



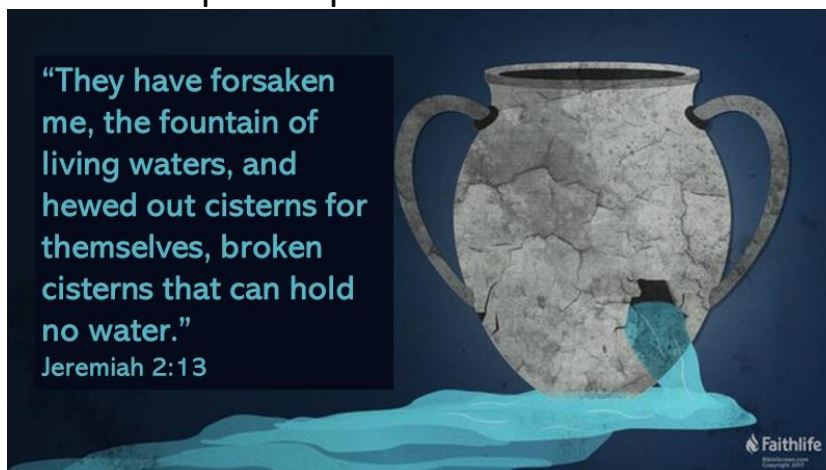
Everyone centers their life in something or someone. Why is that? Because that's how God created humanity to be. It was His creation intent that humanity would center their lives in him, delighting in His fellowship.

But when our first parents turned from God, the spiritual vacuum that resulted from their rejection of God, began a quest, that has continued in every generation... to create alternate gods.

The vacuum within the human heart must be filled.

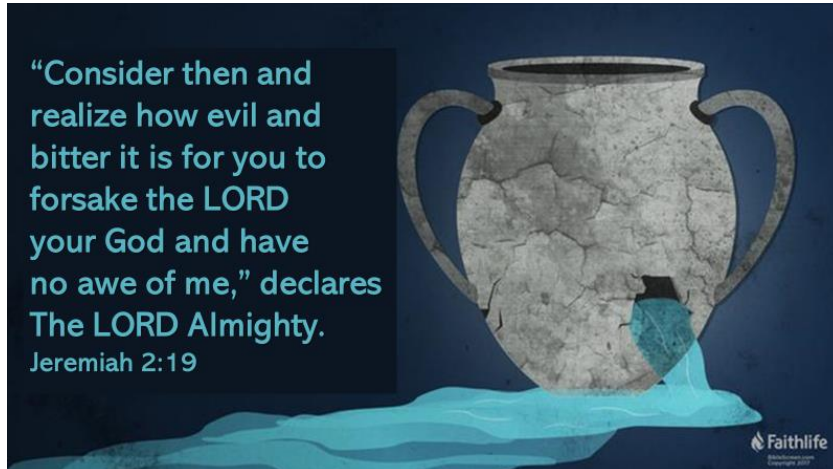


But this God's assessment regarding the things humanity turns to in their attempt to replace him.



All of humanity's alternate gods... are like broken cisterns. None of them can satisfy the thirst of the human heart; none of them can give life because they are empty. They disappoint and produce bitterness of soul and in the life that follows death they will leave a person completely ruined.

God said...



As followers of Jesus we often use the word "gospel." But what is the gospel? This is our coffee/question.



The gospel is the good news of what God has done in Jesus Christ to rescue us not just from ourselves... and our sin... nor the fallen corrupt angels who have taken the whole world captive to do their will... but from the wrath of God.

The gospel is the good news of what God has done to bring us home to himself; to restore through Jesus Christ the fellowship that was lost when our first parents turned from Him.

This fall we begin a new discipleship study entitled:



... to be followed by a companion discipleship study entitled...



What we will immerse ourselves in over the next 5-6 months is what the Scriptures speak of as the gospel.

My intent today is to rehearse with you the essence of this good news.

1. In the beginning God created a good world.

In the beginning God created humanity.

He made us in his image, male and female.
And for what purpose?
John Piper explains...

“[Human beings] were made to be prisms refracting the light of God’s glory into all of life.”

John Piper

We exist for the glory of God.
We were created to delight ourselves in God.

1. In the beginning God created a good world.
2. Humanity has turned away from God.

The evidence is unmistakable.
Something is wrong – the world is broken and so we are... because we have turned away from God.

But the triune God has continued to reveal himself in the creation – he has made known to us his eternal power and his divine nature.

