

## Good News – Sermon 4<sup>th</sup> Feb 2017

**Reading:** Romans 5:1- 11 Good News Translation (GNT)

*Now that we have been put right with God through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>2</sup> He has brought us by faith into this experience of God's grace, in which we now live. And so, we boast of the hope we have of sharing God's glory! <sup>3</sup> We also boast of our troubles, because we know that trouble produces endurance, <sup>4</sup> endurance brings God's approval, and his approval creates hope. <sup>5</sup> This hope does not disappoint us, for God has poured out his love into our hearts by means of the Holy Spirit, who is God's gift to us. <sup>6</sup> For when we were still helpless, Christ died for the wicked at the time that God chose. <sup>7</sup> It is a difficult thing for someone to die for a righteous person. It may even be that someone might dare to die for a good person. <sup>8</sup> But God has shown us how much he loves us—it was while we were still sinners that Christ died for us! <sup>9</sup> By his blood we are now put right with God; how much more, then, will we be saved by him from God's anger! <sup>10</sup> We were God's enemies, but he made us his friends through the death of his Son. Now that we are God's friends, how much more will we be saved by Christ's life! <sup>11</sup> But that is not all; we rejoice because of what God has done through our Lord Jesus Christ, who has now made us God's friends.*

### Introduction

This morning I want to think about Good News.

- The word Gospel literally means 'Good News'
- As Christians, what we have found is good news
- What we share should be 'Good News'
- And more than that, who we are should be 'Good news'

This is what I want to think about this morning

- Next weekend we will be out in our community
- Sharing in the 'Love Twydall' event.
- We will be washing cars, picking litter,
- Praying, sharing and loving our community

This is going to be hard work

- It is easy to think 'what is the point'
- "Don't we already do enough?"
- And I understand that - It is easy to become discouraged

But I would suggest sitting back now is a bit like a fisherman

- Who has spent all day repairing and maintaining his fishing gear
- Mending his nets, replacing his lines
- And then says to himself "I'm too tired to go fishing now"
- What was the point of all the work if he doesn't actually fish?

It is the same with us

- We work hard in church
- We are all so busy
- But what is the point if we don't actually share the Good News?

I know that is not entirely fair

- Because Love Twydall is not the only way we share good news
- We are doing it week in week out in our friendship Group, Midweek Break
- And in all sorts of other ways.

But I wanted to encourage everyone this morning

- Including myself
- Remind ourselves of the wonderful good news we have to share.

I want to look at three things

1. Knowing Good News
2. Being Good News
3. And Sharing Good News

### **Knowing Good News**

A couple of weeks ago, I shared about Truth

- The importance of truth
- Truth that is constant and real and unchanging
- Truth that does not change with our beliefs and feelings
- The truth of Jesus revealed in the Bible

I don't want to repeat that this morning

- If you want to know what I said I can give you a copy of my notes
- Or look on our website as Sarah will be putting my sermons on that

Instead I want to think about a different issue that also important.

- That is to do with our value.
- If truth is facing a crisis in modern society loss of self-worth is just as bad
- It has reached crisis proportions
- Especially among the young.

It is ironic, in a way

- Men and women have ditched God
- They say we don't need him
- We are the ones to decide right and wrong
- Humanity is the pinnacle of evolution
- Yet so many of our young men and women have no sense of having any worth
- They are adrift with no sense of who they are.
- It breaks my heart

Because it doesn't need to be that way

- irrespective of what we believe,
- Regardless of who we are or what we have done
- God loves us all equally.
- We have an intrinsic worth from being made in God's image
- And we have an objective value from God's love for us set by the price Jesus paid for us.

Jesus told Nicodemus

*"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. <sup>18</sup> Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son."*

(John 3:16-18)

There are two important facts to note here.

- The phrase 'God so loved the world' implies all of us
- Not just some of us that are more acceptable than others.
- But each and every one of us.

Secondly our salvation is based on faith in Jesus.

- Not on any other factor.
- We can't earn it or deserve it.
- Neither can anything we have done disqualify us
- It is not a competition
- We don't have to outdo anyone else
- We simply have to put our trust in Jesus

We are welcomed into God's presence because, as Christians, we are 'in' Christ.

- Not because of who we are or what we have done.
- When Paul tells the Roman Christians,  
*"There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus"* (Romans 8:1)
- He is reminding us that Jesus has died for us and no-one can tell God that his precious son's death was inadequate to save us.

There is, however another side of the coin here.

- Just as we know we are saved through Jesus by his death for us
- Equally we cannot presume to think we can enter God's presence by our own merit.
- We are accepted 'in' Christ'
- So, we must have surrendered ourselves to him first.

