

The Treasure of the Gospel
II Corinthians 4:7

INTRODUCTION

The Lowries made the big move this week. On Monday, we loaded all of our earthly possessions on a truck and headed west. While it took a lot of boxes to hold our possessions, there were not many true treasures among them. My wife could put most of them in her purse.

However, outward appearance can be very deceiving. Actually I come to the pastorate of this great church with a priceless treasure. We did not pick this treasure in a box or trust it to the mover. This treasure is both spiritual and eternal. Without this treasure, I would have no reason to assume the heavy responsibilities of being the pastor of this great church. With this treasure, I come fully prepared. This treasure is the one the Apostle Paul alludes to in our text. "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of

"This" gives us a clue to the nature of this treasure. We go back to the previous Verse to find the answer. "For God, who commanded the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." The treasure is the light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the message of the person and love of Jesus Christ Himself. This is the reason the Apostle declared, "For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus sake." This is precisely my situation. My one asset in coming to you this morning is that I have the light of the glory of God in my heart, and the Gospel of Jesus Christ on my lips.

But what prompted the Apostle to call this good news a treasure? There are three things about the Gospel suggested in this passage that indicate the priceless value of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Consider them with me.

I. THE GOSPEL IS A TREASURE BECAUSE OF ITS SOURCE

The God of light is the source of the Gospel message. "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." In the background of this identification of God is the great creation recorded. The creation began with God commanding, "Let there be light." And there was light. All of the physical light that we enjoy today has its origin in the creative word of our God. But this same God has acted in a way to give the world an even greater light to remove an even greater darkness.

The Gospel is the direct result of what the God of creation did in the person of Jesus Christ. The reference of "the face of Jesus Christ" reminds us of this. God was in Him reconciling the world unto Himself. Apart from God reaching out to a world of darkness through His Son, the Lord Jesus - there is no Gospel.

This means that the message of the Gospel is not a human creation. It is not the result of human research or the product of human intellect. While theologians have studied it diligently through the years in attempts to understand it, it did not originate with them. No matter of human intellect could ever in the light of eternity be called a treasure. This word is a treasure because it comes directly from God Himself in the person of Jesus Christ. It is a matter of revelation. When Paul wrote to the Corinthians in an earlier letter, he made this clear when he wrote about the Gospel, "For I deliver unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures." Paul delivered only what he had received. This is my assignment. I am responsible for delivering a treasure that God Himself has sent to you. The treasure is divine in origin. Do you really catch the significance of this? God Himself has sent word to you. Surely any word from an eternal God will be valued above all things.

II. THE GOSPEL IS A TREASURE BECAUSE OF ITS CONTENT

The Gospel message is a message of truth. It reflects the very character of the God who gave it at this point. "But by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." When a servant of God declares the Gospel, he can be sure that he is setting forth nothing but eternal truth. He can do this with confidence. This is the reason that as long as I am responsible for this pulpit, I pledge to you that there will be nothing but the revealed word of God declared here by me. I know that it is truth, but I have much 'uncertainty about many other things which are heard today.

But truth can sound so cold and abstract. Actually the Gospel is a Person. The Gospel is Jesus Christ the Lord. He declared that you come to know God and find life for yourself as you come to know Jesus as Lord. It is when you look into His face that you behold the glory of God. To preach the Gospel is to declare the historical facts about Him and their significance for your life.

The Gospel is Jesus dying on a Cross for our sins. It is the record of the sinless Son of God taking our place upon the cruel tree. It is the report that God Himself laid on Him the shortcomings and sins of each of us. It is the report that by dying on the tree. He paid the price for our sins.

The Gospel is Jesus buried in a tomb. It is the report that he actually died and was placed in a borrowed tomb. His death was as real as the death of any man.

The Gospel is Jesus risen from the dead. It is the report that He came out of the grave on the first day of the week and that he was actually seen by hundreds of witnesses. It is the report that God has highly exalted Him and given him a name which is above every name. It is the report that from this exalted position he continues to represent us before the Father. That He is there ever to make intercession for us.

The Gospel is Jesus coming again. It is the report that Jesus has promised to return to the earth again and that when He does, He will come as the judge of all the earth. It is the announcement that every soul shall have to give an account to Him about all of life and its deeds. He is to be the Judge of all the earth, King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

The Gospel is the announcement that through Jesus Christ, you can have your sins forgiven right now. Do you not see why the Gospel is such a priceless treasure? There is nothing like it in all the earth. It is unique in the fullest sense of that word. It is unlike anything else known to man.

III. THE GOSPEL IS A TREASURE BECAUSE OF ITS POWER

Paul wrote to the Romans, "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth." Our text brings into focus just exactly how it is the power of God.

The Gospel relates to the deepest need of mankind. Ever since the Garden of Eden, there has been a horrible darkness in the heart of man. This darkness is a direct result of man being cut off from God by his sin. This sin makes it impossible for man to know God personally or to have any communication with God directly. The Gospel of Jesus Christ makes it possible for this terrible barrier between God and man to be removed. Whenever sinful man responds to the Gospel with repentance and faith, God fully and freely forgives all of the sins that this person has committed. This forgiveness is accompanied by God bestowing upon the person a precious gift of divine righteousness which makes it possible for the person to enjoy the favor of God for all eternity. Anything that can bring to mankind the forgiveness of sins has to be a precious treasure.

But there is more. Along with the forgiveness of sin, there comes the light of the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ. God is no longer a stranger. He is no longer an abstract. Instead there is opened up to the person an ever-expanding knowledge of God that truly moves from glory to glory. The only true knowledge of God available to mankind today is that which comes through Jesus Christ and through our response to His Gospel. You may search in any direction that seems inviting, but sooner or later you will come to this conviction. Light comes through the Gospel. It is the light of the knowledge of God - and oh how satisfying it is.

CONCLUSION

The Apostle declares, "But we have this treasure." Giving God all of the glory, I include myself in that "we" this morning. By the mercy of God it is in my heart. But let me be honest with you - it is in my heart only that I might share it with you. It is not my treasure - it is God's treasure. He put it in my heart so I could share it with you.

If you will receive this treasure by faith today, this wonderful work of God will be done in your heart. You will leave this place knowing for sure that your sins have been forgiven. You will leave with a new light shining in your inner being. But you must receive it. But in all honesty, I must warn you that there is a mighty spiritual force called the "god of this age" who is attempting to keep you from ever seeing, this light. But he is powerless to keep you from the light if you will come to God with a whole heart this morning. Will you do it right now? This treasure can be in your heart too!