

Recovering the Wasteful Gospel

When the woman poured out upon the Lord Jesus ointment of great value, the disciples asked indignantly, “Why this waste?” (Matt. 26:7-8). To this the Lord replied, “Wherever this gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what this woman has done shall be told as a memorial of her” (v. 13). The gospel that will elicit a response like Mary’s, a wasteful response of pouring out our precious lives, heart treasures, high positions, and golden futures, is an all-inclusive gospel. As believers, our failure to proclaim Mary’s story wherever the gospel is preached speaks of a heart that fails to see and fully appreciate the wonderful good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. This good news is contained in the all-inclusive gospel that is revealed in the Bible, both in Old Testament prophecy and in its New Testament fulfillment in Christ. The truth concerning the full gospel of God, the all-inclusive gospel, needs to be recovered because the so-called gospel that most Christians believe and preach is incomplete, shallow, low, and even distorted.

A recovered understanding of the gospel will recognize that the gospel equals the totality of revealed divine truth. According to Galatians 1:23, the gospel equals the faith, and the faith equals the gospel. The faith refers to the objective faith, that is, to the content of what we believe concerning the person and work of Christ. The entire revelation of the New Testament concerning His person and redemptive work is the faith. When these contents are preached, subjective faith is produced, bringing us into an organic union with the Triune God in Christ, so that we may live in this organic union until we are fully and completely one with the Lord in our entire tripartite being.

A recovered understanding of the gospel will recognize that the gospel supplies the grace of God. In Acts 20:24 Paul solemnly testified concerning the gospel of the grace of God. In the New Testament, grace is not a matter simply of God’s unmerited favor. When we heard the gospel and believed into the Son of God, God gave Himself to us as grace, and He now lives in us as grace to be everything to us and to do everything for us. Now we can receive the abundance of grace, grow in grace, come forward to the throne of grace, and experience grace reigning in us unto eternal life.

A recovered understanding of the gospel will recognize that the gospel brings us into the kingdom of God. The

kingdom of God is a divine sphere for God to work out His plan; it is a realm where God can exercise His authority to accomplish what He intends, carry out His will, and fulfill the desire of His heart. The gospel of the kingdom not only brings people to God’s salvation but also brings them under God’s rule so that they may be under the reigning of God with its blessing and enjoyment.

A recovered understanding of the gospel will recognize that the gospel is the gospel of peace. According to Ephesians 2:14-17, Christ is peace, Christ has made peace, and Christ came to announce peace as the gospel. With the gospel, we have been called to the peace of the Body of Christ. Christ abolished on the cross all the differences among humankind due to ordinances, and in so doing, He made peace for His Body; this peace should bind all believers together and thus become the uniting bond of peace (4:3).

A recovered understanding of the gospel will recognize that the gospel shines the glory of God in Christ into our being. According to 2 Corinthians 4:4 and 6, the gospel illuminates the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. The Triune God is a God of glory, and God’s eternal goal is to bring His many sons into glory. God created us as vessels unto honor prepared unto glory; we were predestinated in His sovereignty to be His vessels to express what He is in glory. Although humankind fell into sin, Christ’s redemption has fulfilled the requirements of God’s glory. Through the gospel of the glory of God, God has called us by and into His eternal glory.

A recovered understanding of the gospel will recognize that the gospel is related to and imparts the unsearchable riches of Christ into us. According to Ephesians 3:8, Paul announced the riches of Christ as the gospel, not doctrines. The riches of Christ are what Christ is to us, such as light, life, righteousness, and holiness, what He has for us, and what He accomplished, attained, and obtained for us.

A recovered understanding of the gospel will recognize that the gospel is related to the mystery of God and of Christ. In Romans 16:25 Paul associates the gospel with the revelation of mystery. There are five great mysteries unveiled in the Bible. The mystery of the universe is God, who is the meaning and purpose of the universe. The mystery of man is also God. The mystery of God is Christ. The mystery of Christ is the church, and the mystery of the church is the

organism of Christ, the Body of Christ as the enlargement of Christ. The gospel is the proclamation of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery.