Before telling him how 'God so loved the world'

- Jesus began his conversation with Nicodemus by telling him  
*"I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again."*  
(John 3:3)

- The person we are has been corrupted by sin,
- God's image has been tarnished and spoilt by mankind's wilful disobedience to God over generations.
- Much as God loves us he cannot accept us as we are.

This was true in Noah's day as we read in Genesis 6:5-8

*The LORD saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time. The LORD regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled. <sup>7</sup> So the LORD said, "I will wipe from the face of the earth the human race I have created—and with them the animals, the birds and the creatures that move along the ground—for I regret that I have made them."<sup>8</sup> But Noah found favour in the eyes of the LORD.*

We are no different from these people.

- "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23)
- and the consequences of sin is to be separated from God.
- God has promised not to destroy us as he did the people in Noah's day instead
- "God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8).
- In doing so he has won a new life for us, we may be born again as righteous and holy children of God.  
*"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!"* (2 Corinthians 5:17)

This is great news.

- We can be made acceptable to God despite all we have thought done and said that is wrong.
- However, to accept Christ requires repentance.
- Asking God to make us into a new person, to be born again.
- Just as a child grows we too must be growing more and more like Christ until we join him in heaven.

### **Being Good News**

This is where the second point comes in

- Christianity is not just about knowing Good News
- It is about being Good News
- Jesus did not come to just tell us about God
- He came, as God, in our midst.

Being a Christian is not just about knowing the truth

- Or even believing in God
- It is about faith
- Putting our trust in Jesus and relying solely in Him means we live differently

We become more and more like Jesus

- And that is evidenced by the things we say and do.
- The apostle John made this point when he wrote to the early church.
- 1 John 2:1-6 & 9-11

*My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. <sup>2</sup>He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.*

*<sup>3</sup>We know that we have come to know him if we keep his commands.<sup>4</sup>Whoever says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in that person. <sup>5</sup>But if anyone obeys his word, love for God is truly made complete in them. This is how we know we are in him: <sup>6</sup>Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did.*

*<sup>9</sup>Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates a brother or sister is still in the darkness. <sup>10</sup>Anyone who loves their brother and sister lives in the light, and there is nothing in them to make them stumble. <sup>11</sup>But anyone who hates a brother or sister is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness. They do not know where they are going, because the darkness has blinded them.*

Jesus told a story about this

- A parable about Sheep and Goats
- In Palestine sheep and goats look pretty similar to most of us
- But a good shepherd would know the difference
- And be able to separate them

Jesus has said he will do the same with us

- To the sheep, he will say

*'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. <sup>35</sup>For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, <sup>36</sup>I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'*

*<sup>37</sup>"Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink?<sup>38</sup> When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? <sup>39</sup>When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'*

*<sup>40</sup>"The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'* (Matthew 25: 34-40)

It is not enough to know the Good News

- We have to live it
- We have to be Good News in our church, in our family and in our community
- And that really is what 'Love Twydall' Celebrates

## Sharing Good News

This brings me to my final point – Sharing Good News.

- Because the news is only Good if people respond to it.
- If they come to faith in Christ
- Because, as we have seen, it is only through faith we are saved

Paul tells the Roman church

*“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”*

*<sup>14</sup> How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? <sup>15</sup> And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”* (Romans 10:13-15)

For someone to find this saving faith they need others to help them

- To guide and support them as they learn and grow.
- As they find faith
- Because faith is not acknowledging a set of beliefs
- It is a vibrant living and growing relationship with God

That is why Christians are called disciples

- Because discipleship implies an ongoing learning and developing.
- And Jesus called us to make disciples
- In his last words in Matthews Gospel he says

*Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. **19** Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **20** and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”* (Matt28:18-20)

We should be grateful Jesus calls us to be his disciples

- Because it means we do not have to be experts
- Being experts puts a lot of pressure on us
- Being learners allows us to make mistakes
- To ask for help

It means we are in this together

- Learning, supporting and sharing with each other
- The writer to the Hebrews encourages us

*Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. <sup>24</sup> And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, <sup>25</sup> not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.* (Hebrews 10:23-25)

And most importantly it means Jesus is guiding and leading us

- That was the point of the passage from Romans 5 I read at the beginning
- It was when we were helpless to save ourselves that Christ died for us
- How much more will he support us and guide us now we are his friends

Just before he died Jesus told his disciples

*“I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.<sup>19</sup> Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live.”* (John 14:18-19)

- Of course, we know he was talking about the Holy Spirit
- The Spirit who is God who is with us and in us
- Through whose power, we can grow and learn together.

## **Conclusion**

And that is Good news!

- So, let’s remember the Good news that we know
- Let’s be Good news
- And let’s share the Good News

Amen

I want to end with the Benediction from Hebrews 13:20-21

*<sup>20</sup> Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, <sup>21</sup> equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*