The Church: Our Message

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Preacher: Dr. Michael Staton

[0:00] I love the words of the hymn we have just sung because it takes us back to the central theme! The story of God's grace.

There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins. And sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.
The dying thief rejoiced to see that fountain in his day. And in our testimony, and there may I, though vile as he, wash all my sins away.
It is only by the grace of Jesus Christ, by his work on the cross and his mercy extended to us, that we have hope at all.
But because in his work and because through his blood our sin has been washed away, we have all the hope we need.
[1:36] Now the song that we have just sung together, while it is glorious and true, is only good news for those who know Christ as their Savior.

It's not a universal promise that everybody's sins are washed away. It is for those who have been saved by grace through faith.
So the gospel, in as much as it is good news for all who believe, is a promise that is there for only those who believe.
Which means that today, while the music and the lyrics, I'm sure, have warmed all of our hearts, it would only be the testimony for those who are in Christ.
If this morning, as we gather here, there's not been a time in your life where you have turned from your sin and asked the Lord Jesus Christ to save you, if there's not been a time in your life where you have been joined with Christ by faith, the good news for you today is that promise can be true for you.
[3:00] And perhaps you would think to yourself, but I'm a sinner. Perhaps you would say that you're so aware of your weaknesses and your failures, you might wonder, could the Lord really save you?

Can I just remind you that sinners are the very ones Christ came to save? If, however, you should this morning think to yourself that you are good enough, you don't need saving, can I remind you that there are none good other than God?
God. The gospel reminds us that we have hope. It also clarifies that we have a need. And that need is found only in Christ.
But that's what God does. He saves sinners. He changes lives. He changes us.
He changes us. He changes us. It washes all our sins away. We hear about it often in the waters of baptism.
[4:46] As people stand and express their trust in Christ and the way that the grace of the Lord Jesus has saved them and changed them.

It is the gospel message that is the one central message that every true church has and every true church must continue to proclaim.
Every ministry of our church, every age group, everything we do as a congregation must be rooted in the gospel, must have as its core the proclamation that Jesus Christ came to save sinners.
And for the Christian, it's a story that never gets old. To remember and remind yourself of what your life was like before Christ and what your eternity would be like without Christ and then to remember what Christ has done for you.
For those who have walked with Jesus for many years, it still is the sweetest story ever told, isn't it? Jesus came and lived a perfect life and died in our place.

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[6:07] Took upon Himself our sin and freely offers salvation for all who would believe. And for the one who is not yet a believer, there is no news more important for you to hear or no news more important for you to believe than the truth that Jesus alone can save.

We love to sing songs about the cross, though the cross itself is a graphic and violent thing because of what it represents.
We love to tell the story of Jesus dying for us, although the act itself is beyond words to try to declare.
It's the promise it contains that makes it such a beautiful story for us. Some of you who have been around a while may have grown up singing one of my favorite hymns that expresses, I think, how we feel about the Gospel.
The old hymn says, I love to tell the story of unseen things above, of Jesus and His mercy, of Jesus and His love.
[7:36] I love to tell the story because I know it is true. It satisfies my longings as nothing else can do. The chorus says, I love to tell the story to be my theme in glory to tell the old, old story of Jesus and His love.

It goes on to say, I love to tell the story for those who know it best. That's you, believers. They seem hungering and thirsting to hear it like the rest.
Christ. And when, in scenes of glory in heaven, I sing a new, new song, it will be the old, old story that I have loved so long.
I love to tell the story to be my theme in glory to tell the old, old story of Jesus and His love.
There is something sweet about just letting our minds and hearts rest in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
[8:54] Our church this semester, we're going through a number of weeks just focused on the church. What is it that the church is supposed to be about?

What does the New Testament teach us about the church? We began several weeks ago by focusing on the truth that Christ is the head of the church, that the church is His.
We belong to Him and in all things it is the Word of Christ and the will of Christ that should motivate us, that should unite us. We talked about what the church must do when we gather together for worship.
That we don't invent ourselves what we're supposed to do. We want to do what the Bible tells us.
And so as we gather for worship, we want to preach the Word.
We want to sing as the Bible calls us to do. We want to pray together. We want to have public reading of Scripture. We want to do what He has called us to do.
[10:00] We looked at Hebrews 12, verse 28 that says, Therefore, let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken. And thus, let us offer to God acceptable worship with reverence and awe.

This reminds us, this is the way that the church views the worship of God. It's to be done with reverence and awe.
Because if our minds are focused on Christ, that will be our viewpoint. We will be filled with reverence and filled with awe.
We don't just want to say things that are true. We want to preach in a way that is reverent. We don't want to just sing songs that are true.
We sing with reverence. We don't just want to minister to each other. We minister with reverence.
And the reason that's important is because if we're focused on ourselves or focused on each other, our motivation can quickly become to impress.
[11:06] When we are focused on Christ, the only response we would have is to be filled with reverence, to be lost in wonder and love and praise because of who Christ is.

We've looked at how the Bible describes the leaders of the church that He has given to the church. Pastors, elders, overseers to serve the church and to teach and to feed the flock.
We spent a Sunday looking at what those men in the church are supposed to do. The character they're supposed to have. The gifts they're supposed to have.
The motive they're supposed to have as the Bible tells us that we are to, the pastors and elders, the overseers of the church are to serve as God would have them. The pastors of the church are not to do their own thing.
They're not to advance their own career. They are not here to make much of themselves. They are here to serve as God would have them. which would be to always be pointing people to Jesus.

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[12:09] We talked about how the church has this tension we live with. That we want to be faithful and yet only God can do the work ultimately.

We want to proclaim the Gospel but only God can save. We want to pray for people to be converted but only the Holy Spirit can convince. We want to teach and disciple but only God can cause the growth.
And so we trust God to do what only God can do. But we want to be found faithful declaring and proclaiming the Gospel.
We've talked about how we are to be a church filled with members who are ministering that the Lord has given each of us gifts to serve and we want to use those gifts to minister to each other to help each other to strengthen the church that we're not here just to watch or observe but we're here to engage to participate in the work of ministry.
And that's because that's what God in His Word has called us to do. And all of it goes back to reminding ourselves that as a congregation we are the Lord's.
[13:25] And everything we do and the way that we do it is to be done in a way that makes much of Jesus Christ. And the way that we ought to remind ourselves of that truth is through the message of the church.

So today I want us to think about our message. And our message simply is the gospel of Jesus Christ.
Joey read it for us so let me invite you to turn back with me to Titus chapter 3. And let's remind ourselves of the message that we have to proclaim.
And this message should be declared from the pulpit. It should be declared in Sunday school classrooms. It should be taught in Awana classrooms. It should be declared in our youth service on Wednesday night.
It's a message that's declared through our Crossroads ministry, through ladies ministry, through our men's ministry. You name it, this is the message that we sing, that we speak, that we teach, that we proclaim that we are sinners deserving of judgment.
[14:27] But God in His grace and in His mercy sent forth His Son and that Christ as our sacrifice is the Savior for all who would believe in Him. This is the message we have as the body of Christ.

Look again at Titus 3 with me in verse 3. For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another.
I want you to make note first of our condition without Christ. Our condition without Christ. Verse 3 describes it for us and it shows us just how dreadful our condition was without Christ.
We were full first of sinful actions. It says, we ourselves were foolish and disobedient and led astray. It means we lacked understanding.
We lacked a spiritual sense. We did not do as we should. And let me be honest and tell you, this is true of all of us.
[15:47] Today, if you don't know Christ as your Savior, it's very possible that you are a very kind person. and it's possible that you're a very diligent student and it's possible that you are an extraordinary employee and you can be a great citizen and you can be a caring neighbor.

But the Bible says without faith it's impossible to please God. Spiritually speaking, it is impossible to do any good work apart from having faith in God, which means you could never have enough good works to save you because you could never even get started on that.
Even your acts of kindness or generosity or benevolence, if not rooted in faith, are not pleasing to God. And so the Bible is right when it tells us that our actions without Christ are sinful and the reason our actions are sinful, second, is because we have sinful desires.
It says we were slaves to various passions and pleasures. It's all kinds of sinful desires. And those sinful desires will find all kinds of ways to express themselves.
We think about the sin of pride. And sometimes the sin of pride is expressed through boasting and you just say you're better than somebody else.
[17:22] But pride has so many different ways to express itself. It may not be boasting and arrogance. Pride may be rooted in jealousy because someone else is given a blessing and you think to yourself, I deserve something like that.

That's pride. Just like pride can manifest itself in so many different ways, so can all kinds of other sinful desires.

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And the reason why we have all kinds of sinful actions is because it springs from hearts that have all kinds of sinful desires. And the reason for that, thirdly, is because we are full of sinful motives. It says we were passing our days in malice and envy. It means we were filled with anger. We were filled with jealousy. We had ill will toward people.
It means that we're not grateful the way that we should be because we always feel like we deserve something more. Now, to say that you were filled with sinful actions and sinful desires and sinful motives is not to say that in any given day that a person without Christ is acting as evil as they could.
[18:37] There are people who don't know Christ that are vile and murderous. There are other people without Christ who are much more kind and gentle. It doesn't mean you're as expressing your sin as profoundly as one could.

What it does mean is that every part of your life has been impacted by your sinful condition. Your mind, your thoughts, your heart, your desires, your will, your body, every part of who you are has been impacted by the fact that apart from Christ we are sinners.
That's true for all of us. That's who we were without Christ. And we had relationships that weren't right. The verse goes on in verse 3 to say you were hated by others and hating one another.
This is to say that our sin affects not only all of who we are, it affects every relationship we have. Sin impacts our relationship with God, obviously, but it also impacts our relationships with people and it even impacts the way that we view and feel about ourselves.
This is who we were without Christ. This is our life without salvation. This is our condition without Christ.
[20:03] Christ. If you're here this morning and you've never been saved and you don't know Jesus Christ in a personal way, this is who you are today.

And it's tempting, I know, to say, but I'm not near as bad as some other people and if you compare your life, even as an unbeliever, to other unbelievers, you will no doubt be able to find all kinds of examples of people who acted out in a more horrific and vile and obvious way.
But can I just remind you gracefully that the standard of heaven is not the sinner you're thinking of. It is Christ.
Christ. And if you think you're going to make it to heaven because you compare better than somebody you've heard about on the news or you live better than somebody else that you know of that you work with, can I remind you that that person is not the standard of heaven.
Compare instead your life to Christ. Christ. His perfection. His sinlessness.
[21:36] You will understand very quickly that while in your mind you may surpass some other sinful person, you in no way meet the requirements of heaven because you are far from perfect.

And that's true for all of us. That is our condition without Christ. That is the bad news.
We are all sinners. And that sin brings judgment. And there is literally nothing you can do on your own because even if from this day forward you could act perfectly which you can't, you already have enough sin on your record that it would keep you forever and forever away from the glories of heaven and the presence of Jesus to bless.
But the message of the church is one of glorious news. Second, we see in verses 4 through 6 our conversion in Christ.
Our condition without Christ is that we are sinners and our conversion in Christ is due to His good works. Look at verse 4. But, when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared.
[23:03] Here's the contrast. Yes, we were sinners and without hope, but, when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, there is good news.

And the good news is that God in His kindness has sent us Christ. Romans 2, verse 4 says, Do you presume on the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?
Here's what that means. You may, as an unbeliever even today, think to yourself, you know what? I don't act as bad as I could. I do plenty of good things.
I mean, after all, I'm at church on Sunday and you may even be happy to be here. Maybe your parents made you come. Maybe your teenagers convinced you to come. Whatever it may be, you're here at church and you're fine to be here and as you compare your life to other people, you can feel pretty secure and pretty proud of yourself.

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But the truth of the matter is that we are all sinners. Here's the danger. You could say to yourself, but I don't truly repent of my sin. I've never truly given my life to Jesus, but I seem to be doing pretty good.
[24:18] Marriage is okay. Kids are okay. Come to church on Sundays. Career is going pretty well. But don't confuse God's patience with you as His pleasure of you dwelling in your sin.

