

The Gospel in a Broken World

"Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, and serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

"Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." – Romans 12:9-21

I want to reiterate some elements from my message on June 1st, ***The Gospel in a Broken World***. The ongoing injustices, discrimination and prejudice we have experienced in the last month have led to catastrophic collateral damage that is destroying our relationships and our city. We are facing some incredibly challenging times and at times life seems hopeless at least to fix anything.

Racism – I believe is a misnomer – I believe this improperly labels the issue of ethnic prejudice and discrimination. If our fundamental presuppositions are incorrect and unbiblical there is no way to come to a correct solution. If the Bible is true (and I believe it is) Adam and Eve are the progenitors of the entire human race. When God disassembled that people in Genesis 11 at the tower of bable, He did by diversifying language – He created a multitude of languages that divided the one people group, not into races, but different ethnic groups. There is only one race, the *human race* and every person who is part of that global community has inestimable value because God has created all of us in His image. There are however, out of this one race a multitude of ethnic or tribal groups with their own distinct values, cultures and practices. This in no way makes them less than any other group, just different. The biblical position is that we are all part of the same family – human and we need to treat each other with that value.

Evil – there is evil in the world and it is within us. The Bible tells us that we all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. There is natural evil which is about natural disasters such as famines, floods and earthquakes. Sin, evil, moral suffering and death are the consequences of moral sin. We often treat evil as circumstantial but the Bible is clear that it is not our culture that is broken as much as human beings are seriously broken. Romans 1:18 tells us that God's wrath is poised against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of *humanity*. Wherever you go in the world there is evil because it is in the heart of every human. If we want to fix the systemic issues in our culture it is not about fixing the culture but the redemption of the human soul.

The Gospel is the ultimate solution to the human condition. The gospel is not one of several options it is the only viable option. This does not mean we should not address injustice in our court systems. This does not mean we should not deal with the dysfunction in our institutional structures that have failed us – but as long as people are involved we are going to face challenges. You might say, "I know people who claim to know Jesus but their behavior is just as bad as those who are not religious." Some might suggest that even "religion" is broken and I would tend to agree that religion is what is broken not Christianity. Christians struggle at times to live a powerful, righteous life with Christ. This does not demonstrate the impotence of the gospel but reveals the full weight of human brokenness. The gospel is not broken; it is powerful to lift even the most broken person to new life in Christ. When a believer fully surrenders to the power of Christ the potential is life-changing. Christians are not perfect but they are the best ones to best demonstrate the genuine power of God to counteract the toxic evil that has resided in him. If this is a genuine struggle for Christians how much more difficult for those who do not know Him.

The gospel is the only sufficient motivation for believers to care. The gospel is the force to move us to mercy and compassion. Only the self-sacrifice of God's Son can be the basis to move forward. Only the compelling impulse of His love will change believers so He can work through them to change our world. May you know the sufficiency of His grace.

In His grace, Pastor Brad