

## Sermon to the Saints of God which are at Topeka – Sunday, September 11, 2016

***And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. – Mark 16:15-16***

The word *gospel* appears 98 times in scripture – all in the New Testament. The English word *gospel* reportedly comes from the Old English *godspell* (*god* = good and *spell* = story or news).

When the word *gospel* appears in scripture, it is either from the Strong's Greek #2097 *euaggelizo* (yoo-ang-ghel-id'-zo) or #2098 (a derivative form of 2097) *euagellion* (yoo-ang-ghel-ee-on). Further, #2097 *euaggelizo* – is a compounding of the Greek *eu* (yoo) which means: well, well done, good, rightly; and is also used as an exclamation; and *aggelos* (ang-el-os) which means: a messenger or angel - generally a (supernatural) messenger from God, an angel, conveying news or behests from God to men. You can probably guess that this is where we get the words *evangelize* and *evangelist* – I won't go into the gory details of the distinction between 'U' and 'V' in the Greek and Roman alphabets, but it's my understanding that, had we been having this discussion 400 or 500 years ago, we would never see a 'U' in conjunction with Greco/Roman writing (that's a more modern deviation from the original for the sake of clarifying when the letter 'V' is being used as a consonant versus a vowel). It would have been just 'V's, whether being used as a consonant or as a vowel, as in IVLIVS CAESAR (yes, the 'J' is another weird deal) - hence our pronunciation '*eVangelist*' rather than '*eUangelist*'.

The word *euaggelizo* (yoo-ang-ghel-id'-zo) has these possible meanings:

- to bring good news, to announce glad tidings
- used in the OT of any kind of good news
- of the joyful tidings of God's kindness, in particular, of the Messianic blessings
- in the NT used especially of the glad tidings of the coming kingdom of God, and of the salvation to be obtained in it through Christ, and of what relates to this salvation
- glad tidings are brought to one, one has glad tidings proclaimed to him
- to proclaim glad tidings
- instruct (men) concerning the things that pertain to Christian salvation

The word *euagellion* (yoo-ang-ghel-ee-on) originally meant:

- a reward for (having brought) good tidings (which was a relatively serious and widely practiced matter, not just in the Greco/Roman culture, but in many cultures that predated it, in both the western and eastern worlds);

but ultimately it came to have these possible meanings:

- good tidings

- the glad tidings of the kingdom of God soon to be set up, and subsequently also of Jesus the Messiah, the founder of this kingdom. After the death of Christ, the term comprises also the preaching of (concerning) Jesus Christ as having suffered death on the cross to procure eternal salvation for the men in the kingdom of God, but as restored to life and exalted to the right hand of God in heaven, thence to return in majesty to consummate the kingdom of God
- the glad tidings of salvation through Christ
- the proclamation of the grace of God manifest and pledged in Christ
- the narrative of the sayings, deeds, and death of Jesus Christ came to be called the gospel or glad tidings

All of those meanings are helpful to us, but in the case of this particular word, *gospel*, we have a wholly superior way of determining the meaning with precision, as it comes from the scripture itself (much in the same way Christ helps us with a practical definition of what his commandment of 'loving our neighbors as ourselves' means by giving us his words at Leviticus 19). In this case, the Lord gives us clarity when we study the word in comparing a piece of Old Testament scripture that is a prophecy concerning Christ (written in Hebrew) and Christ's reading of that specific prophecy concerning himself (written in Greek). Consider the scripture, first at Luke 4:

***And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. – Luke 4:16-21***

Now let us look at what he was reading – out of Isaiah 61:

***The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; - Isa. 61:1-2***

This passage of scripture continues, without really shifting, and is beautiful and delightful. I only stop here because we are looking at the help this scripture gives in determining a precise definition of the word *gospel*, even though that word never appears in the Old Testament. In the Luke account, we see that Christ is actually handed a copy of the book of Isaiah (Esaias), and he

opened it up and read, verbatim, out of that place (which may seem a little silly to point out, as he IS the Word, and therefore has infinite knowledge of every nuance of meaning, jot and tittle). However, here, we are able to do a side by side and see that Christ makes synonymous gospel (Luke) and good tidings (Isaiah) (the Hebrew word there means to announce or preach as good, welcome news or to receive such). This isn't merely a loose equivalence – it is the Saviour reading, word for word, concept for concept, a prophecy concerning himself and it being profitably recorded by the Holy Ghost for our learning and admonition. We also see that the word translated from the Hebrew into *meek* has the same meaning as the word translated from the Greek for *poor* (lowly, afflicted, destitute of the Christian virtues and eternal riches - helpless, powerless to accomplish an end). But I also hope that it is not lost on us that, right in the middle of that glorious Messianic prophecy found in Isaiah 61, Christ stops, closes the book, gives it again to the minister, and sits down; right in the middle of a verse. And he said *precisely* that part of that prophecy that he meant to say, as in all things. He stopped after reading: *'to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.'*