The kindness of God is there to lead you to repentance. That's what the verse tells us in Romans 2.4. And the verse here in Titus 3 reminds us it's His kindness and it says of His love.
It's not the usual word that's translated as love here in the original text. It's the word that refers to pity. That God loves us is kind toward us and He's taken pity upon us.
Our condition is that we were sinners completely unable to save ourselves. And God in His kindness in His pity in His love made a way for us.
How did He do it? Well, it was according to His works not ours. Verse 5 He saved us. For the believers in our church if somebody asks you what's your testimony?
[25:40] Tell me how you came to faith in Christ. You could say a lot of things and you could give lots of explanation of the people God used to teach you the truth and the way the Lord saved you and the way that He changed your life.

But if you just want to communicate your testimony in three words let it be these three He saved me. That's your testimony.
God saved me. Those three words by themselves give us the heart of the Gospel. that it is God who has done the work.
That the act of saving is something He performed not I performed and He saved me because I needed saving. Sometimes when people share their testimony it's filled with all kinds of grandiose stories about their life and sometimes even filled with almost glorifying their sin and sometimes we get so filled with the things we did or the decisions we made or even the circumstances of our lives and here's the heart of the Gospel it really is this simple if you are a believer here's why you're a believer God saved you.
He saved us. Goes on to say in the verse look at it in your text here not because of works done by us in righteousness but according to His own mercy.
[27:20] It's not our works that saves us it's His mercy that is our hope or as one man put it we can no more save ourselves than could a spider web hold back a tank.

We were powerless to save but here's the heart of the Gospel God saved us. God's grace speaks of Him giving to us what we did not deserve.
His mercy speaks of God withholding from us a judgment we did deserve and as one author stated that mercy is what you ask for when you can't think of anything else.
When you have no other plea when you have no other hope when you have no other option we just say God have mercy. It's the heart of the Gospel.
God there's nothing else I can do I can't be good enough I can't try hard enough I can't accomplish enough things God would you just be merciful to me.
[28:33] for the children of our congregation today children listen to me closely here your only hope of salvation is that you have a God who is merciful and today if you with faith would cry out to the Lord Jesus believing in Him and trusting in Him the Bible says that you will be saved saved and to our teenagers the Gospel is not different it's the same there is no way in your own on your own that you could ever earn heaven the heart of the Gospel for our teenagers is that we are sinners deserving of judgment but God is rich in grace and mercy and through Jesus God saves and today teenagers if you would call upon the name of the Lord believing in the promises of God this day you will be saved and for the adults in our congregation there's not a different

Gospel it's the same the Gospel is that on your own your works have earned you judgment but God who is rich in mercy sent His Son and through His works those who would believe in Him with the gift of faith will be saved we don't have a Gospel for our kids and a different Gospel for our teenagers and then a different Gospel for the adults it's one message it's one theme it's one Gospel salvation found in Jesus Christ alone and no matter what brought you here today there is one message by which you will be saved and it's the message of the grace of Jesus Christ our Savior and I want to call on you even this day to trust in the
Lord Jesus Christ to confess your sin and to ask Him even this day to forgive you and find everlasting life in the Old Testament one of my favorite books of the Bible the book of Habakkuk

