

Lake Cities Community Church  
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## **“What is the Gospel?”**

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The disease starts in the face, mouth and throat and spreads to the rest of the body. The rash grows more and more severe - developing into puss filled sores - racking the body with high fever, bleeding, pneumonia and infection. 40% of adults and 80% of children who contract the disease will die. This disease killed 500,000 people a year during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and more than a billion people since 1700. It is a horrible, merciless and often fatal disease.

Let me restate that. *It was* a horrible merciless and often fatal disease. Of all the diseases you may worry about, this one is no longer on the list. The last reported case of a person with this disease was in 1977 and the disease was officially declared eradicated worldwide in 1980. If you have not guessed, I am talking about the disease of small pox.

The man who created the vaccine to this disease is still alive. His name is D.A. Henderson. This is a picture of him receiving the Medal of Freedom from President Bush in 2002. He works at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center. He was gave an interview to Smithsonian Magazine a few months ago and told the magazine that success he and his



team achieved was found in the simplicity of the vaccine. He said this about the vaccine: “The vaccine was effective, long-lasting, easy to administer, easy to transport, worked with only one dose and required no refrigeration.” Once the vaccine was discovered the disease was destroyed.” (*Smithsonian Magazine*, 35 Who Made a Difference, by Paul Trachtman, Nov, 2005)

This morning we begin our 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Mission's Month and the theme of our month is, "The Gospel is for Everyone." And we will see this month - just as Dr. Henderson's vaccine was effective in stopping the disease of smallpox, world-wide - so too the gospel is effective and able to combat the disease of sin, world-side. Jesus said, "it is not the healthy people who need a doctor, but the sick people" (Mark 2:17). The gospel is the vaccine for the disease of sin.

Over the next four weeks we will turn our eyes to Liberia, Japan, Germany, Sweden and to a few ministries closer to home. But before we pack our bag, before we stamp our passports let's consider the nature of the gospel. Do we really know what we have here- what we desire to share with the world? This morning consider with me six characteristics of the gospel.

### **God's Son – Jesus Christ**

The very first thing we much understand about the gospel is that it centers around **God's Son – Jesus Christ**. In seminary, they call the gospel is "christocentric" – that is a fancy way of saying the gospel is about Christ. As a painting is the work of its author – the gospel is the work of Christ. You may remember from a few months ago, that we looked at [Mark 1:1](#) **The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God**. Jesus Christ is the source of the gospel – it comes from Him, and he is the object of the gospel – it is about Him. Listen to Paul's description of the gospel in [1 Corinthians 15](#). (1) **Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, [1Cor. 15:2](#) by which also you are saved... that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, [1Cor. 15:4](#) and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures**. The gospel about Jesus – His death, and burial and resurrection. It is Christocentric. That is the work of Christ and the heart of the gospel.

## Open to Everyone

The second characteristic of the gospel is that the gospel is **open to everyone**. I mean, how unthinkable it would have been for D.A. Henderson to say – this new smallpox vaccine is only for Americans. Or only for women. Or only for left-handed people. It would be cruel to have such a cure and to limit it to a small group of people. The gospel was designed to be global. **Acts 1:8 says, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.” Rom. 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.** John Stott rightly said, “We must be global Christians with a global vision, because our God is a global God.” The gospel is open to everyone. In Human Resources we have annual open enrollment period –opportunities to elect benefits – to sign-up. The gospel provides a global open-enrollment to all the spiritual blessings of God. The gospel is open to all

## Simple

The third characteristic is that the gospel is simple. It is not rocket science. It does not take a seminary degree to understand it. The gospel can be explained in minutes – and is easily understood by a child of five or six years old. Do you remember the Jailer who asked, **“Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” Paul and Silas responded – “Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, you and your household.” (Acts 16:29-31).** What? That’s it? Just believe? What else? Do I have to jump up and down 10 times? Do I have to make a pilgrimage? “Believe in the name of the Lord Jesus and you will be saved.”

