

Educational Responsibility: Commitment #4 Proclaim the Glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ
1 Corinthians 15:1-11

There is no doubt that the world has changed. There is no doubt the change is drastic and deep. There is no doubt the church has been affected by the change as drastically and deeply as the culture. But we here at Cornerstone have taken the position the apostle Paul takes in the third chapter of Philippians where he writes,

But this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

We cannot languish in vain longing for the past. Instead, we look forward into the promises and power and purpose of God to fill the earth with the knowledge of God and we assume four fundamental cornerstones as we move into the future God has for us. Those four cornerstones for Cornerstone are these:

1. Establish our theological identity
2. Engage our educational responsibility
3. Enact our relational opportunities
4. Empower our mission priorities.

A prime component of the second cornerstone, engaging our educational responsibility, involves purposefully, intentionally, consistently working together to disciple the next generation. We are being guided in that pursuit by David Michael and his book, *Zealous: 7 Commitments for the Discipleship of the Next Generation*. So far we have considered three of the seven commitments.

1. Embrace a biblical vision for the faith of the next generation
2. Foster a robust partnership between church and home
3. Teach the breadth and depth of the whole counsel of God.

Today we will take up the fourth commitment we make as we move forward together to engage our educational responsibility and disciple the next generation. The fourth commitment is this: ***Proclaim the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ.***

The gospel is the heart of Christian faith, yet you would be surprised, I think, how few people who claim to be Christian either know the biblical gospel of Christ or are able to adequately express the gospel when asked. Linda and I have been casually searching for a recipe for something called Goulash or American Chop Suey. Please do not respond to this sermon with your recipe. There are as many expressions of that simple macaroni dish as there are people who remember eating it. Honestly, we are not looking for “a” recipe, there are thousands. We are looking for Linda’s mom’s recipe, the “one and only.”

Asking people, “what is the gospel?” will have much the same response. As many different answers and variations of a theme as there are people answering the question. Some of those

answers will be better than others. Some will be closer to the biblical gospel. Others, like goulash recipes that include green bell pepper, will be farther from the original and include less desirable components.

This morning, just as Paul recounts for the Corinthians a simple summary of the gospel, I was to share with you a simple retelling of the gospel of Jesus Christ. In his book, *Zealous*, David Michael gives you ten essential truths of the gospel. This morning, I want to condense ten to four: four components of the biblical gospel. Let me give you four nouns and the questions that go with them.

A clear, complete telling of the good news of Jesus Christ includes these four nouns:

1. God
2. Man
3. Christ
4. Response

These four questions correspond to the four nouns:

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| 1. | Who made us and to whom are we accountable? | God |
| 2. | What is our problem? | Man |
| 3. | What is God's solution to that problem? | Christ |
| 4. | How do I come to be included in God's solution? | Response |

The gospel starts with God. Cornerstone, that should not surprise you, does it? Time and again you have heard that if you want to understand yourself and the world you live in, start where the Bible starts. Start with God. "The gospel is a stark message, and it intrudes into the world's thinking and priorities with sharp, heavy truth." The gospel begins with God.

It is God who made us. It is God to whom we are accountable, to whom we must give an account for our existence, our lives, our hearts, our souls, our loves and desires and choices, and what we have done with them. We were created for God's glory but have devoted ourselves to living for our glory. We must each of us give an accounting of ourselves to our Creator. We belong to God and we must answer to Him.

God created us to know Him, to love Him, to trust Him, to rely on Him, to please Him, to delight in Him, to exalt Him, to love the Lord our God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. This is what God wants from us, this is what He desires of us, this is His will for us whom He created for Himself. God made you, knit you together in your mother's womb, according to David in Psalm 139, for the life of honor and obedience that flows from love and reflect God's own holiness and glory. The gospel starts with God.

But we, like sheep, have gone astray, we have turned, each of us, to our own way ([Isaiah 52:6](#)). Paul, making the point of the human condition to the Christians at Rome describes our problem like this:

None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless' no one does good, not even one.

He summarizes a few verses later,

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Every single one of us has disobeyed God's commands, rejected His authority over us, and indulged our self-interest in opposition to the purpose for which we were created, to fill the earth with the knowledge of His glory, not our own.

