Andrew, they left the seashore. When he came to James and John, they left Zebedee, their dad, and the family business.

And followed Christ. When he came to a Jewish tax collector, contracted to the Romans to rip off the Jews, Matthew walked away from the tax booth.

All of their lives were changed. All became disciples of Christ, those intimate twelve that walked with him. Later, Peter spread the gospel like no other in the days after the ascension of the Lord.

John was used mightily of God. We've got four books in the New Testament that show that. He mentions twice among those works the reason why he writes what he does, the purpose behind it.

[ 1 : 1 3 ]     It's found one time in John chapter 20, verse 31. He said, I write these events so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

It was the reason he wrote. Matthew never returned to the tax booth, but he took his pen with him. And instead of keeping an account of people's taxes, instead he wrote an account of the works of Christ.

It is the first book of the New Testament. The gospel really does change lives. Now, I could go around this room this morning and ask you to share how Christ has changed your life.

And many of you could immediately share how Christ has changed your life. And many of you would look at me and say, don't you dare stick a microphone in my face. I understand that too.

However, I will tell you that if you're a child of God this morning and Christ has changed your life, you need to be ready to give an account of that to any and all that God puts in your path.

[ 2 : 1 8 ]     The gospel, the real gospel is life-changing. And others need to hear it, and we need to share it as Christ has commissioned us to, and we need to hear ourselves sharing it because it reminds us of what we got when we got Christ.

But don't you dare think that when you do that, that everybody's going to be happy with you. Don't you dare believe that everybody is going to be agreeable or that everybody's going to be celebrating with you.

When Jesus came, lives were changed, and everybody wasn't happy about it. But we've already seen some of that, and it just keeps building throughout this gospel.

And Jesus has an answer for it. It's found in Mark chapter 2, beginning in verse 18, and it says, Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. And people came and said to him, Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?

And Jesus said to them, Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast.

[ 3 : 39 ] The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day. No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on old garment.

If he does, the patch tears away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear is made. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is destroyed, and so are the skins.

But new wine is for fresh wineskins. People resist change. They don't like it.

Mark Twain said, The only people who like change are wet babies. And C.S. Lewis said, Everyone wants progress, but nobody wants change.

Jesus brought change. Everywhere he went, he brought change. He still brings change. And the change in a life given to Christ is the evidence of the reality of Christ in that life.

[ 4 : 49 ] But that does not mean that everyone will like it. They won't. I remember I mentioned last week with all the good news of the gospel that there also comes the scorn of the gospel from a lot of people.

And I want you to watch this progression that we've already seen in the gospel of Mark. We'll continue to see it. Christ comes to Capernaum. He's teaching.

And Mark tells us that he teaches with great authority, quote, unlike the scribes. Well, now that's a hint of what's coming down the pike.

One with a demon comes to him. He casts out the demon. That draws a crowd. He heals many in the crowd. And then he goes out preaching throughout Galilee and the surrounding areas, casting out demons as he goes from village to village.

The crowd grows as he goes. More lives are affected. He comes back to Capernaum. And when he comes back to Capernaum, the pharisaical scribes come to hear him.

[ 5 : 58 ] They've heard about him. They come to hear him. They're sitting in the front row in that home when he heals a paralytic and takes away his sins. And when Jesus said he took away the man's sins, well, that's a claim that he's God.

And the scribes, because nobody can take away sins but God. And so the scribes didn't like it. He changes Levi, also known as Matthew's life. And then he sits down with Matthew's friends in a big banquet in Matthew's house with other tax collectors and, quote, sinners.

That really upset them. Now we get to our passage today and the Pharisees are apparently involved in a fast that Jesus has not acknowledged.

And they want to know why he's not fasting. Now, I want to be clear. Jesus fasted. He fasted in the desert for 40 days. And he gave instructions to his disciples in Matthew 6 about how to fast.

He did it. And he expected it to be done. It is still a great godly discipline to fast for prayerful reasons. You'll see a pattern of that in the Old Testament of God's people fasting.

[ 7 : 19 ] Sometimes in preparation, they inquired of the Lord concerning what their next steps would be. Sometimes they fasted asking God to intervene in their circumstances.

You also see them fasting when they're repenting or when they're mourning over their sins. There's only one fast that is prescribed in Scripture in the Old Testament.

And that's the Day of Atonement or Yom Kippur, which is coming up this Thursday. And that's the only time that they were asked to fast on that Day of Atonement. But in addition to that, you see all kinds of other fasts that are called for special called reasons.

There's one-day fast. There's three-day fast. There's seven-day fast. There's 40-day fast, as our Lord did in the desert. They fasted more during the exile than any other time because they wasn't at home.

And they wanted to go home. And they were asking God to help them in the midst of that. The Purim fast was established after God used Esther to save the Jews.