Romans 1:20

For since the creation of the world
God's invisible qualities – his eternal
power and divine nature – have been
clearly seen, being understood from
what has been made, so that people
are without excuse.

The testimony of Romans 3:23 cannot be any clearer:

Romans 3:23

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

What does it mean to fall short?

The answer is inseparably connected to the first phrase – “for all have sinned.”

Humanity was created in the likeness of God, but sin has corrupted our very nature, our inner person... and without exception, we all... fall short of who God created us to be.

Humanity's sin is evidenced by our disdain for God.

When King David was confronted by the prophet Nathan for the sin he had committed, God said to him, 2 Samuel 12:10 – “you despised me.”

What does it mean to despise God?

It means to not listen to him; to refuse to obey him.

Like David, all of us, believe we know better than God; that we are smarter than God; that our ways lead to life and God's ways will deprive us and leave us empty.

We fall short of God's glory, not simply because we choose sin, but because in our very nature we are sinful.

Ephesians 2:1-3

You were dead in your sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.

All of us lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts.

Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.

All of humanity is born spiritually dead.

We may be tempted to blame our parents, but we in turn pass on to our own children the sin nature that was passed on to us.

And all of us by nature.... follow the ways of the world... which are the ways of the fallen angel Satan and those other evil angels who have aligned themselves with him.

Because the human heart is sinful, Satan has access to every person's life, and he uses this access... to influence and compel human beings to carry out his will. See 2 Timothy 2:26.

What is the will of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who works in those who are disobedient?

It is Satan's will that humanity gratify the cravings of their nature infected by sin; and follow its desires and thoughts, because in doing so humanity stands with Satan in defiance of God.

Satan so hates God... that he is bent on corrupting and ruining all that God created to be good.

God the Spirit reveals that when humanity chose to turn from God, in doing so they came under the power of the god of this age, who has...

2 Corinthians 4:4
... **blinded** the minds of unbelievers,
so that they **cannot see**
the light of the gospel
that displays the glory of Christ,
who is the image of God.

The gospel of Jesus Christ announces to humanity the truth, not just of who the triune God is, but of who we are...

**Humanity was gloriously created
and is now tragically ruined.**

The news of Romans 8:7-8 leaves no wiggle room.

The nature we are born with is hostile to God; it refuses to submit to him and leaves every person unable to please God.

In other words, along with the fallen angels, humanity became an enemy of God.

1. In the beginning God created a good world.
2. Humanity has turned away from God.
3. The Judge of the earth must bring his justice to bear upon humanity's moral and spiritual treason.

God told our first parents that if they disobeyed Him, they would die. Romans 6:23 repeats the warning – “The wages of sin is death...”

What death was God talking about?

Death

- Spiritual
- Physical
- Eternal

He was speaking of physical death – that describes when our body ceases to function.

He was speaking of spiritual death – that describes our natural condition when we are born – we are separated from God.

But there is a third death of which God warned of – eternal death. It is the just response of God to our sin.

Sin is not something trivial.

It is a heinous crime and a cancer that ruins and corrupts and cannot be ignored or accommodated by God.

God has set a date when Jesus Christ will return to the earth in blazing fire with his holy angels.

On that day all will appear before the triune God and give an account of their life.

The just sentence of God for human sin is an eternity in Gehenna.

Gehenna is not remedial.

It is a place of torment, of weeping and of unending regret.

This is the devastating bad news of humanity's condition.

This is the news that provokes offense - "How could God send someone to hell?" or stirs up protest and argument - "But I'm a good person."

According to God, goodness and badness are not the criteria that determines our acceptance with or rejection by Him.

The damning evidence against every human being is our spiritual deadness evidenced by our exchanging the truth of God for a lie; our refusal to thank him, and our choosing to worship what is worthless rather than the triune God who is worthy.

In any given day we all do... good things and we all do things that are not good.

But the good we do... is utterly and completely insufficient to make us alive to God.

The sin we commit, in word and in deed, and remember, God's testimony is that all have sinned... is the overflow of our heart that is dead towards God and our mind that cannot see his beautiful holiness and love and treasure him.

We are tragically ruined.

This is the human condition.

Now hear God's good news.

1. In the beginning God created a good world.
2. Humanity has turned away from God.
3. The Judge of the earth must bring his justice to bear upon humanity's moral and spiritual treason.
4. Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.

This glorious news – that there is a Savior... and his name is Jesus Christ... cannot be discerned from observing the creation. It is news that must be told.

Romans 10:14-15

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? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent?

As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" (Isaiah 52:7)

We often read of a mistrial of justice whereby an innocent person is sent to jail for a crime they didn't commit.

