

Preached on: Sunday, September 17, 2023

Truth Community Church
4183 Mt. Carmel Tobasco Road
Cincinnati, OH 45255

Website: truthcommunitychurch.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm

I invite you to turn to the book of Romans 1, as we begin this morning. And as we turn there, I just want to say that we are completing in this message a brief series titled, "How to Know that Christianity is True." We have seen that history confirms the truth of Christianity. We saw key markers of dates working backwards in time, 200 AD, 112 AD, 64 AD, matters of public record testifying to the existence of Christ and the existence of a widespread Christianity within a generation of the life of Christ. We saw that Christian preaching confirms the truth of Christianity, the truth of the gospel. On Tuesday evening, if you weren't here, you should get that message and listen to it, we saw that early Christians could not have possibly manipulated the Old Testament to make it agree with what happened in the life of Christ, and conversely, they could not have fabricated events in the life of Christ to conform to the existing Old Testament. We looked at those reasons why that was thoroughly impossible, and what we came to as a conclusion was this, is that the facts of the gospel, the birth, the death, the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the spread of Christianity immediately after his ascension, these are matters of historical public record that are easily verifiable by anyone that will take the time to do it, and ignorance of these facts is a culpable negligence on the part of every soul that would neglect them. And so we're led to an inescapable conclusion about all of these things as we remember that from the time of Moses, God had been putting into writing 1,500 years prior to the time of Christ, the anticipation of Christ, the prophecies of Christ, the sacrificial system that prefigured Christ, and then Christ came and fulfilled all of that and appointed apostles, and they went out and preached after the resurrection and the coming of the Holy Spirit, beloved, there's a whole system and unit of thought in the matters of biblical Christianity that is a seamless web of sparkling perfection and what all of that tells us is this, is that what God promised in the Old Testament beginning with the writings of Moses in the first five books of the Bible, what followed in the historical and prophetic books that came, everything that was anticipating the coming of a great prophet, of the Son of God, of a Redeemer for his people, everything that God had promised over nearly two millennia, he's now fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Look at Romans 1 beginning in verse 1 as we see an overview of these things in the writings of the Apostle Paul. This will kind of give us a context for other things that we want to say here this morning as we conclude this series, "How to Know Christianity is True." The title of today's message is "Christianity Today." Christianity today, not referring to that deplorable magazine that goes by that name, but how you can know

Christianity is true today, how one becomes a Christian today, that is the source of our preaching and that is the object of our consideration here this morning as we begin by reading the first six verses of the book of Romans.

1 Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, 2 which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, 3 concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh 4 and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, 5 through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, 6 including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,

Now, just a couple of preliminary comments about that text. Notice the prophecy and the emphasis on prior written Scripture that Paul makes there in verse 2 when he speaks of the gospel of God at the end of verse 1, he says it was promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scripture. Months ago, we took an extended period of time looking at how Scripture in the Old Testament at the time of Christ and in the apostolic writings, they all greatly emphasized that the gospel that is being preached in the New Testament is in perfect conformity with what was promised in the Old Testament, and so that we must see that the New Testament is an outgrowth of everything that was prophesied and promised in the Old Testament. And that's a beginning point, really, of having a Christian mind is to see this fundamental unity flowing through the Old and New Testaments as it points to Christ.

Go on and see the historical aspects there in verse 3 where Paul says concerning his Son, who, we could add parenthetically as a matter of historical record and ancestral bloodlines that really happened, this Son was descended from David according to the flesh. We do not preach empty platitudes. We do not preach a mere moral theory. We do not preach abstract philosophy or theology. The gospel is premised on actual historic events that actually took place in real space, real time on this real earth, and that were witnessed and attested by hundreds and hundreds and even thousands of people over the course of time. It's a matter of public record, beloved, and we cannot easily dismiss it as a fiction because to do that is to simply deny history and truth itself and is a matter of intellectual suicide to do that. You know, sometimes the accusation is made to become a Christian, to believe in Scripture, to believe in Christ, is to commit intellectual suicide. That's bogus hogwash. The reverse is actually the truth. To deny Christ, to deny the history of the gospel is to be willfully and culpably blind.

