

The Foolishness of Preaching the Gospel

April 18, 2010

Pastor Sean Harris

For those of you that are saying, Boy, we sure have been looking at the Gospel for a while, don't worry. Chapter 11 is a little bit of application and then we are going to get into chapter 12. When we start with Chapter 12 forward, I am going to tell you right now that it is some toe stomping, tough, living the life of Christ Scriptures. But for now, Paul has already presented this strong case for the salvation of the Jews. Last week we looked at that.

Romans 10:14-21

How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world. But I say, Did not Israel know? First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you. But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.

Okay, let's pick up where we left off last week. Those of you that are visiting say what in the world is a picture of a lifeguard doing up on the screen? Let me take you back to last Sunday for a moment. We said last Sunday to think of the stage as a pier. Do you remember? We said we want to think of this area as the water, and we said that we are out here drowning in our sin. And when we look up on that pier to see someone to rescue us, we are not looking for a little, old man in a wheel chair, or an infant in her sleeper. What we are looking for to rescue us from the ocean is a lifeguard. We want a big, strong, massive life guard. You know that chest you have been dreaming of all your life, men? That lifeguard is our Jesus. We believe that He is able to rescue us. What we said last week was you don't call out to a lifeguard that you don't think that can save you. You call a lifeguard that you think that I have no doubt that guy can save me. That is a big, huge, massive guy and it will be no problem for him to save me. We said last week that when you believe in your heart God, doesn't need to hear you say something because He knows your heart. And the moment He hears your heart, not literally, when you believe in your heart that He can save you, when that happens, you are saved. You don't have to walk an aisle. You don't have to fill out a card. You don't have to pray a prayer. All those things are fine and we do them, but you are saved when you believe! We want to remind ourselves that our lifeguard is the person and work of Jesus Christ. You ask when Jesus Christ proved that He can save people. He proved it when He rose from the grave. He demonstrated "I'm alive. I can do this. This is no problem. Do you think it is a hard thing to deliver you from the grave? Let Me show you how well I can do it. I am going to deliver myself from the grave first."

So this is the lifeguard that saves himself in the water. That is pretty cool. He doesn't call out to a lifeguard. He is the lifeguard. That is our awesome Savior. That is why we might get a little excited when we worship this morning! Let me tell you something, I promise you that if you go down to Myrtle Beach and get pulled down by some rip tide and some big, massive guy pulls you out of that water, you will talk about that for weeks and weeks. You will get his name. You will know who he is. You will put it on Facebook. You will Tweet about it. You will email your friends. You will take pictures. You are going to tell people about that massive lifeguard. I promise you.

Let's make sure that we understand what we mean by believe. Everyone can remember this, everyone that has children and everyone that has been a child. You remember taking them to the pool or the lake. And that little child does not want to get in. He is scared. Do you remember that? Do you remember those precious days? And you are trying to get him to come in the pool. And you say come on. It's fun in here. Enjoy it. And he is on the edge and he is timid. You try to get him to jump, and you say Daddy is down here, I got you, Son. You are safe. Nothing is going to happen to you. That is what faith is. Because faith is, you know what, Dad can do this. My dad has never let me down. So you jump. That is what salvation is. It is jumping into the arms of Jesus and saying, I trust You. I have never been where You are. You have never delivered me before. I am not sure You can do it, but I am believing by faith. I am leaning on and trusting in You.

You have to understand my illustration. But what is wrong with my picture, Church? There are no life jackets! There is no life jacket when you are trusting in Jesus. You know what the life jacket is in this illustration? It's good works. It's baptism. It's church membership. Just in case Jesus doesn't come through for me, I have this back up. There are no life jackets. It is when you jump in completely depending on Daddy. I can't swim. I have never been in water before. If I go in, I am going to drown if Daddy doesn't rescue me. There is no hope without Daddy. Daddy is Jesus.

This is what Paul says: If you don't tell them about it, they are not going to get saved. How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? How shall they hear without a preacher? Your job is to tell them about the lifeguard. Your job is to tell them that you have an awesome lifeguard who rescues people and He did it for me and He can do it for you. How do you do that?