Gill, in part, on the 'acceptable year of the Lord': *The time which he willed and fixed for the redemption of his people, and in which he showed his goodwill and pleasure unto sinful men, in the gift of his Son to them, and for them; and which, as the Arabic and Syriac versions render it, was a time "acceptable to the Lord": the sufferings of Christ were according to his will; his sacrifice was of a sweet smelling savour to him; his righteousness he was well pleased with; and the satisfaction and atonement for sin he made was a plenary and complete one: all Christ did, and suffered, were grateful to God, because hereby his perfections were glorified, his purposes, counsel, and covenant were accomplished, and his people saved. The Persic version renders it, "to preach the law acceptable to God," neither agreeable to the original text, nor its sense; for Christ was sent to preach the Gospel, and not the law. In the Vulgate Latin, and Arabic versions is added, "and the day of vengeance," out of the prophecy in #Isa 61:2 but is not in any of the copies, or other versions. Our Lord did not read through all the three verses in the prophet, as it might be thought he would.*

It seems clear that *believing* the gospel, though having fundamental aspects, is a thing that God gifts upon the hearts of his chosen people in a manner that, over time and with appropriate, with diligent study and greater light afforded by God, continues to be understood with ever-increasing clarity and detail, and that cup of understanding, humility, gratitude and love toward God continues to widen and fill the heart of a man whose heart is turned to God through belief in Christ.. As to *preaching* the gospel, I desire to know with as much clarity as the Lord will grant me what that means to me, as I'm sure we all do – and what it calls upon us to do, and how to do it, in service and obedience to our King. This, much in the same way that, after having read the words at Ec. 12:13, we desire as much knowledge and clarity about what the commandments of God *are*, that we may keep them in ever-increasing obedience to Him.

***Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. – Ec. 12:13***

We want to know all we can about what His commandments are, but it would be disobedient by definition to wait until we understood all of them to keep any of them. So instead, we do 2 things: we strive to keep the commandments we feel we have light on (while constantly asking God for increasing light on them) and we search the scriptures, get counsel from other learned, godly souls, both amongst us and who have come before us, on those matters that we don't have clear light on. Sometimes we learn from their mistakes, comparing spiritual things with spiritual, and having iron sharpen iron on these weighty matters of his commandments (again, constantly asking God for more light on what we don't know). It is chiefly for this reason that we:

***Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. – 2Tim. 2:15***

So by comparison, when we see the commandment out of Mark 16:

***And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. – Mark 16:15,***

We desire to preach that gospel with as much clarity and light as we have, while constantly asking the Lord to give us more light on the subject, that our obedience can be enlarged by doing that work with fidelity, humility, and doing it more heartily unto the Lord, both in season and out:

***Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. - 2Ti 4:2***

Gill, in part, on preaching and being instant in and out of season: *Either Christ the essential Word, who is the sum and substance of the Gospel ministry; or the Gospel of salvation, the word of righteousness, peace, and reconciliation by Christ; which is to be preached, or published, in like manner as heralds proclaim the will of their princes; openly, publicly, and with a loud voice, without adding to it, or taking from speaking out the whole, and keeping back no part of it; and that with all courage and boldness:*

*be instant in season, out of season; that is, be constant and assiduous in the work of the ministry; be always and wholly in it, either preparing for it, or performing it; or doing those things which are annexed to it, or follow upon it; redeem time, and take every opportunity of dispensing the mysteries of grace, as a faithful steward of them; not only make use of the common and stated seasons for the ministration of the word and ordinances, but embrace every other that offers; make use not only of those seasons which may seem commodious and advantageous both to preacher and hearer, and promise usefulness and success, but even such as may seem*

*incommodious and disadvantageous to flesh and blood; such as times of persecution and opposition; but none of these things should deter and move from the preaching of the Gospel.*

Of the 98 times that the word gospel appears in scripture (again, all NT), 56 times it appears in explicit conjunction with preaching, publishing, speaking or testifying, and many of the remaining times the implication of preaching is not far off (either in context or proximity). The word gospel is also used in several distinct phrasings that can be helpful to us:

- gospel of the kingdom (Mt. 9:35)
- gospel of the kingdom of God (Mark 1:14)
- gospel of Jesus Christ (Mr. 1:1)
- gospel of God (Rom. 15:16)
- gospel of his Son (Rom. 1:9)
- gospel of Christ (2Cor. 10:14)
- gospel of your salvation (Eph. 1:13)
- my gospel (2Tim. 2:8)
- Christ's gospel (2Cor. 2:12)
- gospel of the grace of God (Ac. 20:24)
- our gospel (2Thes. 2:14)
- another gospel [as false] (Gal. 1:6)
- any other gospel [as false] (Gal. 1:9)
- gospel of peace (Eph. 6:15)
- hope of the gospel (Col. 1:23)
- gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ (2Thes. 1:8)
- everlasting gospel (Rev. 14:6)

So what does it mean, specifically, to preach the gospel? It is with great clarity and thanksgiving that we can see, as a generic but valuable answer, that the gospel is the whole of the scripture (as the whole of the scripture is Christ and points to Christ). The transitive property of logic and mathematics helps us here (if A=B and B=C and C=D, then A=D). Can we not say that the gospel is Christ? Is not Christ the Word? Is not the Word the scripture (Bible)? So is not the gospel the Bible? And when we preach to each other - those who give each other continuing evidence of being interested in the things of God (by being here and showing forth therefore and understanding of the body of Christ and a need for spiritual communion, ministering and being knit together in love) – we preach the whole Bible, bit by blessed bit (as the Lord blesses us with light), as a way of being nourished and growing in the Lord. So a sermon or study on sacrifices in the Levitical code, or on the Sabbath, or on the Lord's Supper, or on the 7 churches of the Revelation, etc., all edify us, refresh our bowels, delight our sensibilities and help us to better bring our thoughts into captivity that we obey Christ (there are so many other benefits – words would fail to encapsulate them all). We sinful worms, who can do nothing to escape the eternal

fate of our sinfulness, constantly recognize, by the grace of God, the blessed reconciliation to God through the mystery of Christ's death, burial and resurrection. It is amazing. We love it – we drink in every notion and nuance of it that God will bless our minds and hearts with. Since we are interested in it, we come together to speak of these things and learn from the Holy Spirit all that he fills us with:

***Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not. – Mal. 3:16-18***

***Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; - Col. 2:12-14***

We see in ourselves, and when people come here, or in those who reach out and express some level of seeming earnestness in their approach, that there is lots to discuss concerning the gospel. The eunuch didn't know much, but seemed earnest, so the Holy Spirit caused Philip to be joined to the chariot and preach Christ to him:

***And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet. Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: in his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth. And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ***

***is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing. But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea. – Acts 8:26-40***

But what of preaching the gospel to someone who doesn't necessarily express an interest? Or what of preaching the gospel to someone who you don't have much time with? Or both? Obviously you can't preach the whole Bible to someone – even if you had a few days – so what does it mean to preach the gospel to 'every creature,' when you will only have a person's attention for a minute, or if no interest is expressed (which again means you might only have a minute)? Are there fundamental, necessary and sufficient aspects of the gospel that we could look to – even if we can't express them (in some mediums, like a sign, or twitter, etc.) that are those which we must preach; otherwise we are not really preaching the gospel?

Tulip, or the doctrines of grace, or what some call Calvinism, seems to start to get at that.

Total Depravity – we are depraved, sinful worms who are deserving of nothing but death and hell – an eternal, unbearable punishment for our sin against God, and we can't stop sinning nor can we pay our debt of sin – and this is the state of every man born

Unconditional Election – There is no basis or merit in any man, nor can there ever be, that could determine his election (or escape from damnation). While some men do escape that horrible fate, and are instead predestinated to a glorious eternal habitation in the presence of God, it is the sheer good pleasure of God's will that has (already) determined all such outcomes.

Limited Design in the Atonement – Christ came into the world and died to save sinners from eternal damnation (again, on account of their sinful nature), but not ALL sinners. God chose who would be saved, and the blood of Christ is ransom and reconciliation for only those sinners who have been predestinated to that blessed lot.

Irresistible Grace – No man can resist the call of God into belief in Christ, and therefore salvation. While all men are offered the external call of God, only his elect have their hearts changed by the internal call of the Holy Spirit working in their hearts (thereby bringing them to true repentance).

Perseverance of the Saints – Once saved, always saved. There is no loss of salvation once bestowed. Though saints experience persecution, affliction and trouble (again, on account of our sin), those who God has pronounced His love for are loved eternally and their salvation eternally secure.