Verse 4 of Romans, he was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by, parenthetically, as a matter of historical public record, his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord. Then Paul goes on and says that that Lord appointed him through grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations. Among all the nations, beloved, this is universal truth. This is not something that is limited to middle-class white suburbia in America by any means. This is the one gospel for all the nations. This is why Jesus says,

"Go into all of the nations and make disciples," it's because he is Lord over all, there is one God over all, one God over Jews and Gentiles alike, one saving gospel for Jews and Gentiles alike that has universal applicability, universal authority, and a universal command to repent and believe in Christ. We are swimming in the waters of universal truth that is so well attested that in terms of the writings of other secular writers in ancient antiquity, there is no comparison to how well Christianity and the biblical record and the biblical manuscripts, how abundantly they are testified as according to everything else combined. Scripture and Christ and the gospel is in a category of its own, alone, which is what you would expect if it is true and it is.

Now, the preaching of the apostles rested on the person of Jesus Christ himself, of his person, of his life, his ministry, his works, and the interpretation of his death on the cross, that it was an atoning death, a sacrificial death designed to satisfy the just wrath of an angry God against the sins of all of mankind, and Christ offering a sacrifice that would reconcile his people to a holy God as the Spirit calls them one by one to faith in Christ. The apostles spoke of his works, his words, his death, and his resurrection. Now, here's another question as we test, as we probe the legitimacy, the accuracy, the internal consistency of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the biblical message. As it were, we probed to see if it's as warm in the center as it is on external appearance by these things. Is there an internal unity, an internal consistency that would explain the actions of the apostles as they proclaimed that message? Here's the question, could the Christ that they preached as the Son of God and the Son of Man, fully God in human flesh, could that person of Christ truly resurrected from the dead, leaving behind an empty grave where his bones, his body had been placed, leaving behind an empty grave, could that story, could that person have been an invention of the 12 apostles? Could they have collaborated after Christ died and, assuming for the sake of argument, contrary to fact that Christ was really dead, that Jesus was really dead and did not rise from the dead, could the apostles have conspired together to concoct a story that would make Christ resurrected when he really wasn't and have power to change the lives of those who heard and believed, could they have invented that on their own?

Let's ask a question just based on simple human motivations: why would they do that? Why would you do that? Why would those 12 apostles, 11 before Matthias was chosen as an apostle at the end of Acts 1, why would they do that? The conspiracy so-called, if that's what they did, it brought them nothing, beloved, nothing that human nature desires. You cannot explain it by human motivation because the apostles received no worldly advancement from this so-called supposed conspiracy. It brought them no material benefits. What it brought them instead were beatings and imprisonment and ultimate martyrdom over the course of time. They did not receive human praise for their message and for their ministry; no Jews from their own race praised them. The Jews were in violent opposition to them. As you read through the book of Acts and you read the writings of the Apostle Paul, you see how often they stirred up opposition to these men, opposition to this message. Why would these men, these apostles, do that simply to bring scorn and contempt and physical suffering upon themselves, why would they do that? That's not what men do if they are out to advance their own cause.

And think of it further, beloved, if the apostles made this up, they all ultimately died as martyrs for the cause with the exception of the Apostle John who was exiled to a rocky island called Patmos at the end of his life. If they made it up, beloved, they died and they went to the stake and other means of execution, they died for what they knew to be false, if in fact this was a conspiracy that they had made up. Beloved, men don't do that. Men don't do that. They don't die for stories that they know to be false, which has to be the premise if they conspired together in order to make up this Jesus. Men don't do that and particularly, beloved, that reality and that motivation needs to be really clear to us in our day here in the 21st century, where conviction is despised and rejected and viewed as something that is uncouth and unwelcome in the world in which we live, because in our world, everybody's just supposed to let everybody get along, everybody, you know, your opinion's fine, my opinion's fine, let's just not make too much of issues of truth. Well, in that postmodern spirit of where we live, we have the testimony from 2,000 years ago of men who knew the truth and died for it, suffered for it in a way that is utterly foreign to the way that people think about principles today. In the midst of the carnal, ungodly, worldly way in which people live today, this is a spirit that is unknown for and to the councils of considered thought as the world measures it today.

