



Christ Redeemer Church

Grace. Truth. Community.

***“Gospel-Centricity:
How the Gospel
Transforms Everything”***

Sermon Series Study Guide

Winter 2019

edited by Pastor Don Willeman, Th. M.

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INTRODUCTION

...I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling, and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.

~1 Corinthians 2:2-5 (NASB)

This winter we will be doing a short sermon series entitled “Gospel-Centricity: How the Gospel Transforms Everything”. From its very inception, Christ Redeemer Church has striven to be a church driven by one thing: the gospel of Jesus. Why? We believe the gospel changes everything. It is the center and power for everything we need for a life of joy, hope and godliness; it is the “secret” power behind a “successful” church. Indeed, it radically redefines “success”. Certainly, we seek to do all that we do with excellence. However, we refuse to give room to the myth that our church is in the business of making the gospel effective. Rather, we are committed to the exact opposite, the church does not make the gospel effective, but the gospel makes the church effective. The gospel alone is the power of God for salvation to all who believe.

What is the gospel? The gospel is nothing more and nothing less than the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. We desire Christ to be preeminent in all that we are and do, for we believe that the grace to come to Him and the grace to grow in Him are found in Him alone.

Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892), the great London preacher, understood this. He is considered by many to be the “Prince of Preachers” and is arguably the greatest preacher the English-speaking world has ever seen. His preaching was so popular that his sermons were wired each Sunday for publication in the New York Times! A 5,500-seat auditorium, “The Metropolitan Tabernacle,” was eventually constructed to house his growing crowd of hearers.

What was the secret to Spurgeon’s ministry? The answer can be found in the first words uttered from the pulpit of the Tabernacle, and it is instructive to us:

“I would propose that the subject of the ministry in this house, as long as this platform shall stand, ...be the person of Jesus Christ. I am never ashamed to avow myself a Calvinist; I do not hesitate to take the name of Baptist; but if I am asked what is my creed, I reply, ‘It is Jesus Christ.’ ...[T]he body of divinity to which I would point and bind myself for ever, God helping me, is not [a] system, or any other human treatise; but Christ Jesus, who is the sum and substance of the gospel, who is in himself all

theology, the incarnation of every precious truth, the all-glorious personal embodiment of the way, the truth, and the life.”

Any one who has tasted of the goodness of Christ knows the sweet and all-encompassing power of which Spurgeon speaks.

How to Use the Study Guide

The pastoral staff and interns have prepared this study guide to accompany this sermon series and to help us with our study of this subject.

The date at the top of each page notes the Sunday for the respective the week. The Scripture verse listed under each heading is a suggested memory verse for that week. Below that you will find a suggested passage of Scripture, followed by “Reflection Questions”. These readings will prepare you to hear the sermon for that upcoming week.

To be clear, this guide is not intended to be a “legalistic” requirement. Not at all! Rather, it is a way for us as a congregation to walk together as we explore God’s Word. And to what end? Our prayer and confident expectation is that as we grow in our understanding and practice of daily prayer and meditation, we will grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ and so grow in our love for Him and one another.

Simplicity of this Study Guide

This study guide is intended to be simple and basic. Each day’s “lesson” should require no more than 15 minutes. At times this may annoy some of you, leaving you feeling that it is too pedantic. However, there are at least two reasons why this approach is necessary. First, we want everyone (whether novice or longstanding Christian) to be able to access this material. Anyone who wants to get more out of it certainly can – simply spend more time digging deeper. The second reason is that my goal is simply to get you pondering and praying through the pertinent Scripture each week. Prayer and meditation are basic, and the basics are always basic. We never get beyond them. It is so often in the fundamentals that we fail. My prayer is that the experience of our corporate study will enhance your personal study. Likewise, the reverse is true. Your personal study will enhance our corporate engagement around this subject. The weekly discipline that this study guide represents will be a tangible way that we can grow together in allowing the “word of Christ [to] dwell among us richly” (Colossians 3:16).

In the power of Christ!

Don Willeman
January 2019
Hanover, NH

WEEK OF FEBRUARY 3, 2019

Memory Verse:

*For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God
for salvation to everyone who believes,
to the Jew first and also to the Greek.*

~Romans 1:16 (ESV)

MONDAY:

Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:10-17

Reflection Questions:

- What are one or two takeaways from yesterday's sermon?
- According to the reading, what is Paul passionate about? Why?
- What is he is fearful of (v. 17)? Why?

Prayer:

- How do you struggle with being divisive in your engagement with fellow Christians? How does your pride play into that?
- Spend some time praying that God would humble you before the centrality and power of the gospel.

TUESDAY:

Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:17-25

Reflection Questions:

- Verse 23 implies that there is something inherent in the gospel that trips us up (“stumbling block”) that is counter-intuitive (“foolish”). What is that? How is this true for you?

