

## The Lost Gospel

You know what I realized? I have been on missions to 23 places - China, Mexico, Alabama, Washington, Louisiana, Tennessee, Georgia, Texas, and Colorado. I have preached 34 sermons and spoke at 5 retreats. I have attended 41 conferences. I have taught Sunday School for 8 years and personally disciplined 7 people. I have lead bible study for 10 years and have taken 185 hours of theological coursework. I have listened to 2041 sermons and spent every waking moment surrounded by church life. Yet I'm just now beginning to understand what the gospel of Jesus really means.

I find this realization terrifying on multiple levels. Could it be true that you can spend all of your life ingesting theological facts, knowing the "right" things to say – when to say it & when not to say it, learning how to play the church game and yet end up lost? Could you even be a teacher of the things of Jesus and still miss him all together? You know what scares me? The Bible scares me...why? Because it'll say stuff like this "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it" (Matt. 7:13-14). I looked up the word "few" in the Greek to see if it meant something else...the word (ὀλίγοι) means "few" ...crap! Or what do you do with "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'" (Matt. 7:21-23)? Yeah...it seems like Jesus is saying there's a lot of people who do "church" but a few people are my disciples. Man, that has gotta be the scariest thing in the world huh? Like standing there at the end and Jesus going "yeah...who are you?"

Us church folk have been coming to church...well, forever right? (That's why they call us church folk) And I think the word "gospel" has been thrown around out there almost as much as the word "love" has been misused. Gospel...gospel, well I think I know what it means but I don't know if I can really explain it to you...let me Wikipedia it real quick. Sound familiar? See I think a lot of us get confused about what the gospel of Jesus really is. You look in the church now and people think and swear that it's a system of rules to follow (and nobody will openly say that) but if you look at their life and what they communicate, it's definitely true. Or the gospel is some kind of moral standard that we have to live up to. So what *is* this gospel?

Plain and simple – "While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). It seems almost too easy though...but read through the first four books of the New Testament again and you'll see it for yourself. In the middle of all of our junk, in the middle of our divorce, in the middle of our bondage from lust, in the middle of all of the rage, vengeance, and hate that controls our heart...Jesus Christ goes "that's all you got? Ahh, c'mon...I can deal with that. What? Porn...that's cool, I can handle that. Come to me and let me heal you so you can be free". It's the moment when you and I are so freakin' tired of running and we lay bare our sinful heart at the feet of Jesus and we find no condemnation...just mercy and love. You tell me that's not good news!

And what you realize after you come to him and confess and be open is that he begins to work on you. And as he begins to chisel away at your chains you begin to taste freedom and start living life how it was meant to live – not necessarily the easiest way...but certainly the most fulfilling way. You think of the implications of this though...if this is the good news (the gospel) then there's much to celebrate. If this is the foundation of our faith, then the church should *always* be a place of honesty and brokenness (i.e. just a ghetto, dirty, authentic place) where we all come to seek the way of Jesus (not rules). And sooner or later all parts of our lives are taken over by this man Jesus that has so captured our hearts. The way we spend our money is a reflection of it; the way we support each other – financially, spiritually, emotionally; the way we learn at church; the way we go about deciding our future and careers...

You see, being a church person is the easiest thing in the world. I mean once you learn how to pay the game then you're in. And man...you can excel as high as you can. But what you have done is damned yourself...because you can get just enough of Jesus to be content, but never really know him. When he begins to really press into you – just wait till he starts talkin' to you about honesty, just wait till he gets into your money, your career, your relationships. What I've learned from one of my favorite pastors is that "many people have tried church...few people have tried Jesus".

My challenge to you, dear friends, is to finally shut off your ipods, turn off your tv, close aim and facebook for just a minute and really sit back and ask yourself "Do I really know who Jesus is? Am I honestly following him or am I just playing some kinda game?" And maybe you started off really good and now found yourself on the religious treadmill...John writes to you in Revelation 2 "Repent and do the things you did at first" Let's finally take stock in Jesus Christ and let us make him the object of our affections and his heart our heart.