The apostles didn't make this up. Men don't die for what they know to be false if the premise of the opponents of Christianity would be true. Here's where it leaves us, beloved, that what we see in the Lord Jesus Christ transcends humanity. It transcends history. It transcends human explanations. And part of the reason for that can be seen by the testimony recorded in John 7:47. You don't need to turn there. But the contemporaries of Jesus, as they heard him speak, and even Roman authorities, Roman soldiers who were sent to arrest him, to stop him, and they didn't do it, and the testimony is, "Never has a man spoken the way this man speaks." And at the end of the Sermon on the Mount, we read that when Jesus had finished that sermon, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one who had authority and not as their own scribes. And so everything about the historical record is consistent and points in the same direction. What God promised in the Old Testament over a course of 1,500 years had been fulfilled in very recent history in the person and ministry and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, with all that said, with all that said, beloved, and for those of you perhaps that are visiting, perhaps joining in to this lengthy, lengthy series at the tail end, you're kind of parachuting in and you haven't heard all the groundwork that was laid for it, let me say this: everything that I've just described today and over our prior two messages last Sunday and Tuesday, none of that is enough to make a person a Christian. You do not become a Christian by believing in history and agreeing with a certain set of historical facts. The very fact that people so easily dismiss the history shows that something is lacking there, not in the truth or the accuracy of the history that we've presented, but something is missing, something's missing, beloved, from the presentation of all of these very important matters because we realize and we freely acknowledge, in this pulpit anyway, that the powerful truth of what we've said is not enough to convert a single soul to Christ. We freely and openly acknowledge that. You do not become a Christian by believing in history. You don't become a Christian by being in church today. You do not

become a Christian simply by being born into a Christian family. And as lovely as it was to welcome those six little ones to the front here today and do something for them, not a one of them is going to be saved simply because of a physical birth to believing parents. You do not become a Christian by moral effort. You don't become a Christian by having a dad that's an elder. None of those things, none of those earthly things are enough. None of them are sufficient. You can only become a Christian by personally repenting of sin and believing in Christ himself. That's the only way.

Now at one level, that's simple in the sense that it's not complicated to understand and grasp the principles behind it. That's not difficult. The gospel is clear and direct and uncomplicated enough that a child can understand it and a child can believe, but it's not simple and easy to believe in Christ, at least as some try to make it seem. You know, one of the things that was mentioned in the waters of baptism earlier was, you know, I had prayed a prayer. Kelly said, that didn't make me a Christian. Mark said words of similar import. He knew of Christ, but that didn't make him a Christian. Why is it, beloved, what is it that we could have all of this history, that we could have clear statements about what the gospel is and that it's not difficult to grasp, it's not a complex system, which is one of the reasons, beloved, one of the reasons why I detest the system known as Roman Catholicism and why our pulpit has been, is now, and always will be unalterably opposed to that demonic realm of thought, of teaching, is because it's so incomprehensibly complex and self-contradictory. You could never draw Roman Catholicism out of the Scriptures alone. It's a moral abyss that leads people into darkness and ultimately into eternal judgment if they entrust their souls to that system of thought.