That is very good stuff; it boils it all down. Can you preach part of the gospel, and neglect preaching other parts, and still be said to preach the gospel? Sometimes we are pushed to the limit on time, medium, or lack of interest. And none of that ultimately matters. The Lord gives us platforms, words, resolve, and right spirits to do the work he has bid us to do. But isn't preaching the gospel, like any other duty, subject to greater and less light on the subject? Do we have all the light possible here? Can we be more thorough-going, and therefore more obedient to God, in our approach? I submit to you blessed brothers and sisters a few questions that I think we can ask ourselves and answer – with the help of scripture and God-given spiritual reasoning – that can shed some light on what are those crucial, fundamental aspects of preaching the gospel to those who are without:

1. Can you say you're preaching the gospel if you don't preach the absolute sovereignty of God? No. The Bible preaches God's sovereignty. If He's not sovereign, then you may not be compelled to do what He wills.
2. Can you say you're preaching the gospel if you don't preach on sin and man's sinful nature? No. the Bible is clear that the wages of sin is death (hell) and that all men are of the fallen Adamic race. The fall of Adam (and therefore man) stands in need of the reconciliation that can only come through Christ. There's nothing man can do. Christ is the only reconciliation, and it's the perfect, beautiful design of God that Christ's crucifixion and resurrection is the mechanism of the atonement and reconciliation to God.
3. Can you say you're preaching the gospel without preaching on hell? No. Salvation has no meaning if the punishment isn't expressed as scripture expresses it from cover to cover: unbearable, inescapable, eternal torment strapped right on the back of our fallen, sinful nature.
4. Can you say you're preaching the gospel if you don't preach on election and reprobation? No. The Bible preaches election and reprobation. Jacob have I loved; Esau have I hated. Esau was a man, and the standing type of the children of disobedience. If salvation is universal, then it is worthless.
5. Can you say you're preaching the gospel if you are not preaching the hatred and wrath of God? No. The Bible preaches the hatred and wrath of God (see #4). His counsel is fixed in all matters, and his hatred is an expression of his glory and sovereignty. Again, what is the value of salvation if there is nothing to be saved from? One chief way in which God glorifies his name is in the destruction of the wicked.
6. Can you say you're preaching the gospel if you don't preach on the Great General Judgment? No. The Bible preaches it – it is a day certain and fixed. And no man can escape it. Men from all quarters will be begging mountains to fall on them to hide them from THE WRATH OF THE LAMB. How's that for brain-cramping, sheer horror?
7. Can you say you're preaching the gospel if you don't preach repentance for sin? No. Christ preached repentance. See Luke 13. And the rest of the Bible (shout out to my brother and

co-grandpa Jon). See #s 2-6 on the unbearable, and yet eternally-borne consequence of dying in an unrepentant state.

8. Can you say you're preaching the gospel if you are not preaching the love and mercy of God? No. The Bible preaches the love and mercy of God – and furthermore, it is preached erroneously and perverted by many, many men - so a faithful, truthful rendering of His love and mercy seems all the more vital. Another chief way that God glorifies His name is in delivering His people from their bondage (sin), their afflictions, their persecutions – in fact, God saves his people from THEMSELVES. The love of God is ultimately the only thing of real value in this universe. It is the thing that Jacob wrestled the man in the desert all night for. If we don't have the love of God upon us, we have nothing but eternal torment – and all of the memories of fun and pleasant things in this evil world won't carry the day, hour, minute or second in hell.
9. Can you say you're preaching the gospel if you don't preach the death, burial and resurrection of Christ as the mechanism of Salvation for his children? No. The WHOLE BIBLE preaches that – from cover to cover – that the blood of the Lamb is the only efficacious atonement for the sins of man. Why is it such good news? See #'s 1-7. What else is there to talk about, from a standpoint of what all men stand in dire need of (us included)?
10. Can you say you're preaching the gospel if you don't make Christ the centerpiece of all your preaching? No. The whole Bible preaches Christ. God Almighty has, from eternal ages past, decreed and designed a specific and exclusive Salvation – thereby glorifying His name in mercy. The blood of Christ is the only atonement for sin defined by God Almighty. If you don't faithfully preach Christ as the all in all – the only path to salvation – the way, the truth and the life - then you are a Pharisee. If you preach Christ amiss in heresy, or pervert the gospel, then you are a minister of Satan. Faithful, God-fearing preachers of the gospel should preach the Lord Jesus Christ coming into this world and dying to save sinners – with as much sound doctrine around the detail of that blessed Salvation as the Lord gives us. And we should do so patiently and with longsuffering - in total awareness that many, many others preach it wrong. We must preach Christ faithfully. We must preach the gospel, and the gospel is Christ. It should consume and delight our minds always – we should fix our gaze upon the cross, and never be ashamed of the gospel, even those aspects of it, and *particularly* those aspects of it, that everyone else gets wrong – so we must ask our Maker to help us get it right.