- What’s the essential difference between God’s wisdom and power and human wisdom and power?

- Why is it good that a person cannot come to know Christ through human wisdom and power?

Prayer:

- Make a list of ways that you seek after human praise and impressiveness.

- In the face of these things, spend some time praying that God’s power and wisdom would overpower yours.

WEDNESDAY:

Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:26-31 & 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

Reflection Questions:

- According to Paul how does a person become a Christian?

- Why did Paul decide to present himself and the gospel in simplicity and weakness?
- In follow up to the previous question: 1) How might this way of thinking be offensive in our Upper Valley context? 2) How might it be attractive?

Prayer:

- If you are not yet a Christian, pray that God would show you the wisdom and power of God in Christ.
- If you are a Christian, pray that God would show you how the wisdom and power of Christ is bigger, deeper and more counterintuitive than you tend to think.

THURSDAY:

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 1:3-14

Reflection Questions:

- Would you say that this is a happy or sad passage, a positive or negative one? Why? How so?
- Make a list of the blessings that are ours in Christ?

Prayer:

- Praise God for the many specific blessings that are ours in Christ.

FRIDAY:

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 1:3-14

Reflection Questions:

- This passage references the work of God the Father, Jesus the Son and God the Holy Spirit—all the Persons of the Holy Trinity. What does each of these uniquely do for our salvation?

Prayer:

- Pray that God would give you insight into the meaning of “to live is Christ and to die is gain” for your own life and circumstances.

SATURDAY:

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 1:3-14

Prayer:

- Pray for the gathering of the church tomorrow and those that will be leading our various aspects of public worship.
- Pray that we would know the power of God’s presence with us – that we would know the blessing of God, especially the particular blessings that of which Paul writes.
- Pray particularly for the preaching of the Word of God and that we all would be eager to hear and obey.

WEEK OF FEBRUARY 10, 2019

Memory Verse:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.

~Ephesians 1:3 (ESV)

MONDAY:

Scripture Reading: Luke 9:18-27

Reflection Questions:

- What are one or two takeaways from yesterday's sermon?

- In this passage, Jesus asked His disciples: "Who do the crowds say that I am?" A moment later He turned and directed the question at them: "But who do you say that I am?" Why do you think Jesus asked them these two questions?

- In response to the second question, Peter declared Jesus to be "The Christ of God." What did he mean by that, and how is this *Good News*?

- What Jesus declares in vv. 21-22 is unusual. In fact, even His own disciples struggled to grasp it? How could something this awful be considered good?

Prayer:

- Pray that God would help us to better understand who Jesus truly is, and how His Gospel is truly Good News to us.

- Spend some time asking God to help you see and identify how the Gospel is relevant to your own difficulties and circumstances.

WEDNESDAY:

Scripture Reading: Mark 8:27-38

Reflection Questions:

- How can the Gospel be such Good News when it's so very demanding (v. 34-38)? How might these demands in fact be good for us?
- Rather than weighing us down with demands, Jesus intends to liberate us as we follow Him (Gal. 5:1). In what ways or areas of life do you recognize that you're not actively embracing the freedom of self-denial?
- What is one step that you could take this week in the path of Christ?

Prayer:

- Following involves identification. Ask God to empower you to take new steps that follow in the way of the Gospel, but don't stop there. Pray that He would wed your heart, mind and will to His, as well.
- Pray for those presently suffering for their faith as they follow Christ.

FRIDAY:

Scripture Reading: Galatians 2:20 - This verse might remind you of one of the Creeds that we sometimes confess together on Sunday mornings:

CONFESSION OF FAITH: Adapted from The Belgic Confession (1561), Article 16

LEADER: What do you believe about your Savior Jesus Christ?

CONGREGATION: We believe that we have no access to God but through our Mediator and Advocate Jesus Christ who became man, having united in one person the divine and human natures. Who else is there in heaven or on earth

that loves us more than Jesus Christ? Though he was in the form of God, he made himself of no reputation, and took the form of a man and of a servant for us, and was made like us in all things. Where could we go to find a God that loves us as much as this—a God who laid down his life for us, even when we were his enemies? Who is there that has so much power and majesty, indeed all power in heaven and on earth, and yet cares for us so much?

Reflection Questions:

- As Paul followed Jesus, he longed to “deny himself” and identify with Him. Based on this verse, what do you think was the driving motivation for Paul?

- How would you explain Paul’s perplexing statement: “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me?” What does this teach us about the Gospel, and what it might mean for us to follow Christ?

Prayer:

- Take a moment to reflect on and to give thanks for the radical love of Christ.
- Think of particular fellow believers and non-believers that you know. Pray that they might know and experience the love of Christ.

SATURDAY:

Scripture Reading: Galatians 2:20

Prayer:

- Pray for the gathering of the church. Pray that the love of Christ would be undeniably evident among us.
- Pray for the leadership of the church as they lead us in worship.
- Pray particularly for the preaching of the word of God and the ministry of gospel in all the other venues (e.g. Sunday school, children’s ministry, etc.).

WEEK OF FEBRUARY 17, 2019

Memory Verse:

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

~Colossians 3:12-13 (ESV)

Monday:

Scripture Reading: Colossians 3:1-17

Reflection Questions:

- What does this passage say is true about the identity of those who trust in Christ?
- How is this identity “new”? How was our identity different before trusting in Christ?
- What sort of community does this new identity create? Is it an inclusive or exclusive community? How so?
- If you are a believer, is this gospel community described here reflective of your own community?

Prayer:

- Pray that God would continue to reveal to us our identity in Christ, and that we would continue to live into it.

- Pray that we would have open arms and open hearts to the community around us.

Wednesday:

Scripture Reading: Romans 12:3-21

Reflection Questions:

- Take some time to think through the commands Paul gives. How many are there? What are some common themes?

- What's the heart posture that Paul calls the Romans to? What are the results of that heart posture?

- What do you find personally most challenging in these verses?

- Challenge yourself to put into practice one of these commands this week. Share that challenge with a friend today.

Prayer:

- Pray that God would enable us to do what He asks of us.

- Spend time praying for someone else in your community today. If appropriate, reach out to them and let them know you're praying for them.

Friday:

Scripture Reading: Galatians 5:13-15

Reflection Questions:

- How might our understanding of freedom play into community building/destruction?
- What is the biblical definition of freedom? How does that differ from the popular definition of freedom?
- In your experience, does it take more work to build up a community or tear it down? Why do you think that's the case?

Prayer:

- Pray that CRC would be a place where people could experience freedom in Christ
- Pray that we would do the hard work of community building, rooted in love.

SATURDAY:

Scripture Reading: Colossians 3:12-14

Prayer:

- Pray that the love of which Paul writes would be evident in our gathering tomorrow.
- Pray for the gathering of the church tomorrow and those that will be leading our various aspects of public worship.
- Pray that what we experience during our worship would overflow into the community throughout the week.

WEEK OF FEBRUARY 24, 2019

Memory Verse:

For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

~Colossians 1:19-20 (ESV)

MONDAY:

Scripture Reading: Colossians 1:15-20

Reflection Questions:

- In what ways does this passage describe Christ as the center of reality?
- How does Christ's preeminence in this passage cut the roots of our tendencies towards self-defensiveness, anxiety, and pride?
- What are the implications for your life today that Christ Jesus has reconciled all things to Himself, in heaven and on earth, by making peace through the blood of His cross?

Prayer:

- Confess ways that you have put yourself at the center of reality. Pray that God would give you eyes to see true reality—that Christ is foremost in, and the source of, all things.
- Spend some time meditating on this picture of God's glory presented here and worship Him as He helps you reorient your heart.

Bonus:

- How might you encourage someone today by sharing the picture of God's glory here with winsome and warm authenticity?

WEDNESDAY:

Scripture Reading: Revelation 21:1-8

Reflection Questions:

- Looking at this passage, what is the picture of life on the other side of death? In what ways do you long for the fulfillment of this revelation?
- What do you typically spend your time hoping and longing for? How does this picture of God dwelling with this picture help free you?
- How might faith, “the *assurance* of things hoped for” in this passage, help you be fully present in your world today to serve and love sacrificially?

Prayer:

- “I believe, help my unbelief” is a prayer commended to us in the gospel. Pray that God would increase your assurance of the hoped for new heavens and new earth, so you can have strength and joy to keep pressing on in the circumstances you face today.

FRIDAY:

Scripture Reading: Colossians 3:18-4:1

Reflection Questions:

- Paul says that bondservants are to “work heartily as for the Lord and not men” because they are serving the Lord Christ. If in your whatever you do you are serving the anointed King over all creation, what are the implications for your work?

- In what ways would it change your work ethic to realize that even with the simplest of tasks at your current vocation, you are serving the Almighty God who made you and gave himself for you?
- In what ways is it freeing to work “as for the Lord” instead of as a people-pleaser?

Prayer:

- Confess any ways that you are “going through the motions” in your work, and ask God with humility and confidence to help you work with all your heart for Him in all you do, especially today.
- Pray that God would help you to see the significance of your work and the work of those around you. Thank Him for allowing us to serve in His work in the world.

SATURDAY:

Scripture Reading: Colossians 1:15-20

Prayer:

- Pray for the gathering of the church tomorrow. Pray that the head of the body [Christ] would lead us as His church through those leading worship and in our fellowship with one another.
- Pray for the children’s ministries—that God working through those serving there to bring them to a proper awe of this Jesus.
- Pray particularly for the preaching of the gospel of God—that the authority and power of Christ [the anointed king] crucified would humble and embolden us.



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