[ 8 : 23 ] And God's people were fasting and praying for Esther in that circumstance. And God used her for such a time as this. And after he used her, they established the Purim fast to remember how God brought them out through Esther's obedience.

However, by the time we get to our passage in Mark chapter 2, the Pharisees have added to that. They make it a habit to fast.

They fast twice a week, Mondays and Thursdays. And they want people to know that they do that. As a matter of fact, they put whitener on their face to make themselves look more pale.

They put a sick look on their faces. And they walk around in gloom, trying to get people's attention. Don't do that.

Okay? Don't do that. If you're having a colonoscopy tomorrow and you're preparing for it, you can do that. Okay? But do it at home. Okay? Because it could get ugly.

[ 9 : 27 ] But I'll hear about that at lunch. But anyway, we need not look like folks of gloom and doom.

If Christ is within us, it ought to reflect, inform your face of what God's done in your heart. And that's what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount.

He said in Matthew 6, this is what he's referring to, is this fasting process. Matthew 6, 16 through 18, he says this. And when you fast, that's instructions too fast, by the way.

And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites. For they disfigure their faces, that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly I say to you, they have received the reward.

But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others, but by your Father who is in heaven in secret.

[ 10 : 29 ] And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. He also refers to this in a parable that he uses in Luke chapter 18. When the Pharisee prays, God, I thank you that I'm not like other men.

And then he starts naming other people that he's, and what they do, and how they act, and all that stuff, that he's not like them. And then he says, and I fast twice a week. That's his prayer.

Apparently our passage speaks of a time when the Pharisees are participating in one of their regular fasts while Jesus is feasting with the sinners and the tax collectors.

I guess it was on a Thursday or maybe a Monday. Whatever. They were very upset about that. Not only was the Pharisees fasting, but also John's disciples were fasting.

Speaking of John the Baptist. Now, I want to be clear about something. The Pharisees and the disciples of John were not partners by any means, but they're both fasting as well.

[ 11 : 39 ] John's disciples are fasting in anticipation of a coming Messiah that John had talked about. Let me explain. When John the Baptist was preaching in the wilderness of Judea before Christ came, he drew quite a crowd.

Matthew chapter 3 verse 5 says, Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to him. So there were literally thousands of people that were coming out there.

Okay. Different people on different days, but they were coming. You know who else came out to hear him? The Pharisees. As a matter of fact, when they came out to hear him, John the Baptist called them children of snakes.

He confronted them because he saw their hypocrisy. In addition to that, Jesus went out to John. And Jesus told John to baptize him.

But I want to be clear about something. All those people that believe John's message and all those people who follow John along the way, they were not there, not all of them, when John baptized Jesus.

[ 12 : 51 ] And then, it wasn't long after that baptism that John the Baptist is arrested. He's thrown in prison. He will be killed. But by him being thrown in prison, it preempts him from getting the message out that the Messiah had come.

We see in the book of Acts, there's questions about it from John's disciples. So either they didn't witness the baptism, and apparently they didn't witness it, nor did they hear that Jesus had come, so they didn't know.

So they're still fasting in anticipation of the Messiah that John the Baptist proclaimed so loudly. The combination of these two groups, distinctive groups, but they have a common bond.

They're both fasting. The combination of these two groups caused people to ask questions. And when they asked, Jesus answered.

And he addressed three matters. The first thing he addressed is the insufficiency of a man-made gospel. The insufficiency of a man-made gospel.

[ 14 : 06 ] Listen, religion is what many people rely on, and religion is empty without Christ. And if in Christ, it's not religion, it's relationship.

It's relationship with Christ. Salvation does not come through our actions. We cannot earn it. Salvation does not come through our sacrifice.

We cannot buy it. Salvation does not come through our appearance, no matter how gloomy or pitiful that we may try to look. It does not come through our knowledge.

Satan knows about the things of God and knows Scripture quite well. It does not come that way. Judaism was to prepare the Jews for Jesus.

However, they missed Jesus. And without an acknowledgment of Jesus, it is condemning. Any works-based system is condemning.

[ 15 : 09 ] Any of them. No matter how many confessions are made, no matter how many candles are burned, no matter how many communions are taken, outside of a surrender to Christ, Catholicism is just a man-made religion.

It is empty ritual outside of Christ. No matter how many missions are served, no matter how many temples are attended, no matter how many caffeinated drinks are abstained, for a Mormon, it's just empty man-made religion without Christ.

And it's not the Christ that they have created because the Christ that the Mormon church has created is not part of the Trinity. Their Christ was not divine while he was on the earth.

And you have to earn it through works and efforts. Friend, listen, that's not Christ. That's a cult. And when they accept Christ by grace through faith, they'll leave false, empty religion.

However, without Christ, it's just a religion. Jehovah's Witnesses can knock on doors until the cows come home. But they'll never know Jesus as long as they believe that he's a mere archangel and not Almighty God.