With God this will never happen.

God is just.

No one will be sentenced to hell who doesn't deserve to be there.

And while everyone of us deserves hell, God Himself has provided the means by which we can be saved.

The gospel is the good news of what He has done.

**“The wisdom of God
has ordained a way for
the love of God
to deliver human beings from
the wrath of God
without compromising
the justice of God.”**

John Piper

What did God do?

Romans 3:25-26

God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement,
through the shedding of his blood
– to be received by faith.

He did this... to demonstrate
his righteousness at the present time,
so as to be just and the One who justifies
those who have faith in Jesus.

What does it mean for Jesus to be a sacrifice of atonement?

When Jesus was nailed to the cross, God the Father placed upon Jesus
humanity’s sin.

2 Corinthians 5:21

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us,
so that in him we might become the righteousness
of God.

1 Peter 2:24

“[Christ] Himself bore our sins” in his body on the
cross, so that we might die to sins and live for
righteousness; “by his wounds you have been
healed.”

Because of love, Jesus willingly chose to be our substitute.
He gave his life in exchange for ours.
This is how God is both just and the justifier.

There are only two options for how humanity's sin can be dealt with.
Hell, or God's sacrifice of Jesus innocent life to pay for our sin debt.
There is salvation in no one else but Jesus.

1. In the beginning God created a good world.
2. Humanity has turned away from God.
3. The Judge of the earth must bring his justice to bear upon humanity's moral and spiritual treason.
4. Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.
5. What must we do to be saved?

In the city of Philippi, Acts 16:30, the man who ran the local jail asked Paul and Silas, **“What must I do to be saved?”**
Paul and Silas answered him, Acts 16:31, **“Believe in the LORD Jesus and you will be saved.”**

Both in Acts 2:38 and Acts 3:19, Peter urged the people who listened to his preaching of the good news **“to repent and turn to God.”**

Acts 15:3 describes this response of repentance and belief as **“conversion.”**

The two are inseparable, like two sides of a coin.
And the Scripture informs us that both are gifts from God.

Acts 11:18

... God has granted repentance
that leads to life.

Acts 14:27

[God] opened a door of faith
to the Gentiles.

No one can ever respond to the gospel of Jesus unless God first does his work of shining the light of truth into their hard heart and blinded mind.

2 Corinthians 4:4-6

The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord... For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ.

God's work of shining his light... the truth... into a human heart and mind... is called regeneration.

If God didn't pursue us and work in us, we would never come to him because we are spiritually dead.

This is the testimony of Jesus...

John 6:44

No one can come to me
unless the Father who sent me
draws them...

But the gospel must be received.
This is the testimony of Romans 10:13:

John 6:44

No one can come to me
unless the Father who sent me
draws them...

Romans 10:13

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

Our response of calling upon the name of the Lord... is what the Bible describes as conversion. See Acts 15:3

Conversion is an act of our will where we renounce sin, agree with God's assessment of our condition and submit to his authority over us, and believe in and receive Jesus as our Savior.

As repentance and faith are inseparable so is regeneration and conversion.

REGENERATION
CONVERSION

This is the beauty, as well as the astonishing news of the gospel of Jesus:

- God calls people out of darkness.
- In Jesus God provides everything needed, not just to deal with our sin problem, but to make us righteous.
- God enables us to believe the gospel and to walk in the light.

Salvation is of the Lord.

Ephesians 2:8-10

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Salvation is by grace.

We are saved through faith.

Our faith, as well as our repentance is a gift from God.

The same God who in the beginning created all things, including humanity, begins a work of recreation in those who trust in his Savior. He places within us a new nature with new desires that treasures God and delights in Him.

He gifts to us the Holy Spirit who empowers us to live like Jesus lived.

This is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And in response to salvation, the people of God pour out their lives in gratitude.

Think of it...

Jesus made a way for us, sinners and rebels... to come home to him.

He took away our sins and declared us to be not guilty.

By the Spirit he is at work in us to transform our characters.

His goal is that we would share in his holiness.

And when he makes all things new... and he will... we will be entrusted as his sons and daughters to refract his glory into the new creation.

How great is our God!!!

How great is our salvation!!!

We celebrate this morning the Lord's Table.

As our call to worship stated... we remember Jesus Christ.

We remember his cross.

We remember his empty tomb.

And our hearts are in awe of Him.

As we come to the Table, to receive the bread and the cup, we come in surrender to him.

He is our God and Savior and we love him with every fiber of our being.