But still, believing in Christ, not as easy as some might make it seem. Some of you, perhaps, saying, "I want to live my life of sin now. I'll believe in Christ at the end. I'll repent at the end of my life after I've enjoyed sin for a period of time, you know, and I've done what I want to do. I've pursued my career and I've gotten wealthy or done whatever I want to do. I've had multiple women, multiple men, whatever the case may be, and I know I can't do that if I claim Christ. So I'll indulge these things now and at the end I'll repent and believe in Christ." Beloved, if that's you, you're going to hell. You're going to go to hell with that mindset because a primary assumption that you're making there is that it is within your power, in your time, as you choose to repent and believe in Christ but that's not true. You do not have the power to repent and believe in and of yourself. You are dependent upon the grace of God to help you, and if you are pursuing sin now and indulging in pursuing that life, beloved, that's not going to make your heart more tender and susceptible to the influences of the gospel at the end. You're pouring more and more concrete around your heart and making it harder and harder to pierce it and to get through for the truth to come through. We rejoice in the fact that sometimes God saves people on their deathbeds, but the reality is that's pretty rare and you should not presume that the day of salvation for you will be at your choosing 30, 40, 50 years from now. You shouldn't presume on that because Scripture says today, now, is the time of salvation. Today is the day of salvation. And if you reject and harden your heart against the gospel today, you should not presume that you'll have another opportunity tomorrow. It's that urgent. It's that momentous. It's that consequential.

It's not as easy to believe as some would make it to seem, and that's what I want to lead you into as we consider Christianity today. The first point that we need to consider is the reality of unbelief. The reality of unbelief. Why is it not as easy to believe as so many make it out to be? You know, just come forward, pray a little prayer, and you can go away, go into heaven. That's as deplorable as Catholicism in the reality of things. Let's say this, we've looked at the history of Christianity over the past two and a half messages. The history of Christianity, as compelling as it is, can do no more than win temporary attention in the minds of those who don't believe. Think about it this way, my friends, if evidence could turn one into a Christian, then the time of the first century would have been a time of universal turning to Christ because so many knew about the resurrection. All of Judea, all of Palestine would have been converted by the compelling evidence that was known as a matter of public record at the time. They knew of the resurrection. They could have literally walked to the tomb and seen it empty and walked away unbelieving. Now that may, for many of you, that may be a stunning thing to see because, you know, we're used to people kind of trying to set their own terms by which they'll believe. "If God will show me a sign, then I'll believe. If, you know, if I saw signs in heaven, then I would believe," and on like that. But beloved, that's not true. A sign will not help you believe. Jesus made that clear. Jesus said that even a resurrection does not compel belief. He said in Luke 16:31, he said, "If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead." If you reject the word of God, if you're cold, indifferent, hard, unbelieving in response to the living word of God, nothing else is going to help you and the problem is, is that unbelief, rebellion against God, the carnal man, rules in the human heart with a power that mere facts cannot move. It would be like trying to go up to that great mountain in Yosemite National Park, Half Dome, and that massive piece of granite and trying to put your hand against it and move it pressing against it with your human power through one hand and say, "I'll move this." It doesn't work that way. In like manner, facts don't move an unbelieving unconverted heart.

And Jesus spoke of this if you'll turn to the gospel of John with me John 3, the reality and the power of unbelief and all of these things are good reasons not to be an Arminian. John 3:19, Jesus said, "this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed." And in Romans 8, you don't need to turn there, just listen as I read Romans 8:7, we read that "the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God." You see, beloved, there is a ruling disposition, there is a controlling power, there is a spiritual death in the human heart that is beyond the reach of mere information and it is beyond the reach of human will to change and convert in its own power. And that's why, beloved, that's why you have so many, many people that will say something like this, you know, that I prayed a prayer, I tried to believe, and it didn't work for me. I know that many of you have perhaps experienced that. Some of you have it in your own family. People say, I tried and it didn't work for me. A stunning admission that it is not within human power to enter the kingdom of God. You must be born again, Jesus said. If you are to enter the kingdom, you must be born again. You must receive something from above that you do

not control if you are going to be saved. The Apostle Paul adds further perspective. In 1 Corinthians 2:14 he says, "The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned." You're not even able to understand these things as an unbelieving person. Not able to accept them.

Let the weight of that settle into your heart for a bit. A natural person does not accept these things. They're folly to him, not able to understand them because they're spiritually discerned. You realize how desperately sad and how desperately desperate this is, that all men are under the wrath of God, guilty and condemned for their inherited sin from Adam and the commission of their own sins in their own life. There is one gospel that can save them. It's demonstrably true, it's demonstrably accurate, and yet they cannot tap into it by their own power because of the reigning power of sin and unbelief in their hearts. That's a reality of unbelief. It's a spiritual dungeon where the key has been thrown away.

Elsewhere, 2 Corinthians 4, the Apostle Paul says this and shows that there's another layer, another dimension of the problem. He says, "even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." How desperate is the unbelief? How desperate is the spiritual condition? The unsaved man has a heart that is in rebellion against God, does not have the spiritual capacity to understand, rightly appraise, or respond to the truth of the gospel, and on top of that, Scripture says he's spiritually dead in trespasses and sins, dead men don't do anything, on top of that, they're encased in this dungeon of darkness from which there is no escape and there is no key of the way out. That dungeon is guarded by a supernatural foe called the devil, the adversary, and Satan himself who actively hinders the light of the gospel from reaching into the dark dungeon of that human heart. That's a problem. That's a problem and all of the easy preaching, all the easy believism that is peddled in the name of Christ today, it has to neglect, ignore, and overlook that, knowing that, number one, it's not popular truth, and people won't gather around in big crowds to hear that, and it just exposes the emptiness of the promises that they make to those who hear and are trusting them to lead them to God. It's so sad. It's so wrong. And yet this is clear all over Scripture.

Now beloved, it's always been this way since the fall of Adam, and when the apostles preached in the first century, they were preaching to men who had the same condition of heart that we're describing here today. This is a common thread throughout humanity. It's a common chain that binds all men into darkness with a common god of this world who actively hinders the preaching of the gospel. This is hopeless, humanly speaking. This is hopeless and yet, beloved, as you read the book of Acts, you see the apostles preaching with supernatural confidence. They were marked out by the boldness with which they spoke, even though they were uneducated and untrained men. Why were the apostles so confident? And why did they not find their mission to be impossible? They knew these things that we're talking about. They wrote them to us. Why did they not just close up apostolic shop and go back to fishing? That brings us to our second point this morning. Second point is the reality of supernatural power. The reality of supernatural power.

Beloved, Scripture says that the things that are impossible with men are possible with God. What's impossible with men is possible with God, and as we look at so many things, as we look at the biblical record and see the explosion of Christianity in the early church, we have an answer. As you look, if you're a true Christian and you look at your own testimony and how you were once dead in sin and now you are alive with God, how did that happen? The only sensible answer, the only thing that explains and ties all of these things together in a way that lets us move forward toward eternity and to minister in the name of Christ and to preach the word of God with confidence, with power, and with authority, the only sensible answer is found in the New Testament and the answer is this, is that the gospel advances and succeeds only by supernatural power that is not resident in humans and which is not subject to human control so that when Jesus Christ in his great commission sent the disciples out to preach the gospel, to make disciples of all the nations, he ended on this note when he said, "Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age," Matthew 28:20. Christ says, "I'm sending you out to preach the gospel. Your audience is going to be filled with people and dominated by people who are dead in sin, dominated by the devil and doomed to suffer the wrath of God. It's an impossible mission that I'm giving to you, but there's more to it than that," Christ said to those apostles, he said, "I'll be with you as you go." This Christ who rules the seas, who created the heavens and the earth, who stopped storms with his spoken word, who raised the dead, who healed the deaf, who gave sight to those born blind, that Christ of demonstrable, proven, supernatural power, we looked at this also a few months ago as part of this greater series that we're preaching; you start to see how all of this is necessary to build a Christian mind. The Christ raised from the dead, the Christ who did miraculous work, told those disciples, "Go," and he said, "and I'll be with you as you do," so that the supernatural power of Christ was attending the ministry of the apostles as they preached and that need for supernatural power is why God sent the Holy Spirit.

Look at Acts 2. Acts 2. The reality of supernatural power, the need for supernatural power, explaining how human deadness and satanic blindness is overcome for the advance of the gospel in a way that mere historical facts cannot accomplish. Acts 2:1, "When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance." And the tongues there are known human language, not spiritual babble, as you see as you read later in Acts 2, as a diverse group of people from many geographic regions say, "We're hearing them preach in our own language." These men who were fishermen, untrained, uneducated, suddenly speaking in a language that they had never studied or spoken before. Supernatural power being poured out upon the early church for the proclamation of the gospel.

And we don't have time to go through all of Acts 2, just jump over to Acts 36 as Peter preaching now filled with the Holy Spirit, filled with supernatural power that is at work in the hearts of his audience as shown by the fact that they recognize their own languages being spoken, in verse 32, we read, "This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the

Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing." Jump down for sake of time to verse 36. "Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified."

Now, this was supernatural preaching about a supernatural Christ under the power of the supernatural Holy Spirit, and the result of that was that the problem in the hearts of men as they heard, their deadness, their blindness, their spiritual domination by the devil, the whole problem of unbelief, controlling unbelief in the heart, now is being addressed by something that belongs to God and God alone. In verse 37, "when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Brothers, what shall we do?'" The chains of Satan surrounding the dungeon broken. The dungeon itself busted into, light pouring into their hearts as they realized that they had just in recent days crucified their own Messiah, that there was guilt upon their souls, that Christ was the one appointed by God to be the Savior of mankind. They say, "What do we do?" The Spirit of God having pierced them. The Spirit who had just arrived anointed the preaching of Peter, now working in the hearts as shown by the attitude of response, "Brothers, what shall we do?"

Peter said to them in verse 38, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." The Spirit will come and indwell you, in other words. "For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself." And with many other words," notice that wasn't all that Peter said. He spoke to them for a long period of time as I'm doing today, "with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, 'Save yourselves from this crooked generation.'" In other words, exercise faith in this Christ that has been preached to you so that you can be delivered by him. Verse 41, "So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls."

How does Christianity advance in the light of supernatural opposition and spiritual deadness? Christ himself is present as the word is preached. The Spirit of God himself has gracious influence on unbelieving hearts. He inwardly changes them and redirects and inclines and gives them a new heart that empowers them to believe. Beloved, Jesus Christ rose from the dead not only for the sake of 2,000 years ago, Jesus Christ lives today. Jesus Christ is a living presence in the room right now, making himself known through the preaching of his word and in his grace, he calls sinners just like you to come to him. In his grace, he promises sinners just like you that if you'll simply come, repent, that he will meet you in your repentance and faith. He will receive you into his kingdom. Christ does for sinners what they cannot do for themselves. During his earthly life, he kept the law of God in a way that none of us have or none of us could do. At the cross in our place, he suffered the penalty of sin, which is death, and now the glory of the gospel is this, that for those who turn from sin to this risen Christ, truly turn, truly turn from sin, truly receive him, not playing games anymore, not mouthing words of a prayer that someone else put on your lips that has no reflection of what's going on in your own heart, not going through outward forms, outward motions, not trusting in a priest to absolve you

of your sins, mortified at the thought of a plaster statue of Mary having anything to do with your salvation. Turning away from dead idols like that to the living Christ with a broken heart, full of confession of sin, saying, "God, save me, the sinner," for one like that, God graciously accepts all that Christ has done as though they themselves had done it. Christ, having suffered the penalty of sin, for the one who puts faith in Christ, God says, "The merits of the death of Christ I apply to your account. The merits of his perfect righteousness I apply to your account. You have everything that is necessary to enter into my kingdom." So much so, beloved, that death holds no longer any fear for us. That is the greatest gift that God could give us in this earthly life, to know that we can face the judgment seat of God without fear. Everything else is secondary vanity by comparison to that. What we deserve has not come to us, it fell on Christ, and now all that belongs to Christ, all of his righteousness, all of his goodness, all of his promise, all of his blessing, all of it belongs to those who will simply believe in him.