Our problem is sin and the guilt and condemnation that comes with rebellion against our Creator and His purpose for us. Paul outlines our dilemma in six words:

The wages of sin is death.

God is right and just to deal justly with lawbreakers. He is right and just to condemn and punish the guilty in proportion to their crime. Death is what we deserve for the sin we commit. And we are helpless and powerless, given the magnitude of our sin against God Himself, to save ourselves from the condemnation we deserve. If we are to be rescued from the just and holy and righteous wrath of God, God alone must save us. The gospel begins with God, acknowledges our sin and guilt, and introduces us to Jesus.

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life.

God is just. He does not ignore sin and the guilt that sin brings. But God is also merciful and kind. He is compassionate and patient. God, Who alone can save us, sent His Son Jesus into the world to do exactly that, to save us.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, God come in human flesh, came into the world to live the life of love and obedience we were created to live. He lived that life flawlessly, entirely without sin. He lived God's creation purpose in your place. And then, though innocent of any guilt of His own, He died on the cross in your place, on your behalf. He lived a perfect life on your behalf. He died a sin-bearing death on your behalf. God put the punishment of your sin and guilt on innocent Jesus. The gospel begins with God, acknowledges our sin, introduces the sacrificial, substitutionary life and death of Jesus, and then calls us to respond.

On the day the church was born, on the day God poured out His Spirit upon and into the disciples, the apostle Peter stood in the streets of ancient Jerusalem and shared the gospel with the great crowds gathered there. He told them of God, and man, and Christ. At the end of that simple sermon the Bible tells us,

Now when they heard this [the gospel] they were cut to the heart, and said to

Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the Holy Spirit.”

The gospel calls for a response. Repent and believe. Trust Jesus. Turn from sin. Seek God’s truth. Pursue God’s way. Follow Jesus.

There’s the gospel in four nouns: God, man, Christ, response. First, you must know and respond to the gospel. You must repent and believe. Then, church, you must proclaim the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ to the next generation, in its entirety, with zeal and with passion, with an eye toward their souls.

David Michael, in his book *Zealous*, as he brings this chapter on this commitment to a close, makes this statement. He writes, referring to the message of the gospel,

Embracing that message is the only hope the next generations have for their salvation and everlasting joy.

In the end, whether or not anyone in the next generation who hears the gospel responds with faith is a miracle of God’s grace alone. But, as we close this morning, I want to give you a look at what the world will be like if we fail to proclaim the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ to the next generation.

Perhaps you are aware there is a contingent in our community that arranged a “Gay Pride” day in Grand Marais yesterday. Perhaps you ignored it. Thought it of little consequence, figured there are too few out there for such an event to have much meaning or participation. I don’t know. I know the event happened and that is all I know of it. But let me offer you two thoughts relative to committing to proclaim the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ to the next generation, and what the world will look like if we do not disciple the next generation.

I was in the coffee shop not long ago. As I was leaving, getting in to my car, I shut the door and reached over my shoulder for the seat belt. As I reached for the seat belt I turned toward the window and out of the corner of my eye saw the driver of the car next to me waving with great enthusiasm. I recognized the driver as a young person who grew up in one of our local churches and who claims, as far as I know, to be a follower of Jesus. I didn’t recognize the car or the passenger, another young person, but I smiled and waved back.

The car next to me backed out of the parking spot and pulled away and as they left I noticed the bumper sticker. The blue square with the yellow equal sign, the symbol for homosexual marriage equality. On a car being driven by an evangelical high school student.

I do not know who the car belongs to and I do not know whether the person was even aware of the bumper sticker. I do not know what this person would even think of that sticker if they knew it was there. What I do know is that in that moment, in my spirit, I heard this statement: “This is where the next generation goes if you fail to disciple them by proclaiming the glorious gospel of

Jesus Christ.”

And then these words of the apostle Paul came flooding into my thoughts:

Romans 1:18-32 (ESV) For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Though they know God’s righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.

It may seem heavy and sobering to close this morning on this note, but this is the message God has placed squarely on my heart: Commit to disciple the next generation by proclaiming the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ in its entirety or lose your children to the world, one bumper sticker at a time.

The gospel starts with God, acknowledges sin, introduces Jesus, and calls for a response. Let us repent, put our faith in Jesus, and commit to discipling the next generation by proclaiming the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ.