

73 What is this good news?

(This was written as a discussion starter for a vicar friend and a highly theological lay reader friend, prior to meeting for a chat about “What is the gospel?” on June 18th. Any comments would be very much appreciated. Thanks, PB.)

I’ve recently done a bit of a survey of Jesus’ preaching, teaching and healing in the Gospels, and of the church’s preaching, teaching and healing in Acts, and the clear pattern that I am seeing is that there isn’t a clear pattern!

The strongest theme in Jesus’ preaching seems to be the kingdom.

And what struck me most from Acts was their insistence on the lordship of Christ.

So, what is the good news? (I’m deliberately not calling it the ‘gospel’ to avoid stereotyping.)

(I did *try* to write this to express it for other Christians, but I’m so obsessed with reaching out to non-Christians that it has come out as an evangelistic pitch, sorry.)

The good news in < 500 words:

- God is love, i.e. God’s essential nature is loving relationship.
- Out of that love, God created humankind and intended that this love should be shared among humans, and between humans and God.
- Humans felt that God was trying to dominate them, so we tried to do it our own way, and it all went horribly wrong (we use the term, ‘sin’).
- God is love, and so God went to great lengths to rescue us out of the mess we had created.
- God is holy, yet when Jesus was born, God willingly came in human form into the mess we had created, and Jesus showed us what real love is; i.e. Jesus showed us what God is really like.
- Jesus taught his followers about a new kind of kingdom: yes, God is a holy God, and yet we can relate to God as a loving heavenly father! That’s the good news that Jesus preached!
- We humans couldn’t cope when faced with the pure goodness of God in human form, and we reacted by killing Jesus.
- Out of his love for us, Jesus allowed himself to be killed, thus demonstrating his kingdom of enemy love: ‘Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you.’
- Three days later, Jesus rose from death, with a new body – still a physical body (he ate and drank) yet somehow different.
- Jesus taught that, through his death, humans could have a new kind of life, in a new kind of kingdom, where the self-sacrificing king was Jesus the Christ, Jesus as the Lord.
- Jesus then left the earth and returned to God the Father, telling his followers to spread the message: through Jesus’ death, relationships can be renewed – and that’s good news!

- To become part of Jesus' kingdom, we need a total rethink of how we run our lives: we call this 'repentance' – a total change of mindset.
- We have to accept that our old way of running our life is bankrupt – it just doesn't work.
- We need to believe and trust in Jesus: that he really was who he said he was (God come to earth) and that through his death we can find life – life in all its fullness, as God intended.
- When we believe in Jesus, God actually comes to live within us, to give us the power we need to put God's new way of living (Jesus' kingdom) into practice.
- If you recognise that without God, your life is bankrupt, tell God so.
- If you believe that Jesus died so that you could have life, tell Jesus so.
- If you believe that God wants to live in you through his Holy Spirit, ask God to fill you – and God will become part of your life in a new and wonderful way.

Paul Bev. 5.6.19