Thirdly, that brings us to the invitation of Christ, the invitation of Christ in light of everything that we've heard. My friends, God has brought us together here today to hear in unambiguous terms these truths. The biblical gospel is not fiction. It is true. It is reality. It is the way things really are, even though it is contrary to the spirit of our age. There is no other name given under heaven among men by which we must be saved. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." And now Christ comes freely and truly to those who deserve only judgment and condemnation and says, "Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Those of us who trust in him find certainty in him, not fiction, not empty promises. What we find in Christ so transcends everything that we experience on earth. How many of you have been brokenhearted by people that broke faith with you? How many of you have been brokenhearted standing at the grave of a loved one, especially those that you don't know went to heaven when they died? How many of you have been brokenhearted by people you trusted by turns of fortune that went against you? And just seeing the emptiness and the unreliability of life and men in general, even the best intentioned of them, let us down eventually, leave us eventually, and one day we'll be the one leaving. There is nothing in this world worthy of you clinging to, hoping in, that would keep you from Christ. Jesus said in John 5:24, "Whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment but has passed from death to life."

And so my friends, every one of you, every one of you faced with this eternally momentous gospel, in this eternally momentous instant, with hell breathing down your neck, Christ comes as a deliverer and gives an invitation and a promise that you must answer and respond to. Jesus said in John 7:37 and 38, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" A command, he says, "Come to me." A promise, "Come to me and out of your heart will flow rivers of living water." Beloved, this is the moment of salvation. This is the day of salvation. You can bring nothing to Christ, no merit of your own, no good works, nothing of the sort. All you can bring to Christ is your desperate need for him and the cry of that publican in Luke 18 that says, "Be merciful to me, the sinner. In light of all you've said in your word, in light of all of the truth that has been

poured into my heart, in light of all of the accountability that comes, O Christ, O Lamb of God, I come. I come to thee and to thee alone." My dear friends, you have heard the truth in Christ today and now the living Christ, by the power of his Holy Spirit, offers himself to you freely and without cost. Will you respond in repentance and faith? May God make it so for each one of you.

Let's pray together.

O Christ, human words are so feeble and ineffective to communicate the urgency of the gospel, the truth of the gospel, and the eternal ramifications of the things that we've heard today. Human words are feeble. Human hearts are unable, distracted. That is why, Father, we are so grateful that it does not depend upon human wisdom or human power or human insight. We commit the things that have been said from this pulpit for the past many months and from the past hour, we commit them all to you and pray that by the greatness of the power of the Holy Spirit, you would open hearts to repent and to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ today. And Father, that you would look not only on the rank unsaved that need this grace, but, Father, that you would look on those that have heard the truth, perhaps professed faith in Christ, perhaps been baptized, perhaps shown outward signs of a spiritual influence, but now walk in darkness and hardness and indifference and, O God, we can't look into their hearts to know what the reality is, only you do. We pray, Father, we pray that you would have mercy on those whose faces come to our mind, on those whose lives we know and love, Father, represented by so many scores of people in this room with their own faces and memories and heart concerns. Father, look on it all. Look on our grieving hearts and have mercy on those that we love even as Paul grieved over the Jews and said that, "I could wish myself accursed and separated from Christ if only the Jews would be saved." Father, with like desire, with like concern, with like passion we pray in the name of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit for your work to fall upon each one of us with power, O God, a power that belongs only to you, the things possible to you, may the fullness of this be unleashed in our midst. As we contemplate the conclusion of our time together, help us by your grace, not according to our merit or our deserving, but according to the love, Father, that you have for your own blessed Son and for the sake of the meritorious life and death that he lived on behalf of sinners throughout the world, Jew and Gentile alike, we ask, Father, because we can do no else. We ask because we cannot make it happen. We ask for your glory and for the sake of sinners everywhere for you, as you poured out grace on the early church in Acts 2, that you would pour out grace upon us today. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Thanks for listening to Pastor Don Green from Truth Community Church in Cincinnati, Ohio. You can find more church information, Don's complete sermon library and other helpful materials at thetruthpulpit.com teaching God's people God's word. This message is copyrighted by Don Green. All rights reserved.