[ 16 : 32 ] And let's just bring it on home while we're here. Listen, old Baptists. Good old Baptists. No matter how much you attend, no matter how much you give, and I encourage you to do both, it does your soul no good without Christ.

You need the Lord Jesus. You cannot align yourself to Jesus or buy your way to Jesus. You must surrender your life to Christ and let him have his way, not in some way in your life, in every way in your life.

The man-made gospel, even with fasting, even with sacrifice, is insufficient for salvation. That only comes by faith in Christ.

My salvation does not rest in me. It rests in the cross of Christ. And no one can snatch me out of the hand of the Father.

We rest there. Any man-made gospel is insufficient. He also says, he also speaks to and addresses the seamless nature of the real gospel.

[ 17 : 53 ] And he gives three illustrations in this passage. And I want to deal with the second two first. It's in verse 21 and 22, and it says this, no one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment.

If he does, the patch tears away from it. The new one from the old and the worst tear is made. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins and the wine is destroyed.

And so are the skins. But new wine is for fresh wineskins. In that day, juice was stored in pouches made of goat skin. A goat was skinned and the hide would be uncut except at the legs and the neck.

That skin was cleaned. It was turned, usually it was turned inside out. It was sealed shut at the leg openings. That left the neck as a spout that made it easy to pour.

Fresh skins are elastic and they could expand. So when you put juice into them and that begins to ferment, that skin will expand.

[ 19 : 01 ] However, if you have an old skin and you put new juice in it and it ferments into wine, it'll burst and not only will the skin be ruined, but you'll lose the juice as well.

The wine will be gone. He also speaks of an unshrunk patch of clothing being sewn to older clothing and that will not work because the first time you wash it, the patch will shrink and it'll tear away from the clothing that has already been washed and has already shrunk.

What's he saying when he says all that? You can't take the gospel of Jesus Christ and force it into old man-made forms of religion.

That's what he's saying. God's doing a new thing. You can't put God in a box. God does not do patchwork. He makes seamless transitions and when one comes to Christ, the old is gone, the new has come.

To put it another way, a new believer is like a new wineskin and the Spirit of God is poured in through salvation to that new believer and God ferments in our lives.

[ 20 : 26 ] He also often speaks of yeast in dough and the impact of that and so he ferments in our lives and we thank God, expand for his glory.

Try to fit God into your ways and our ways. Something's got to give. Listen, when Christ takes over your life, it's because a person has given in and allowed God to stretch him or her instead of just trying to piecemeal God into your lives.

Folks, don't try to patch Jesus into your life. Give him your life. Don't find some caveat in your life that's not going well and say, Jesus, can you handle this for me and not give him your entire life.

That's what he's speaking of. He takes all of our life and we entrust all of our life to him. He makes all things new and he does it in a seamless fashion.

Listen, salvation is not patchwork over a rough spot in your life. That's not what it is. It's a surrender of your life to Christ. It's renewal of your life to him. But not only that, but he also addresses the celebration in the real gospel.

[ 21 : 41 ] When people want to know why he and his disciples are not fasting, he states that it's not time to fast. It's time for celebration. You fast in anticipation and Jesus says, I'm here.

There's nothing to anticipate. I'm before you. Christ is already on the scene. He compares it to a wedding. And a wedding in that day was a serious thing.

They lasted about a week. And as a father who has a daughter who's a fiancée, I am thankful today that our weddings don't last a week.

Very thankful. When you were invited to a wedding, all other things were shelved, by rabbinical law, one was exempt from their religious duties if they were invited to a wedding.

And you know why they did that? Because it would be inappropriate to fast at a wedding. Don't come in in your white face. Don't come in with your gloom and doom into a celebration of a wedding.

[ 22 : 53 ] Do nothing to dampen the spirit. This wedding is not about you. In our day, it's all about the bride. In that day, it was all about the bridegroom. But it's about the couple that's getting married.

It's not about you. And as long as the bridegroom is present, all are to celebrate. Now in mentioning this, Christ is saying, I'm the one you've been waiting on.

I'm the fulfillment of everything that you've looked to. This is it. But in the midst of that, he also prophesies. And he says in Mark 2, verse 20, he says, the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them and then they'll fast in that day.

That term, taken away, speaks of a sudden and violent removal as in the garden when Christ was arrested and taken to the cross.

It was appropriate to mourn over that. It's also like the ascension of Christ. And he could have been referring to that as well when Christ suddenly was lifted from the earth and into heaven.

[ 24 : 04 ] Now, it's appropriate for us to fast today. It's appropriate for us to fast about the condition of our country. It's appropriate for us to fast about revival in our church.

It's appropriate for us to fast about renewal and repentance in our heart. Let me tell you something. This is not all there is.