Our great danger is in missions and evangelism is making the gospel more complicated than it really is. Now I understand that there is also a danger to soft-sell the gospel – we must be on guard against this - but as sophisticated people we are most prone to think there must be more to it. Our tendency is to over-complicate the gospel. In 1991 a new series of books came out called “For Dummies” which had the goal of simplifying complicated topics for the average person. It was a huge success and is now the world’s largest reference series – with over 150 millions books on 1,400 topics. My point? We do not need “Gospel for Dummies” – the gospel is already simple. Let’s keep it that way.

### **Praiseworthy**

Fourth, the gospel is praiseworthy. The word translated Gospel is the Greek word *euangellion* which means - Good News.” Now there is the bad news of sin and death – but the gospel is the vaccine. It is praiseworthy, joyful and good.

Have you noticed that it is tax season for most Americans – and there seems to be a trend by many tax offices advertise – to hire people to dress up as a statue of liberty to entice people into their office? Have you ever seen a happy Statue of Liberty tax person? The ones I drive by seem cold or bored or angry. As we represent the gospel to others – let’s not forget it is praiseworthy. The gospel needs winsome and joyful representatives.

### **Effective**

Fifth, the gospel is effective. By effective I mean it does what it was designed to do. There is no false advertising with God. To save some money, Not too long ago I bought the very cheapest DVD player I could find – it was like \$9.99 – what a deal! But there was one problem – it was very ineffective in playing DVDs. If there was one little scratch, or if the air

temperature was not quite right – it would chug for a few minutes and say, “unreadable.” It was ineffective to do what it was suppose to do; sometimes you get what you pay for.

The good news we have came at the highest possible price, and it is the highest quality. Death. The gospel does was it was designed to do – to overcome death, to rescue people from sin and to fill them with the Spirit. The writer to the Hebrews said, [Heb. 7:27](#) (Jesus) **does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.** The Old Testament sacrifices were not effective to deal with sin and death – but Jesus’ work – the gospel - it is once for all. The gospel is effective.

### **Long lasting**

That leads to our sixth and final characteristic of the gospel, and that is it is long-lasting. And I use that phrase as an understatement. The Bible promises nothing less than eternal life if you believe the gospel. [1John 5:13](#) **These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal.** John wanted his congregation to have assurance that the effect of the gospel was indeed eternal. If you listen to the radio, you have probably heard an ad for the Booth Eye Care and Laser Center. They advertise continually. They promise to beat any price in the Metroplex with the same procedures and warranty period. As someone who could benefit from this procedure, I wonder how long do they promise the procedure to be effective for? Answer – two years. And so I keep putting my contacts in each morning. But with God - we have eternal assurance *that the spiritual lasik surgery the Holy Spirit did on our nearsighted hearts will last forever through this life and into the next.*

## Summary

The gospel is about God's Son, Jesus Christ. It is open to everyone. It is simple, praiseworthy, effective and long-lasting. G.O.S.P.E.L. The gospel of Jesus Christ is the vaccine that eradicates the disease of sin and death. I want to read the first two verses of our mission's month hymn – listen to some of these characteristics of the gospel:

### *We have Heard the Joyful Sound*

We have heard the joyful sound:  
Jesus saves! Jesus saves!  
Spread the tidings all around:  
Jesus saves! Jesus saves!  
Bear the news to ev'ry land,  
Climb the steeps and cross the waves,  
Onward! 'tis our Lord's command;  
Jesus saves! Jesus saves!

Sing above the battle strife,  
Jesus saves! Jesus saves!  
By his death and endless life,  
Jesus saves! Jesus saves!  
Sing it softly through the gloom,  
When the heart for mercy craves;  
Sing in triumph o'er the tomb—  
Jesus saves! Jesus saves!

Let join together this week in renewing our commitment to share the gospel here and throughout the world – because, the gospel is for everyone!