

THE VICTORY OF GOD

John 18:33–19:30 • Char Brodersen

Introduction: Good morning, Church! If it's your first time joining us, welcome! As many of you know, we're spending this year building out our biblical theology—seeing how the whole story of Scripture fits together and finds its fulfillment and goal in and through Jesus Christ. We are now in our final series looking at the Story of the Kingdom. For the last two weeks, we have been looking together at the Gospel and the kingdom of God as it was proclaimed, demonstrated, and inaugurated by Jesus through his life, death, and resurrection. Before we move on in the redemptive narrative of Scripture, I think it is very helpful and necessary for us to consider the scope of the Gospel and the kingdom of God—particularly how God is King again through the work of Jesus' cross.

It is sometimes missed by our modern ears because we tend to focus on the sufferings of Jesus, but every one of the Gospel writers see the cross as an ironic coronation ceremony. Arrayed in purple robes, crowned with thorns, declared by the ruling government in the three main dialects of the ancient world—Hebrew, Latin, and Greek—this is the King of the JEWS!

This is the moment where the world's true and rightful King, God in human flesh, was lifted up, exalted for all people to see. In him we see what kingship really looks like—Sacrificial, substitutionary, a beautiful stewardship and care for the weak, vulnerable, and outcasts of society, victorious and hope-filled, power to empower his subjects.

Pastor and theologian from the 1800s, J. L. Reynolds, wrote, *“When Christ uttered, in the judgment hall of Pilate, the remarkable words ‘I am a king,’ he pronounced a sentiment fraught with unspeakable dignity and power. His enemies might deride his pretensions and express their mockery of his claim, by presenting him with a crown of thorns, a reed and a purple robe, and nailing him to the cross; but in the eyes of un-fallen intelligences, he was a king. A higher power presided over that derisive ceremony, and converted it into a real coronation. That crown of thorns was indeed the diadem of empire; that purple robe was the badge of royalty; that fragile reed was the symbol of unbounded power; and that cross the throne of dominion which shall never end.”* —J. L. Reynolds, *Church Polity or The Kingdom of Christ*

Victory, conquest, triumph, overcoming; this was the vocabulary of those first followers of the risen Jesus and the early church for the first few centuries. This is how they read the sacred text of the apostles and the prophets. The apostle Paul wrote: “he gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ,” “we are more than conquerors through him who loved us,” and “God ... leads us in triumphal procession in Christ.” It is he who “overcame,” “has triumphed,” and moreover did it by the cross. There was no defeatism about the early Christians, they spoke rather of victory.

Last week we looked specifically at how the original and biblical gospel or Good News is the proclamation that “God is King!” What I want us to see is that this is not only more biblically accurate but also a more beautiful and full understanding of the gospel—for if we understand that the good news is about the reign of God, we see that it has so many implications not only for us personally in regards to our salvation, and in the way we live, but for all people and all creation!

The Gospel concerns our personal salvation, our communal identity, and our cosmic renewal and hope, and Jesus accomplished all of this through his victory on the cross.

I. A Truncated Gospel

- A. This isn't the first time we've talked about this, and the reason is because I think it is so essential that we understand the full and biblical gospel. The Good News is that God is King and that his kingdom is coming into this world. This is about rescue and redemption, hope, things finally being put right with the world—evil and darkness being judged. What we often refer to as the gospel—“Jesus died for our sins”—is really about how God's kingdom comes to our lives and how we personally are able to be a part of God's kingdom.
- B. Have you ever wondered how the gospel or Good News, in the way that we often think about it and apply it, is actual Good News to someone who is suffering due to sickness and disease; to those who have been abused, and used, trampled over their whole lives, those who have experienced gross injustice—is the Good News to them? *You are a sinner who needs forgiveness or you will be judged and separated from God for all eternity. Fortunately, God offers you forgiveness of sin through Jesus.* Is this Good News? Is this the message that Jesus and the apostles preached?
 - 1. Jesus was not silent on the personal reality and consequences of sin (if they don't believe he is who he claims, they will die in their sins). Peter preached the need for personal repentance and forgiveness of sins in Acts 2 and 3. Paul said that Jesus is the one who delivers us from the wrath that is to come. But Jesus and the apostles never left the gospel one-dimensional, and their main proclamation was that Jesus is Lord of all.
- C. See, when we relegate the Good News to only being “repent of your sin!” it can be incredibly insensitive, discouraging, and even condemning. It overlooks, minimizes, and mitigates justice and righteousness—as if God didn't care about our suffering and the evil that is done to us in this world, but only that we recognize our own evil and culpability. The Good News is that the Good News (gospel) is better than that—it is about God's reign and rescue!

II. The Biblical Gospel

- A. What is the gospel? Well, of course, we can only truly understand the gospel by going back to the beginning where we understand that the cosmos is created by the God who is Father, Son, and Spirit, who longs to pour out his love and goodness into creation and into his human image bearers. God creates the world for humanity to rule it in partnership and fellowship with him, and yet humanity instead listened to a *different* spiritual being—called the Satan—that convinced them to rebel against God and to have the world and its rule without God. They rejected God as King. As we've said before, though the first humans had the ability to make this choice, they did not have the power to hold the world together, and so sin and chaos broke into God's good creation, bringing separation from God, from one another, from our own selves, and also between us and the created world. The Good News of God being King, then, is all about how God has come on a rescue mission to reclaim and redeem his creation.
 - 1. The gospel is the message about how the God who is Father, Son, and Spirit, the Creator of everyone and everything, has broken into the world he created, but that was derailed by sin, in order to redeem and rescue it by giving his life in exchange for its life—to bring it back into its intended goal—to be a world filled with right doing, peace, and joy with God and human beings living together in total harmony. World without end.
 - 2. Theologian Michael Bird defines the gospel this way, *“The biblical gospel is a justice-bringing, sin-forgiving, slavery-crushing, illness-healing, debt-remitting, low-status-reversing, sin-cleansing, outsider-including, and truthing-to-power gospel.”* —Michael Bird, *The Social Gospel of Jesus**
 - 3. And the message of the New Testament is that this gospel was accomplished through the victory of Jesus' cross and resurrection.

III. The 3D Gospel

- A. Missiologist Jayson George has coined the term 3D Gospel to understand the fullness of the biblical gospel. In his book, *The 3D Gospel*, he looks at the gospel through three lenses—Guilt vs. Innocence, Shame vs. Honor, and Fear vs. Power. He takes this 3D Gospel understanding right from Paul the apostle in Colossians 2 where Paul writes, **“For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority. In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands. Your whole self ruled by the flesh was put off when you were circumcised by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead. When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ (Shame vs. Honor). He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross (Guilt vs. Innocence.) And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross (Fear vs. Power).” —Colossians 2:9–15**
- B. **The Gospel as Guilt vs. Innocence**—God, in Christ, is the holy and righteous Creator and Judge of all and in and through the substitutionary, sacrificial work of Christ. He declares us clean, holy, and righteous. Humans once again have right standing with God through Jesus.
1. This is the most common understanding of the gospel, and rightly so, because of its personal nature. The biblical word for this is justification—making us right with God. In God’s becoming King, he makes the guilty innocent through his work on the cross. The biblical teaching is that humans stand before a righteous and holy God, who is Creator, Sustainer and the rightful King over all—and we owe a debt to him—of our lives, of our relationships, of our stewardship over the earth.
 - a. One way that the Bible speaks of our human condition in sin is as **Transgression**—rebellion and self-will (transgression refers to stubbornness and willfulness, but because we are twisted inwardly, its always negative). We say things like *the heart wants, what the heart wants*—and so we break our commitments because of our selfish desires, excusing it as us just being our authentic selves. We are bent on our own will, our own way, ourselves as the authority.
 - b. We see signs that say—do not trespass, or your spouse or parent says, don’t do that or say that and what? We want to do it even more (even harder), just because.
 - (i) Or maybe another way to think of this one is the fact that we are like terrible tenants in God’s “house.” We are polluting the creation through our insatiable consumption, hoarding the plenteous resources of the world for ourselves while others hunger and thirst, filling the earth with violence and bloodshed—we are punching holes in the walls of God’s house by the way we selfishly treat the created world, our neighbor, and God.
 - c. From this vantage point of the gospel, or Good News, we understand that God became a human being in the person of Jesus, to take up humanity’s debt that we owe to God. God created us for himself—for his glory, for his friendship and partnership. But humans have centered the world around themselves—we have not loved God supremely, and we have not loved our neighbor as our self. And so Jesus came as the True Human who would love God supremely and love his neighbor. In fact, he went further—he died for, substituted himself for the enemies of God, for rebels, at the cross. Jesus took humanity’s place—he took our judgment upon himself and gives us his perfect righteousness and status as the beloved Son of God. In theological terms, we call this substitutionary atonement—meaning that Jesus substituted himself to reconcile us and bring us back to God.

- d. Paul the apostle will later write of Jesus' salvific work, **"God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."** —2 Corinthians 5:18–21
 - e. John the Baptizer called Jesus, **"The Lamb of God—who takes away the sin of the world!"** —John 1:29
 - f. Isaiah called him the suffering servant—who is substitute and sacrifice for us, who bore our sins and carried our sorrows, by whose wounds we are healed (Isaiah 53).
 - (i) *The Fox and the Fleas*
 - g. Because of Jesus' victory through the cross, where he gave himself for his people—our sin for his righteousness—we are forgiven all the sin we have ever committed against others and against God. We are washed clean of all our guilt. Where before nothing was truly right within us, now something is very right in us—God's own righteousness. As the people of God, we now live out that righteousness with God as we forgive others, serve, and sacrifice even as Christ forgave, served, and sacrificed for us! We are to be a community of forgiveness, service, and sacrifice.
- C. **The Gospel as Shame vs. Honor**—God in Christ, is our good, kind, and gracious Brother who restores our honor and place in the family of God at the cost of his own life and inheritance. We clearly see this message in the life and ministry of Jesus, and especially in the parable of the lost sheep, the coin, and lost sons.
1. Humans have lost their honor and their true home in God that was graciously bestowed on them at creation—The royal status, ruling over God's creation, setting humans over all the works of his hands, inviting them to be his covenant partners to rule over all things.
 2. Humanity betrayed and rebelled against God, spurning all the goodness he had shown them, spitting in his face. You remember that directly after their sin, we are told that they hid themselves and they sowed fig leaves together to hide their nakedness. Previously we were told that the man and the woman were in a state of perfect happiness in relationship to God and to each other—they were naked and without shame. But now they hide from God, they cover up from one another—something is very wrong with them—this is the entrance of shame into the world.
 - a. **Sin**—As shame or failure—the word "sin" actually means to miss the mark, or to get "it" wrong. It's the Bible's way of saying humans are not what we should be or were supposed to be. We fail, we mess up, we get things wrong, accidents happen, and some accidents have huge ramifications—killing people and ruining lives. Where does this come from? Sin—the failure to be the kind of humans God created us to be.
 3. Now because we live in this state of spiritual and physical homelessness—this is not the world God created us for, we are not what we were meant to be; because of this loss of honor or glory, humans seek to establish our own honor and glory—sometimes in very beautiful and right ways of self-sacrifice and service. And YET largely, humans seek this by putting down, oppressing others, shutting people out. We also lose our honor with one another and incur shame when we fail each other, when we cheat and lie. All of these are attempts to keep our honor, to have face with those in authority, those who are the "in" crowd. This is where slavery, caste systems, racism, oppression, wars, murder, rape, covetousness, comparisons and judging, and so many other evils come from—the attempts to get back an honor from one another, from created things, that can only come from our restoration to God and to our right place as his children.

4. Jesus as the True Human, who is also the Son of God, comes to restore that honor and place that was forfeited and lost at the fall by taking our shame upon himself and giving us his honor.
5. We humans have been created by God and for God—we are a part of the family. But we have left the Father’s house and dishonored him and incurred shame—entangled ourselves in debt and slavery to sin. We are in desperate need of redemption/restoration. Our Father so deeply loves us that he will not let anything come between us. He will move heaven and earth to rescue and redeem his children. Beyond all imaginations, God will give his very life to rescue us and bring us back safely into the family household that we might be his children and he our father for all eternity.
6. For all those who live under shame—whether through your sin against others, sin done to you by others, or sin done in your presence that has defiled you—Jesus removes your shame, bearing it all upon himself at the cross. There the God of glory, who dwells in uninhabitable light, took on our darkness, our shame, and disgrace—he identified with all of it (this is what Isaiah the prophet is describing in chapter 53), and he put it to death there on the cross!! And now as the resurrected Lord over all, he is the one who bestows everlasting honor. He makes outsiders insiders; the lowly highly esteemed; the lost found; the homeless he gives a home; the fatherless and childless, he gives a family—belonging, acceptance, affirmation. You are loved, you are wanted, you are pleasing through the work of Jesus!
 - a. **“Instead of your shame you will receive a double portion, and instead of disgrace you will rejoice in your inheritance. And so you will inherit a double portion in your land, and everlasting joy will be yours.” —Isaiah 61:7**
 - b. Listen to what Paul the apostle says about any and all who claim Jesus as their Lord and King: **“If you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. As Scripture says, ‘Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame.’” —Romans 10:9–11**
7. Because of Jesus’ victory through the cross, where he gave himself for his people—taking all our shame and giving us his glory and status as the beloved Son in whom the Father is so very pleased, we now practice this same gospel honor in the way that we see ourselves—Beloved, belonging, beautiful, and valuable to God our Father. But also in the way we see and treat one another in our reception of others as brothers and sisters—also beloved children of the Father, who we care and are concerned for, serve and sacrifice for, bearing each other’s burdens, practicing the hospitality, inclusion, honor, affirmation, the removal and shunning of caste, wealth, or gender distinctions.
 - a. Those who are shamed and despised, who have no place in the world or in our culture, can have a place and honor here among God’s redeemed people because Jesus has removed our shame and restored our place in God’s family.

IV. **The Gospel as Fear vs. Power**—God in Christ is our rescuer who fights the powers of darkness on our behalf, rescuing us and setting us free.

- A. We looked at this in our studies on the fall of humanity and the story of the Exodus. You and I, by consequence of Adam and Eve’s sin, are enslaved to our passions, to our misdirected and undisciplined desires—and these passions, idols, and gods in our lives have incredible control over us. We are enslaved to them, and simultaneously, we love our passions and think that if we just get them right, they will satisfy us. But God knows our affliction, and he has created us not for unbridled passion and desires but to direct our whole being to knowing, loving, and serving him. We were created to be his sons and daughters, his partners—and so he has come to rescue and redeem us by setting us free from these enslaving powers.

1. The Bible describes this aspect of our sin as iniquity—the inner warp of the self, bent in on ourselves, twisted, enslaved to our own passions and desires.
- B. All throughout the Gospels, Jesus is depicted as total and uncontested in his power over sickness, over disease, over death, over the demonic, even over nature. He is Lord and the Sovereign Ruler over all that we fear and dread—heaven and earth move at his very word.
- C. In one of his many controversies with the religious leaders, Jesus is accused of being in cahoots with the powers of darkness because they obey and tremble at his very word. Jesus explains what is happening with a parable about a strong man who guards all his goods so that they are secure—but he says if a stronger man comes, he binds the strong man, and then he plunders his whole house.
1. This is what Jesus has done in his work on the cross—He is the strong man who has bound the Satan and plundered all his goods.
 2. **But how?** It's really amazing. The picture that the Scriptures paint is one of a ransom—where an innocent victim takes the place of those who are enslaved. This is pictured quite well in C. S. Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*.
 3. The idea is this—a transaction must take place for Satan to release his authority over humans (something they forfeited to him in their sin and rebellion against God in the garden). The price was and is Jesus, the Son of God, who gives his life as a ransom for humanity (Mark 10:45). At the cross, Satan took the bait, perceiving victory and ownership over God's Son. But Satan was unable to exercise his authority over him because of both his innocence and his divinity. Death could not hold him, he could not see corruption, and so he triumphed over Satan and the grave, and in so doing, he has led a host of captives to freedom, performing the greatest rescue mission the world has ever known!
 4. Paul writes to the church in Colossae: **“And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he (Jesus Christ) made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.” — Colossians 2:15**
 5. In what follows, Paul tells the church to not be afraid or intimidated or enslaved by anything or anyone. We are free in Jesus Christ. Even more, we are more than conquerors through him who loved us!
 6. Or as he writes in Romans 8, there is nothing now that can separate us from God's love in Christ. There is no power in heaven or on earth that we need to fear. Christ is Lord over all.
 7. At the cross, Jesus drew all the powers of evil, darkness, and Satan, and there, he overthrew them!
 8. Humanity, through its rebellion to the one true God and Father of all creation, has found itself enslaved under the tyranny of sin, death, and Satan. Yet God has seen our affliction and heard the cries of humanity and has come down to rescue us (Exodus 3:7–8). He has raised up a Deliverer, and with his mighty hand and outstretched arm, the same arm that Isaiah the prophet will foresee (Isaiah 52–53), he has humiliated the gods and powers of this world, defeating them by triumphing over them through his cross (Colossians 2:13–15). He has delivered us by the precious blood of the Lamb (no spot or blemish, no broken bones), leading us through baptismal waters, as Moses led the people through the Red Sea, so that we are brought through cleansed and renewed—a new identity, a new humanity. Leading us to the promised land of the New Creation. Christ is victorious over all!
 - a. Because of Jesus' victory through the cross—where he took on the powers of darkness that oppress, enslave, and keep people in fear, and totally triumphed over them—we no longer live in fear, not of our past, not of the present, not even of the future! We can live carefree

in the greatest sense, knowing that all things are in his powerful hands. And we can live as a community that is free, and we can bring freedom to others to their addiction, spiritual bondage, generational curses, magic, fear, idolatry, and whatever else may be enslaving them. We declare to them the uncontested power in Jesus' name!

Closing

“Original sin, Reinhold Niebuhr liked to say, is the only Christian doctrine that is empirically verifiable. Our neighbors may not believe in a Fall, but they cannot deny that something is terribly out of joint in the human story. At the other end of history, modern science has made it clear that ‘progress’ is not just a historical fantasy but a physical impossibility. Thanks to the Second Law of Thermodynamics, the total amount of disorder in the universe is increasing, and one distant day the universe’s vast reserves of information, energy, and order will be dissipated in a great and final sigh followed by an everlasting silence. True, this cosmic story ends not in fire but in ice (although some models leave open the possibility that the universe will collapse again upon itself in a final fiery burst of annihilation)—but the ultimate loss of all things is not in doubt. The vision of a sulfurous consuming lake of fire is an eerily apt metaphor for the eradication of history and meaning that is assured in the world as we know it. That end may be unimaginably distant, but it is inexorably approaching as certainly as our own individual deaths. So a story that begins in sin and ends in judgment doesn’t just fail to be good news. It isn’t news at all. It tells our neighbors nothing they cannot figure out on their own. But the Bible’s story is a story of good news: both good and news, both unexpected and unexpectedly hopeful. It is good news about the end: the astonishing claim is that the world will not be forgotten or left to its own decay, but rescued and remade.”

—Andy Crouch, *Playing God*

The gospel is the good news about God’s glorious reign breaking into our broken, sin-filled world—that brings forgiveness of sin, restores humanity’s honor and place, and triumphs and expels all evil, oppression, sin, and darkness, all through the victory of Jesus’ cross! May we live in this glorious gospel, and may we discern all the ways before us to make it known to a broken, suffering, sin, and oppression-filled world!

Communion

As we come to the table this morning, how is the Spirit revealing the goodness of the gospel to you—Knowing that your guilt has been washed away; that you are actually and truly forgiven by God? Come meet Jesus at the table and pour out your gratitude and love to him—come eat, drink, receive forgiveness, and go out forgiven and forgiving!

Maybe today the goodness of the gospel is seen and heard as Jesus removes your shame—what you have said about yourself, what others have said about you. You feel lost, friendless, homeless, faceless. But in Christ, God takes away your shame and gives you this honor—my beloved child, in you I am well pleased. Come eat, drink, be filled with God’s love and approval over you, and go as a beloved child, making known to others their acceptance and belovedness.

Perhaps it’s neither of these, but in fact the good news is coming to you in these words—you don’t have to be afraid anymore; they can’t touch you; they have no power over you. You are safe in the arms of Jesus Christ. He has defeated all powers, whether earthly, spiritual, or demonic. Come eat, drink, receive peace and freedom, and go in that freedom and victory, making it known to others.

Jesus offers us all of these here at the table—let us come, remember, and celebrate the victory of our King!

Prayer—

Most merciful God,

We confess that we have sinned against you

In thought, word, and deed,

By what we have done,

And by what we have left undone.

We have not loved you with our whole heart;

We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.

We are truly sorry, and we humbly repent.

For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,

Have mercy on us and forgive us

That we may delight in your will

And walk in your ways,

To the glory of your Name. Amen.

Appendices

* <https://michaelfbird.substack.com/p/the-social-gospel-of-jesus>

The 3D Gospel by Jayson George