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chapter 3 verse 2 after Habakkuk has wrestled with God and Habakkuk has been put in his place and he understands the power of God and the strength of God and the veracity of God's promise Habakkuk who was once combative is now trusting and he says Lord we have heard of your fame we stand in awe of your deeds renew them in our day in our time make them known and Habakkuk says this in your wrath remember mercy this is the gospel judgment awaits all who have not trusted in
Christ but in God's wrath against sin he is merciful would you even today call upon the name of the Lord and be saved and this salvation described in Titus 3 is salvation through the triune God one God in three persons father son and spirit and we see that here in our text this morning according to his own mercy by the washing and regeneration and renewal of the holy spirit God the father sent his son God the son died in our place was raised back to life ascended back to heaven sends the holy spirit who then draws sinners to the father through the work of the son it says this happens in regeneration renewal it means we are washed we are made new and let me just speak a word to those of us who have been
Christians for a long time don't ever get over the wonder that God in mercy saved you and the grace that saved you is the grace today that holds you the grace that holds you is the grace that one day will welcome you into heaven and when we see him for as he is and when we understand the beauty of the gospel even more on that day than we do on this day more than ever before we will be amazed that it was all the amazing grace of God that saved us don't ever lose that sometimes those of us who have been saved for a long time can forget what it was like to be lost remind yourself daily of the beauty of the gospel and give your life for the glory of
[34:16] Christ to share that gospel message with those who still need to hear it I think about it in a physical way we've got a lot of people who right now we've got a new members class we've got a really large group of great potential new members having such a great time getting to know them these last couple of weeks and I think about how hard it can be to be new in the church to not know people to not know where everything meets to not know what all the names and acronyms mean to not know where all the rooms!

It can be hard to be new and that can it is easy to forget what it was like to be new and to be new often is to be lost you're kind of at a loss where does this class meet where does this room meet and you said this thing meets here is that for me is that for kids is that for adults and we talk about these traditions and it can be hard to be new because you can be lost and it is hard when you're lost those of us who have been in this church a long time ought to remember what it was like to be new what it was like to be lost and help our new members to quickly feel a part of the life of our church well in a similar way if you've been a Christian for a long time it can be easy to forget what it was like to be spiritually lost you wake up every day with hope as a Christian you face every trial and tragedy with your heart broken but with hope in
Christ you think of your future after you die and you know heaven is your home there's a hope there's a joy there's a victory that we live with as believers and it can be easy to forget what it was like to lost it would do us well to remember just how sweet it was when grace saved us when grace changed us because that helps us to pray as we should for those who still need Christ it gives us boldness to share the gospel and not be afraid of men it gives us courage to speak the words of the gospel as we should father sent the son the son lived and died and was raised back to life and the spirit of God calls us to regeneration and renewal verse 6 says God poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior think about those words with me salvation the gospel comes to us through Christ Jesus Christ our Savior and it's so interesting living in our part of the world in this day in history to watch how our world views Jesus it's such an interesting thing because we live in a time in which the story that gets told publicly in the world not the church but by the world of Jesus is very different you'll hear people all the time even unbelievers even those who otherwise mock the things of God who will still often speak kindly about
Jesus and they'll use it almost as a weapon and they'll say things like who are you to say something is wrong you should just love like Jesus or who are you to condemn my life or to condemn the way that I live!
[38:17] you should be forgiving and loving like Jesus and Jesus is forgiving and loving but can I remind you even from this story that tells us of his grace it tells us that Jesus Christ is our savior if he is a savior it means there are those who need saving and the reason we need saving is because of our sin and the problem of our sin is that we cannot save ourselves which means to sin against

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God is to be in a condition where you are facing judgment that's why it's good news that Jesus Christ is a savior not because sin is not a big deal all the world has to do is ask themselves why did Jesus die the world is fine with talking about Jesus miracles or even some of his parables but when you ask them why did he die it changes very quickly he died as a payment for sin because your rebellion against

