

The most important gospel 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

(Show slide 1 as soon as Bible Reading ends)

Did you know that our world is full of gospels?

Let me reassure you that I haven't made a mistake at the very start of my sermon.

It's common to assume that the word gospel is a religious word. However, although that's a popular conclusion, it isn't true.

The English word gospel is derived from the Greek word **euangelion**. That means a really important, good news announcement.

In the ancient world there were all sorts of good news messages that got proclaimed. For example, military victories.

Our modern world is full of gospels. These come in many different shapes and sizes. Some of them are **religious** and some are **secular**.

- Earn God's favour
- Believe in yourself
- Try your best
- You do you, I do me
- Love is love

Whenever we hear a gospel message, it's vital that we ask **two questions:**

- Is it true?
- Is it good?

On this Easter Sunday, I want to remind us of the Christian gospel. My prayer is that we will see its **importance** and see its **goodness**.

First, the importance of the Christian gospel (Vs 1-2)

Change to slide 2 Look at verse 1. **Read verses 1 and 2.**

Let me highlight **four facts** about the Christian gospel that emerge from these verses.

- *It needs to be heard again and again*

It's a message that gets us started as Christians but it's a message that we need reminding of as we run the race.

Why?

It helps us keep on running.

It also helps us to run in a certain way.

- *The gospel needs to be received*

It certainly needs to be proclaimed. It's a message. This happens in a whole range of ways, from big crowds to 121.

As it is heard, it needs to be received.

Will you take it from me and base your life on what it says?

Is it true? Do I believe it? Will I personally appropriate its contents and act on what it says?

Suppose someone says, **the house is on fire** but the fire brigade are outside and are waiting to catch you on a net. How should we respond?

The Christian gospel demands a personal response not just an intellectual nod that it's interesting information to ponder.

- *It's a message that can save us*

Not all gospels talk about the need of salvation.

If they do, they might make you the solution to your own problem.

The Christian gospel presents us with the news that we need to be saved but that we cannot do anything about it ourselves.

It says we need a Saviour and his name is Jesus.

Why then does it say in verse 2 that it is the gospel that saves us?

Surely Jesus is the one who can save us rather than a message?

Verse 2 actually says, it is by this gospel that you are saved.

Jesus has died on the cross to pay for our sins and risen again in glorious triumph.

However, that event alone won't save you.

Salvation is definitely found in Christ alone.

However, the fuller sentence reads, salvation is **by faith in Christ alone**.

It is our personal trust that links us to Jesus the Saviour and the glorious salvation that he offers.

Without the gospel, we will not be aware of the need for faith in Jesus.

- *It needs to be held onto*

There is a word in verse 2 that is very unnerving. It's only got two letters but it carries a lot of weight. The word **if**.

We need to continue to believe the gospel through our life because that produces the response that keeps us trusting in Jesus as Saviour.

Suppose I believe a different gospel that persuades me to be self-reliant or to think of myself as a morally acceptable human being. That's a disaster because I will then stop trusting in Jesus as my Saviour.

Friends, let me implore you to keep on believing the Christian gospel throughout our lives and so therefore let us continue to look to Christ alone as the unique Saviour we need.

Second, the goodness of the Christian gospel (Vs 3-11)

Change to slide 3 Look at verse 3. **Read verses 3 to 11.**

Different gospels have different content.

What about the Christian gospel? Fundamentally, it's the good news about Jesus and what he has done.

The Christian gospel is not a self-help message or an inspiring speech to help us believe in ourselves or be the best we can be.

No, it's a vital message about Jesus and his great accomplishments.

Who is Jesus? He is the Christ. Not his surname but his title. He is the promised Messiah. The Christ. The King of God's people.

What has he done? There are **four** parts of the message we see in **1 Corinthians 15**.

- Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures
- Christ was buried
- Christ was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures
- Christ appeared to many people after his resurrection

Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures. He didn't just die. He died for our sins. All this was according to what is written in the Old Testament. This was the plan all along.

Christ was buried. Yes it was a sign that he had really died but it was also pointing forward to the hope of a physical future for Jesus. It wasn't going to be his spirit that laid on in the hearts of his followers. No, his body was buried in anticipation of his future resurrection.

Christ was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.

Death was not the end. On the third day, God the Father raised his eternal Son physically from the grave.

Notice it says **on the third day** rather than **after 72 hours**. Friday was one day. Saturday was another day. Then Sunday was another day.

Again all this was according to the promises and predictions in the Old Testament.

Christ appeared to many people after his resurrection.

This was not just in the dreams of the disciples or in some other worldly visions.

No, Jesus appeared **physically** to different groups of people at different times.

Many of those who experienced this were prepared to suffer and die as they proclaimed this message to others.

This is the Christian gospel. It's all about Jesus and the salvation work he accomplished.

Why is it good news?

It makes sense of our existence and it provides hope for the future.

- *It makes sense of our existence.*

The Christian gospel explains my struggles, my failures, my feelings of guilt and my longings for a better world and a higher power.

They don't need to be explained away or buried in the basement of my existence.

No, they can be identified, forgiven and dealt with.

The Christian gospel also explains history.

How did a Jewish carpenter from an obscure town in the Middle East establish a following of billions of people?

Christ died for our sins. Christ was buried. Christ was raised. Christ appeared.

If you don't buy into that explanation then what's the credible alternative?

- *It provides hope for the future*

I can be certain about my eternity not because of what I have done or what I will do but because of what Christ has achieved by his death and resurrection.

I can live my life in gratitude and confidence because of his generous mercy.

Forget the weight of performance driven expectations which either lead to pride, anxiety or depression.

Welcome the joy brought by the Christian gospel!

In Conclusion

Change to slide 4 On this Easter Sunday, **what gospel are you basing your life upon?**

There is nothing better than the Christian gospel. **Abandon the false gospels.** They aren't true and they don't work. and believe the only one that will make a difference to your eternal future.

Or in the words of the apostle Paul, "By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you." **Let's pray.**