Let me tell you three ways. Number 1, preach to the lost. Share the gospel. Tell them about the glorious good news that Jesus died on a cross so their sins could be forgiven. Number 2, bring preaching to the lost. How in the world are you going to bring preaching to the lost? Take them a DVD or C.D. It might be worth their soul. Number 3, bring them here. Get them under sound preaching because faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. Hey, they are not going to get saved sitting at home watching Oprah Winfrey. They get saved under the sound preaching of the gospel. Paul said it like this, I've planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. What we are communicating is that you don't know how much God has been working in your life. Then on one day, all of a sudden, God does an amazing thing. Jesus described it like this, he said the farmer plants the seeds, goes to bed, wakes up and the next morning there it is sprouted up. What happens overnight? God did a work in that seed. We believe this morning, even now, God is doing a work in someone's heart. Paul says how shall they preach unless they be sent? And how beautiful are the feet of them that preach the good news. Paul said it like this in 1st Corinthians 1:21; this is where we get our sermon title from. *For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.* The way the world thinks, they don't recognize God. From the world's point of view, that doesn't make sense. In fact, Paul says that it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save people. We are living in a day and age in which young people are saying, how in the world can you believe in the primitive stuff? We've got ipods and ipads and I everything. We have Internet. We have planes that fly all over the world. We know it all. How in the world can you Christians believe in that old fashioned foolishness? You know why? We can believe it because it is God's plan.

What would the world believe to be foolishness? Young people are thinking, are you kidding me? We live in a technologically advanced world. You can't expect me to believe in that old fashioned stuff. It seems to me that God worked pretty well in proving that He can shut down the airlines any time He wants. I thought we could fly anywhere that we want. Well, no. We can fly anywhere we want when God permits us to fly anywhere we want. When God decides, I think that volcano over there in Iceland is going to spew out some mess, He does that. We don't believe in "mother nature". We believe He is in charge. There isn't a volcano that He doesn't decided when it erupts, how much it erupts, how long it will erupt for, what wind direction and who is going to be effected by it.

Number 1, we still believe there is a Creator, God. And we believe even as we move forward with ipods and ipads, etc that there is still a Creator, God. We believe even as we discover more and more about the human body, as we move from MRI, and CAT scans and everything else that there is still a Creator, God. Let me take it a step forward. Number 2, we believe that God walked with Adam and Adam walked with God. There was a day and age 6,000 years ago that in the cool of the evening in a Garden in Iraq that God and Adam hung out together. How cool that would have been! Number 3, we believe there is a Satan who was and is a fallen angel and is an adversary of God. He did tempt Adam and Eve and he still tempts you and me. Even as I preach this message right now, he is trying to distract your thinking. He certainly doesn't want you to come under the preaching of God's Word to see your soul convicted. Number 4, we believe that God gave divine words to toothless, primitive, archaic, old fashioned, weird warriors. I am talking about dudes that walked around with bed sheets wrapped around them and slept on the ground and have no clue what a blackberry is. We believe that God gave them words. Gospel words. We believe that God has preserved those words for 4,000 years and that God has watched over those words. He watched them move from Hebrew to Latin to Greek to English to Spanish to French. And we believe that even when you put those words on an ipad instead of opening it in a Bible, you are still reading primitive, awesome, divine words as you are flipping through that screen. That is how cool our God is. We believe that God left the glories of heaven. To the world, that sounds foolish because for the world if they can't touch it or feel it, they don't believe it. We believe that there is a heaven where God resides. Heaven, angels, saints who have died and from there, Jesus Christ left, and was born of a virgin. A virgin? Preacher, don't you know anything about biology? Virgins don't give birth. And we would say, yes, you are right. Typically virgins do not give birth unless a supernatural God gets involved and does a work and a miracle. This is the only exception. Number 7, we believe that Jesus took on flesh, became God incarnate and walked and talked on this planet for an entire life from baby to a full adult life; and He did not sin one time. He never told one lie. He never, ever rolled His eyes. He never had a bad attitude. He was without sin. We believe that Jesus could go around doing crazy things like making the deaf hear and the blind to see. Lazarus, come forth! And a dead guy gets up and walks out of a grave. We believe that Jesus Christ voluntarily laid down His life. It wasn't involuntarily.

Make sure you understand the foolishness. He allowed Himself to be crucified. Why in the world would someone do that? He did it to redeem a multitude of people groups. For 6,000 years, God has been redeeming all different types of people groups who will all assemble one day and say "That is our lifeguard". We believe that God the Father forgives sin and declares humans righteous because of the shed blood of Jesus Christ and His substitutionary atoning death. We believe that Jesus rose from the grave. We believe that He is on the right hand of the Father right now interceding on your behalf and someday a trumpet is going to sound and that is going to be me right there on Sunday. There is going to be a tie, white shirt, and a suit; my blackberry is going to fall off and my ipad will be left there, but not me. I will not be there anymore! The Bible says the dead in Christ are going to rise and we are going to meet Him in the air. Glory to God! What? Are you kidding? You people really believe that? We believe it by faith. We believe that the worst sinner in the world can turn to God and put their faith in Jesus Christ. We believe that Hitler could have run to the cross of Jesus Christ and had his sins forgiven. We believe that there isn't anyone who can't find forgiveness through Jesus Christ and Him alone.

Take your Bibles and turn to Colossians. We are really going to go out on a limb right now. The world doesn't understand this. They haven't figured this out because the world doesn't believe in faith.

Colossians 2:13 And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses.

Quickened is made alive. You say I've always been alive. No you weren't. You are born dead, as spiritually dead as it gets. That is why the Bible says you must be born again, made alive. Do you know

what a trespass is? It's a sin against God. I will give you some examples of trespasses: Rudeness, Selfishness, Pride, Self-righteousness, Coveting, Jealousy, and Anger. Do you trespass? I do. You are looking at a sinner. I struggle with insecurity. I struggle with envy. I struggle with jealousy. I struggle with pride. I struggle with being kind. You are looking at a sinner saved by grace. Notice what he says. *Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us*, The list of things, sinner, selfish, rude, insecure, doesn't trust me, idolater, pagan, the whole list and he flips it over and there is more, and what does he do with this list? He blots it out. *Which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross*. Are you getting the picture? He didn't die for His sins. When they took His left hand and they smashed it down, that wasn't for His sins, Church. Those were my sins. This hit me right in the heart. He died for my sins. There were none of His sins to nail Him to the cross. In 2nd Corinthians 5:21 we see that He knew no sin. In this ipod-ipad-DNA-kind of a world, how can people still believe in something as archaic as nailing sins to a cross? That is an old fashioned thing. We are living in the 21st century. No, Church, you must embrace this. God's Word said that on the cross of Calvary in Jerusalem 2,000 years ago, sin was nailed to the cross.

Why do I need to know this? Because our great adversary is seeking to always remind us and throw our sins in front of us. You are not as good as you think you are. You haven't read your Bible. You haven't prayed like you should. You don't worship the way you should. And he is constantly throwing in our faces all the time, seeking to defeat us. He wants us to live a defeated, downward life. You can't do this or that because you are a sinner. You can't do that for God because you are a sinner. What I need to get into my thick brain is my sin is nailed to a cross. Why is that so important? It is important because it is on the cross to stay. Nailing it to the cross is permanent. Jesus is not going to come back to the cross and then throw it back in my face. It is nailed to the cross. Forgive yourself. It is already forgiven. You are not letting it go and you are living a defeated life because you won't let it go. Okay, your marriage fell apart 10 years ago. Let it go. Okay, you didn't serve God the way you should've in the 20th century. You're forgiven. Get on with God. Okay, you committed adultery, it is forgiven. Am I condoning it? No, I am not condoning it, but I am reminding us that if we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. The reason we are not doing all we can to the glory of God is we do not understand that our sins have been nailed to a cross. I need you to understand this because this affects the way we are as a church. All of a sudden, I can't hold something against you that has been nailed to a cross. I can't have it both ways.

If the husband is born again and the wife is born again, then both husband and wife's sins have been nailed to the cross. So if my sins have been nailed to the cross and Pam's sins have been nailed to the cross then why are we treating each other like pagans? I don't understand that. Why am I holding sins against her or why is she holding sins against me when both of our sins have been nailed to a cross? Or why can't we get along in the body of Christ? Why are we holding grudges against each other? Why aren't we letting it go? We cannot have our sins nailed to a cross and then hold it against someone else.

Horatio G. Spafford said "My sin oh, the bliss of this glorious thought my sin not in part but the whole is nailed to the cross I bare it no more praise the Lord praise the Lord oh my soul". Let's remind ourselves that this dude lost everything when he penned that. Let's make sure we understand that he was not driving a Rolls Royce, flying back and forth in his private plane, and living the good life. He lost everything. I don't know that I would have penned those words. I am not going to try to act like I am there. My wife and my child mean something to me. I don't know what kind of basket case I would become if I came home and found my son and wife gone. I would pray that the grace of God would give me the strength and sufficiency to write something like this, but this is why the theology in music matters.

Young people, music matters and what you are listening to needs to be theologically sound. If it is not theologically sound, delete it off your ipod. And I've got to tell you, it does not get more theologically sound than that right there. Mom and Dad, you don't have to like what they are singing, but you have to

inspect it, you have to listen to it and if it is not theologically sound, they don't get to listen to it. Here is how it works. If you are still giving them peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, you get to decide what music they listen to. As long as you are feeding them, then you are still in charge. Once they feed themselves and they want to listen to that garbage, then God will hold them accountable. I am trying to get you to understand that God holds you accountable, and everything that we see here is measured by the theology of God. It doesn't matter if it is a clever little song that someone came up with and everyone is singing it on the radio. If it is not theologically sound, we are not singing it.

We believe that when Jesus Christ was pulled off the cross and put in that tomb in the most mysterious way, He took His innocent holy precious blood and went to a tabernacle not made of hands and offered His shed blood on a mercy seat in heaven. Everyone says what? I don't know what container He used. All I know is that according to Hebrews 9, that is exactly what happened. You read it for yourself. I don't know, but I don't have a problem believing in this technology and believing in an old fashioned gospel.

We believe that when someone repents of their sins that God Himself begins dwelling inside them. The very God of the Universe is living inside you, that you have been sealed. How do you prove it? We don't prove it. We believe by faith. Our faith is not in our prayer. Our faith is not in the words we say. Our faith is not in ourselves. Our faith is in the person and work of Jesus Christ who has promised all these glorious things.

What is the required human response? It is to believe. What kind of belief? It is authentic, repentant, obedient belief. You can stand up there all day long and say, I believe, I believe. But when do we know for sure you believe? You know for sure when you jump. A great illustration we've used in the past in here is the dude that would cross Niagara Falls on a string and run back and forth. I'm not advising you to do this on your own. Then he got real comfortable with that and then he did it with a wheel barrow. Then he said, How many of you gentlemen believe I can carry someone across. Hands go up everywhere. Alright someone get in the wheel barrow. Then there were no hands. You know what saving faith is? It is getting in the wheel barrow.

Please listen to this story. Reverend Richard Cecil an English clergyman of the 1800s writes about this concerning the meaning of faith. My little daughter was playing one day with a few beads which seemed to delight her wonderfully. Her whole soul seemed to be absorbed in her beads. I said, My dear, you have some pretty beads there. Yes, Papa. And you seem to be very vastly pleased with them. Yes, Papa. Well, now then, throw them into the fire. The tears started into her eyes. She looked earnestly at me as though she ought to have some reason for such a cruel sacrifice. Well Dear, do as you please, but you know I have never told you to do anything which I did not think would be good for you. She looked at me for a few moments longer and then summing up all her fortitude her breast heaving up with effort, she cast them into the fire. Well, said I, there let them lie. You shall hear more about them another time. But say no more about them now. Some days after I bought her a box full of larger beads of the same kind. When I returned home I opened the treasure and set it before her; she burst into tears of joy. Those, my child said I, are yours because you believed me when I told you it would be better for you to throw those 2 or 3 paltry beads into the fire. Now that has brought you this treasure. But now my dear, as long as you live what faith is. I did all this to teach you the meaning of faith. You threw your beads away when I bade you because you had faith in me that I never advise you but for your good. Put the same trust in God. Believe everything that He said in His word. Whether you understand that or not have faith in Him. That is saving faith.

I am asking you this morning to take the paltry beads of self righteousness and idolatry and throw them into the fire. And embrace what God has prepared for those that love Him: mansions beyond your wildest dreams, a glorious new body, and all eternity. Please throw the beads in the fire and embrace Jesus with all that you have. I promise you that you will not be disappointed.

Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. That is what happening right now as you are hearing the word of God. So allow yourself to believe this morning. You are on the edge of your seat, but you haven't reached out in obedient faith to Christ. Do it now even as I speak. Embrace the faith.

Can I remind you that before Abraham was a Jew, he was a Gentile? He was not born a Jew. Abraham was an Iraqi pagan idolater. In Ur of Chaldees, he was a heathen. According to Genesis 12 it was the word of God that moved him from Gentile to Jew. And the Bible teaches that God is creating a whole new race of people in Christ Jesus in which we abandon our heritage of black or white and we embrace the gospel as our common heritage together. We are all of one new creed and it is the word of God that has made us so. Although it is true that it is our faith in response to the gospel, it is also true that the message itself is awakened by the preaching of the word. So right now in your unconverted soul, God is doing an invisible work of converting you. You need to accept it. You need to believe. You need to embrace it.

According to Romans 10:18 there is no excuse. *But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.* And I would submit to you that much like in America, the Israelites had no excuse to say I had no idea about Jesus. How many Americans could honestly say they have never heard about Jesus before? That is ridiculous. If you walk out these doors and reject Jesus today, you will be reminded of this day at the Judgment. Now that is a scary thought; so don't allow that to go in and out of your ears quickly. Can you imagine if all the foolishness that I have talked about today is real and there you are at the final judgment and you are standing there before Jesus and He takes you back in time Sunday, and He brings you right here and before your memory is this entire service in which you heard the gospel and sat right there and did not embrace it. And then He fast-forwards you two years in time, and He shows you another time when you rejected Christ, and then He shows you a third time. So I would submit to you that today is your day of salvation. Today is the day to embrace the gospel with a passion and stop putting Christ off. Here is the scary part. Every day that you put Him off, your heart gets harder and harder. And you never know when you harden it past the point of no return. Paul told young Timothy that the Hebrew Bible was sufficient to make him wise unto salvation. That very Scripture shows a God. There is something called sin, and God was sending His Messiah. I said the Hebrew Bible because at Paul's time of writing there was no New Testament. He was just talking about the Hebrew Bible.

This is what the Bible says in this last verse. The Bible says to think of God with an outstretched hand reaching out to Israel. Paul says they reject that outstretched arm. They ignored it. They were disobedient, obstinate, contrary, obnoxious people. Is that you, this morning? Is He offering you salvation and you are fighting against Him? Or are you embracing His outstretched arm?

As a follower of Christ, what should I take away? How is it that when people are seeking our forgiveness, we are refusing to forgive them? If our holy, righteous, perfect God reaches out to us with an outstretched arm to a disobedient, rebellious person, how in the world do we as sinners refuse to reconcile with people? Why is it that you husbands and wives are going to bed in two different rooms? Why is it that you are arrogant with each other and you are unforgiving with each other? Why is it his fault? Why is it her fault? You have left this church and that church and you are looking for the perfect preacher. There are no perfect preachers. There are no perfect churches. We are a hospital of sinners. Feelings get hurt around here. We offend each other. We are rude to each other. We are not kind all the time. If you are looking for a perfect church, keep looking. Forgive and move forward. It is time for God's people to start forgiving God's people it. Nail it to the cross.