There are no doubt more questions to ask and answer here. But I submit to you that the exercise seems a helpful, vital one. All of the aspects of the Gospel must be preached, not because it makes it more palatable for anyone – because it is more complete, full, accurate - bringing more glory to God's holy name. Consider the scripture:

***But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt***

***believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. 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. – Rom. 10:8-17***

***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. - 1Co 1:21***

Gill (on the foolishness of preaching): *it was his purpose and decree within himself; it was his sovereign good will and pleasure; it was what he, without any motion from, or merit in the creature, resolved of himself from all eternity that he would "save," not the wise man, the Scribe, the disputer of this world, the rationalist, the talker, nor the worker, but "them that believe" in his Son; that look unto him, venture on him, and commit the care and keeping of their souls to him, however weak, mean, and despicable they may otherwise be; or whether they believe with a weak, or a strong faith, so be it, it is but true: the Ethiopic version reads, "that believe in this foolish doctrine"; and this he determined to do, and did, "by the foolishness of preaching"; or by that sort of preaching, which both for the matter of it, Christ, and the manner of it, the world reckons foolishness; and which are the things of the Father's grace in election, of the Son's grace in redemption, and the Spirit's in regeneration: so the wise men of the world, with all their wisdom, are left ignorant of God, and perish in their sins, whilst the Gospel they despise is the power of God unto salvation to all that believe in Christ; this, through efficacious grace, becomes the means of regenerating and quickening men, showing them their need of salvation, and where it is, and of working faith in them to look to Christ for it.*

Barnes: *By the preaching of the cross, which was regarded as foolish and absurd by the men of the world. The plan is wise, but it has been esteemed by the mass of men to be egregiously foolish and ridiculous.*

Poole: *it pleased God to institute the great ordinance of preaching the gospel, which they count foolishness, as the sacred means by which he would bring all those that give credit to the revelation of it, and receive Christ held forth in it, to eternal life and salvation.*

Finally, let us read the preaching of the gospel in light of Christ's upbraiding at Mark 16:

***Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen. And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. – Mark 16:14-16***

Christ here makes the connection, or even synonymy, between the gospel and his resurrection, chastening those close followers who didn't believe, or whose belief was not centered upon, Christ being risen in fulfillment of his word – that glorious, mysterious, powerful mechanism of salvation from the sentence and judgment of sin – after he specifically spelled out that resurrection TO THEM. He even told them how many days after he was to be killed that he would rise again:

***And Jesus going up to Jerusalem took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again. – Mt. 20:17-19***

So here it was, precisely the day that Christ told his close disciples of his own resurrection, and this occurred:

***Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils. And she went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept. And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not. After that he appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country. And they went and told it unto the residue: neither believed they them. – Mark 16:9-13***

The death, burial and resurrection of Christ, is the sole necessary and sufficient mechanism of salvation for lost sinners, fully reconciling them unto God with his innocent blood. It is the singular and eternally effective act of atonement by the only High Priest for those who God had, in his secret will, appointed to that glorious eternal estate. It is what Him being risen was evidence of. It is finished. He is now fussing at those men as they sat down to eat - at their unbelief and hardness of heart – because they didn't believe reports of his resurrection. This, after he told them not only that he would rise, but when it would happen and what it meant. That such a thing wouldn't have been their most lively hope at that hour - and that upon hearing such reports, it wouldn't have been front and center in their minds and hearts, is a great shame. And then we see vividly the connection made between the resurrection (and all that it means) and the gospel, in that the next thing Christ says to them is to go and preach the gospel, or that thing that they

didn't believe when they heard reports of it (even after Christ had told them specifically of it), to everyone alive that they can get in front of. And that those sinners who believe that gospel – salvation through Christ's crucifixion and subsequent resurrection (not by their own means, but supernaturally being given a heart to believe, and love, that news) and are baptized (being washed – recognizing the need for the washing and realizing that the ONLY effective washing of that sin is the blood of the Lamb) shall be saved – and that those sinners who believe not (that gospel) shall be damned. This is that gospel that you who sat here, not believing in the resurrection of Christ, nor the vitality or complete effectiveness of it – but who I've now made it even plainer and more known to, will go and preach to every creature. This very notion is evidenced by the Holy Spirit, working through Paul, and penning the apostle's account of both his recognition of his own sinfulness and need of salvation through Christ, and in going into the world and preaching that same gospel of salvation to any and all men who he can get ahold of:

***This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting. – 1Tim. 1:15-16***

I love you all. Amen.