A recovered understanding of the gospel will recognize that the gospel is an announcing of Jesus and the resurrection. According to Acts 17:18, Paul announced Jesus and the resurrection as the gospel. Jesus, the resurrection, and the gospel are inseparable; they are intrinsically one. The apostles announced a wonderful person—Jesus Christ, the Son of God—as the gospel, and in their proclamation they, as persons of resurrection, testified that God has raised this One, this Jesus, from the dead. All these elements of this all-inclusive gospel can be seen in detail in the books of the Old Testament and New Testament, particularly in Isaiah, the Gospel of John, Romans, and Hebrews.

The Recovered Gospel in Isaiah

The all-inclusive gospel that must be recovered, both in understanding and in proclamation, is spoken of prophetically in the book of Isaiah. The book of Isaiah may be considered the “fifth gospel,” the gospel of God with Christ as its centrality and universality, revealing the salvation of Jehovah through His process of incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, and coming again and through His wonderful person. This salvation accomplishes God’s economy by producing and building up the church as His corporate seed, the Body of Christ, and by ushering in the kingdom age, which consummates in the New Jerusalem in the new heaven and new earth.

The Recovered Gospel in the Gospel of John

The all-inclusive gospel that must be recovered, both in understanding and in proclamation, is spoken of symbolically through the testimony of John the Baptist in the Gospel of John. The ministry of John the Baptist signaled the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ. As the Lord’s forerunner, John the Baptist used three particular descriptions of Christ, which foreshadowed the major components of God’s New Testament economy—Lamb of God, Baptizer, and Bridegroom. As the Lamb of God, Christ takes away the sin of the world. He is the incarnate Christ, the God-man, who loved us and laid down His life on our behalf to accomplish God’s judicial redemption. As the Baptizer in the Holy Spirit, the pneumatic Christ imparts the divine life into us to perfect us in God’s organic salvation. As the Bridegroom who has the bride, Christ produces and builds up the church as His organic increase and beloved counterpart, God’s corporate expression. The redemption accomplished by the Lamb is the basis upon which Christ, as the life-giving Spirit, carries out God’s salvation in life, which is, in turn, the means by which the Bridegroom prepares and adorns His bride. The Lamb’s redemption is the solid base of the gospel, the Spirit’s salvation in life is the

primary focus of the gospel, and the Bridegroom’s presentation of His bride is the ultimate goal of the gospel.

The Recovered Gospel in Romans

The all-inclusive gospel that must be recovered, both in understanding and in proclamation, is spoken of thoroughly by Paul in his Epistle to the Romans. The subject of Romans is the gospel promised by God, and the deep divine thought in Romans concerning the gospel of God is that God became man so that, in God’s complete salvation, sinners may be redeemed, regenerated, sanctified, renewed, transformed, conformed, and glorified to become the sons of God, who are the same as God in life and nature, to be the members of the Body of Christ.

The Recovered Gospel in Hebrews

The all-inclusive gospel that must be recovered, both in understanding and in proclamation, is warningly presented in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Hebrews is an extended speaking of the gospel of the Lord’s full salvation to redeemed but wavering believers, and it is an extended exhortation to pursue the promise of the righteous reward that awaits those who are diligent to enter into the rest and enjoyment of God’s corporate dwelling place on earth in this age. As believers, we need to recover an understanding of the scope, content, judgment, and goal of the gospel. In regard to its scope, the gospel is God’s speaking to His people, to those who are inheriting the promises through faith; in regard to its content, the gospel reveals and imparts the attainments and obtainments of Christ in His person and work in incarnation and resurrection; in regard to its judgment, the gospel requires a righteous appraisal of our response to God’s speaking, an appraisal that results in either reward or punishment; and in regard to its goal, the gospel fulfills the eternal will of God, the command of the eternal God.

Responding like Mary

Mary received a revelation of the Lord’s death, and she grasped the opportunity to pour out her very best upon the Lord. We have received not only a revelation of His death and resurrection but also a revelation of the great purpose toward which His death and resurrection serve—the producing and building up of the Body of Christ as the enlarged expression of the Triune God in glory. A recovery of an understanding, appreciation, and experience of this all-inclusive gospel by those to whom the ends of the ages have come is the precursor to ending this age. May we pour out all that we have upon the Lord, exemplifying Mary’s heart in the very constitution of our being, as we proclaim her story in the preaching of the gospel.

by the Editors