God earned you death and only Jesus Christ alone can rescue this is the good news of the gospel it's the story of Jesus but here's the thing the world tells the story of Jesus as nothing more than a nice benevolent man who walked around and just made life easy for everybody else the world leaves out the story of Jesus that he came to die because without him every one of us are bound for hell if you hear someone tell the story of Jesus make sure they know the full story of Jesus born in the manger yes a friend of sinners yes a savior absolutely but a savior for people who without him will face eternity away from him the story of
Jesus is a beautiful story but it's only good news for those who believe some of you know the name Fanny Crosby hymn writer back in 1880 she penned another hymn that's one of my all time favorites tell me the story of Jesus write on my heart every word tell me the story most precious sweetest that ever was heard tell how the angels in chorus sang as they welcomed his birth glory to God in the highest peace and good tidings to earth but the hymn rightly goes on to tell the full story tell of the cross where they nailed him writhing in anguish and pain tell of the grave where they laid him tell how he liveth again love in that story so tender clearer than ever
I see stay let me weep while you whisper love paid the ransom for me tell me the story of Jesus write on my heart every word tell me the story most precious sweetest that ever was heard the story of the gospel is beautiful and it's good news for all who believe but the story of Jesus is not only that he saves sinners it's that he alone saves sinners if you don't know Christ would you even this morning call upon the name of
Jesus and be saved our condition without Christ is that we were sinners bound for judgment our conversion in Christ is due to the work that God has done and let me show you thirdly in verse 7 our change through Christ our change through Christ verse 7 so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs this is our change through Christ we are justified we are declared righteous we have become heirs with Christ and look at the end of the verse according to the hope of eternal life what is our change we've been justified we've been made heirs and we've been given eternal life this is our hope this is the change we have through the work of Christ if today you're believing the [44:08] Lord Jesus Christ been saved by grace through faith you have been justified you have been declared righteous you have been forgiven you are an heir with Christ you've been given eternal!

life that which is eternal cannot be taken from you or else it was never eternal it is a salvation is forever you are truly held by the hands of Christ if you are a believer you are held by the hands of God no one can snatch you out of his hands grace saved you grace sustains you grace will call you home and every day as Christians we live with the hope and the belief and the promise that for today and for all eternity we belong to him and nothing will ever take us out of the love God has for us would you today elementary student today teenager today college student parent grandparent senior adult today is the day of salvation today is the day to call upon the name of the
Lord today if you hear his voice calling you do not turn it away this day today not tomorrow not promised to you not next time not guaranteed for you this day today would you today call upon the name of the Lord and be saved the testimony of the gospel is that he saves us this day if you sense the Holy Spirit convicting your heart of sin this day if you sense the Lord opening your eyes to believe the gospel and to behold the glory of it this day would you in your heart just cry out to the Lord God I am a sinner God save me would you this day with faith believing in the promise of the gospel cry out to the Lord God save me and it would be our joy and delight to help you walk with Jesus to help you to know how to build daily habits into your life to grow in your relationship with the Lord it would be our desire to talk to you about how to walk with Christ it would be our joy to talk to you about how to lead your family in the way of Christ it would be our joy to talk to you about baptism and what baptism is and why we would you let us as your church know how we can help you how we can pray for you how we can sit down with you with a Bible that's open and just walk you through seeing how to live and how to build your life upon the truth of the gospel I would invite any of you whether you are new to our church or been!

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a long time whether a child or a teenager or an adult to take the connection card from your bulletin and give us your name and just say today I'm asking Jesus to save me today I'm calling out on the name of the Lord today I'm giving my life to Jesus Christ let us know so that we can follow up with you and pray with you and talk with!
[48:00] with Bibles that are open and with time to be able to disciple you and shepherd you and what it means to now follow the Lord Jesus Christ all the days of your life today you have heard the gospel today can be the day your life is changed forever but be clear on this today removes all excuse of saying you never heard you have heard from the word the truth of the gospel today call upon the name of the Lord and be saved we sang together a few moments ago the words ever since by faith

I saw the stream thy flowing wounds supplied redeeming love has been my theme and shall be till I die and one day when this body gives way as we sung about when this poor lisping stammering tongue lies silent in the grave then in a nobler sweeter song I'll sing thy power to save I'll sing thy power to save save and then in a nobler sweeter song for all eternity and glory I'll sing thy power to save I want you to be in heaven with us to join the chorus of the redeemed singing of the power of Jesus to save this day would you call upon the name of the Lord and say God save me and the rest of your life when somebody says tell me how you became a Christian here's your response God saved me and then spend your life singing and telling of his power to save Lord we thank you for the gospel we thank you for the hope of salvation and we pray Lord that even now through the work of your Holy Spirit that you would open eyes convince hearts and draw people to yourself and that those of us who have already known you as a savior would forever tell of your power to save in the name of
Christ amen to tomumbles to the one to to to to to to to to to to to to to to to Thank you.

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