And the Lord Jesus Christ is coming back to take his bride, the church, to heaven. Even so, Lord Jesus, quickly come. I heard this time last week that the rapture was going to take place on this past Tuesday and Wednesday.

Did y'all hear that? Well, I got news for you. It didn't. Okay? If you're wondering, it didn't. And you know what? If they come out this week and say it's going to happen next week, don't listen to it because Jesus said no man knows the hour or day but he tells us to be ready.

I mean, listen, we live in a fascinating time because we live in a time between the coming of the Holy Spirit and Acts chapter 2 when now because through salvation we can now be indwelt with the Spirit of God and at the same time we come before, we live now before the coming of the Lord Jesus as emphasized in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4.

[ 25 : 26 ] So now it's a time to fast because we need prayer that is real and intense and means something to us. However, it's also a time to celebrate because thank God Christ is here.

He walks among us. He lives within us. We need to live with joy in our hearts. We need to smile, have smiles on our faces and if we have had an encounter with Christ, if we have been changed by Christ and we have an anticipation in our eyes of Christ, the free opportunity to come to Christ is before us.

I'm thankful for that. Romans 10 verse 13 says, for everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved. It's not time for dead religion.

It's not time to throw Jesus in the mix or to sew him into the pattern of your life. No, no, the gospel of Jesus Christ is exclusive.

It's not mixed in like patchwork. It's not dead. it's not gloomy. It's time to leave behind what needs to go, folks. It's time for us to go with God with what he would have for us.

[ 26 : 51 ] Let's quit being selfish about the things that we're trying to cling to and instead sell out and follow him. It's time. The opportunity is now and I don't want us to miss it.

Let's spend the rest of our days celebrating our Savior and then celebrating with our Savior for all of eternity.

I got news for you. The greatest opportunity that you'll ever have in your life is to give your heart and life to the Lord Jesus Christ.

It's the greatest opportunity that we'll ever have. And when you do that, and I'm not talking about God get me out of a hole. God pay this bill for me.

God will you straighten somebody out for me. I'm talking about lock, stock, and barrel folks. As imperfect as I am oh God, I give myself to you today.

[ 28 : 03 ] and I ask you to forgive me for what I've done wrong. And I ask you to come into my life and to change me. Like new wine in a fresh wine skin.

Oh dear God, will you implant your spirit within me and help me to live this day forward for your honor and glory? I'll do it imperfectly, but from this day forward, I want to live for you.

I don't care if you've been in church all your life or you've never been in church. I don't care if you're a member of this church and in leadership or you've never been in this church. If you've never surrendered your life to the Lord Jesus Christ, today's the day of salvation.

Just give up and give in faith. Don't trust him. Don't trust some frame of religion. Don't trust some ideology.

Trust Jesus. He'll change your life. And if he has, other folks ought to know it. It ought to show on our face and we ought to publicly profess our faith.

[ 29 : 25 ] faith. And Jesus by his example and by his commission tells us to do that through baptism. That's the first step of obedience for the new Christian is to be baptized.

If you've never been baptized as a believer, that's a hindrance in your life. You come, say, preacher, I need to be baptized. We're not doing it this morning, but we'll line that up and we'll publicly acknowledge your faith before others.

Maybe God's drawing you to First Baptist Church. This is the place where he'd have you to serve. And if that be the case, just obey him, just trust him.

We'll guide you through that process, but just trust him. Just be obedient to what he tells you to do. And then there's a possibility that maybe someone here that says, you know what?

I've given my life to Christ, and I know that God's calling me to do more for him. He's calling me to serve him in a ministry capacity.

[ 30 : 33 ] I dedicate myself today to surrender my life to the call of God upon my life. I wouldn't encourage it of anybody who don't have a call upon their life by the Lord and clear, but if it's clear and you know it, you'll never be satisfied doing anything else except following the Lord Jesus.

And I'll be honest with you, that goes for anything and everything that he's placed upon your heart and life today. If you'll just trust him, lay it down here.

Make these steps a makeshift altar. Have a pastor pray for you. Do it where you'll stand in a moment. Whatever. Whatever it is you need to give to God. Let's sell out.

Let's give it all. I don't need you, God, to fit into my framework. I'm not trying to patch my life with you.

I give myself to you. That's the exclusive gospel of Jesus Christ. God, to be honest. And that's what changes lives.

[ 31 : 48 ] With every head bowed and every eye closed, if God spoke to you about any of those matters this morning, I will never ask you to do more than what God tells you to do.

And I'll never, well, I'll try my best and I'll never let you be satisfied with doing anything less than that. You just trust God today. And do what God tells you to do.

Heavenly Father, as we stand and sing in just a moment, help us to simply be obedient to follow your will and your way in every way in all of our lives.

Lead us right now, oh God, we pray. In Jesus' name, amen.