

Good News

There is not much good news in the world and in our country at this time. Newspapers, TV and radio news programmes and all the media outlets online love to publish the bad news. It makes great headlines and sells newspapers or gets us to watch, and that is success for them, financial profit being the main concern. One of the national music radio channels suggests you wake up to its music rather than the doom and gloom of the daily news.

There are the wars which threaten the very existence of society, famines in parts of the world, earthquakes abroad, either floods or droughts in the UK, recent news of a tragic plane crash and the photos of the continual arrival of people in little boats across the English Channel, and the reality of child abuse becoming clearer all the time. Politicians try to tell lots of good news in their speeches and how things will get better, lots of promises are made but everything said gets criticised by the media who tell us what is meant to be good news is actually bad news. The media and the so-called experts are probably right, so where is the good news? And what is good news for one person may be bad news for another. So where is good news for everyone? Where is the good news to cheer everyone up and give them some hope for the future? We get told how much the lottery win will be this week and yet the odds against winning are huge and when the numbers are read out it is bad news for the vast majority of punters.

The word 'gospel', with which many may not be familiar as fewer people read a Bible or go to church, means 'Good News'. It can be used when people will say it is 'the gospel truth' when they mean they are actually really telling the truth. Maybe there is the concept that the gospel is the truth. In old times in England the town crier would go around calling out the news and ringing his bell "O Yea, O Yea" would be the cry, and fires in beacons would be used to send messages around the country, re-enacted during the late Queen's jubilee. And in old western movies we have the famous smoke signals, sending news. So, the gospel is to announce, is to bring the news, to be a herald, a proclaimer, it is hoped, of good news. But where is the good news for us all?

When Jesus Christ was born, just a little baby in a stable in Bethlehem 2000 or so years ago in what is now Israel, angels appeared to the shepherds watching their flocks in the early hours of the morning and said "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord". The word tidings is an old English word for news, the Greek word is evangelizo, which means to bring good news and is where the word evangelical, or evangelise, in English comes from. The shepherds were told to go and find the little child in a stable in Bethlehem, and when they went, they found exactly what the angels had told them: still in churches and marketplaces in England and around the world at Christmas time nativity scenes are to be seen remembering exactly what the shepherds saw all those many years ago. After the message from the angels,

we are told, the heavenly host appeared to the shepherds praising God in the Highest and declaring peace on earth and good will towards men.

Good news to all people, wherever you live and in what ever time, good news to you and the declaration of God's good will towards you. It is not good will among mankind, as often misquoted, but God's good will towards human beings. The statement of the angel declares 'the gospel', the good news. It is God's view of what is good news. No, it is not winning the lottery, but something much better, the provision of eternal life which will go on even after this world has come to an end. Yes, Good news indeed

The little baby is "A saviour who is Christ the Lord". 600 years earlier the prophet Isaiah had said that a child would be born, a son would be given, and He, that is the child, would be called "Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father and the Prince of Peace". Isaiah also said, "A virgin would conceive and bear a son". The good news from Isaiah had been outworked in the birth of the Saviour who is Christ the Lord. The gospels, the first four books of the New Testament, are called gospels as they bring the good news of Jesus Christ to us, and Matthew and Luke give the details of what was seen and heard in Bethlehem at that time and what they say confirms what Isaiah had said all those years before. It is remarkable that the gospels written nearly 2000 years ago are still available for us to read, as are the Old Testament prophecies too. God wants to make it easy for us and make sure we have access to His good news.

So, the Christian gospel is a person, all about the person, His birth, His coming to the earth, and that is good news of great joy. The heavenly host thinks so with their praises, and yet the challenge is to prove to humans that there is great joy in this birth, and it really is good news. Christ the Lord is the name given to the child. Christ means 'anointed one' and is the Greek word for the Hebrew 'Messiah', and Lord is what it says, He is the Lord, Lord of all. Jesus grew to be an adult man, and we read little of His childhood, but at 30 years or so of age He started three and a half years of travelling, just walking in practice, around Israel, preaching and teaching what the Bible describes as the gospel of the kingdom of God. Jesus very soon became famous because of the miracles He did and the way He taught, and people flocked to see Him and listen to Him. It was great news. If you were sick, blind, deaf, unable to walk, Jesus would heal you; we read of such healings in the gospels. We hope, if they had had newspapers in those days, Jesus would have made the front pages. But news travels fast and people just sought Jesus out.

Jairus, whose daughter was very ill, came to Jesus. She had died before they got to Jairus's house, but the good news is that Jesus raised the little girl from the dead. A centurion had a sick servant, and he came to Jesus and yes, the good news, Jesus healed the servant. A woman with a medical problem reached out in faith and touched the hem of Jesus' garment and was instantly healed. There are many such instances, and we are told when many came Jesus healed them all. There was a madman, as he

would be known nowadays, and Jesus left him 'clothed and in his right mind'. Physical and mental illness is no problem to Jesus. If you had followed Jesus to listen to His preaching and found yourself hungry miles from home, Jesus provided the food from 5 little loaves and 2 small fish, and you were satisfied.

Jesus even walked on water, not true you may say, but ask Peter who asked Jesus if he could walk on the water too. Peter tried but then started to sink, and the good news is Jesus reached out and rescued Peter. Peter would remember every detail. We mention the word rescue and that is what 'Saviour' means, someone who saves, who rescues. We have the RNLI in England who rescue people from the sea. The programme to watch is 'Saving lives at Sea'. So, this child is a saviour.

Jesus is the Saviour and has come to rescue us and that is the good news. The bad news, there had to be some - or is it really bad news? - was that they killed Jesus. The rulers plotted against Him and persuaded the Romans to crucify Him. A modern news bulletin would say, "He was just 33 years of age and how tragic that His life was cut short". But sometimes things that seem wrong can actually work for good and that is what happened for Jesus. **THE GOOD NEWS: HE WAS RAISED FROM THE DEAD.** Can any death be good news? It is so final, but, yes, Jesus' death led to His resurrection. A full bodily

resurrection is what was accomplished, spiritually, eternally; what took place in Jesus' death really is the very good news.

The problem with human beings is what the Bible calls sin. It is wrongdoing and although the wrongdoing may seem good at the time it is really bad news, and it is because of the sin that all the evil which makes the bad news comes. Jesus lists the wrongdoings and says that they come from within a person; it is easy to see the pride and ambition in leaders which causes the wars, and maybe less easy to see the uncleanness and which causes the abuse of young and old. There is the selfishness too, maybe it covers all the reasons for wrongdoing and makes people do not very nice things against others. So, we have the causes of wrongdoing, and it is God who sees all those things; bad news for Him as He sees the outworking of sin in the lives of people whom He loves.

God's answer, and a just answer; all the wrongdoing was placed on to Jesus when He died. The penalty, the punishment, the judgement was on Jesus. That is why He died and that is good news as it means the sin, the wrongdoing, has been dealt with; there is a way out. Jesus took it all. The wages of sin, the payment, is death. That is why there is death, but even when God put all the world's sin and wrongdoing on o Jesus Christ, death could not hold Him in its power. Death had no authority, no control; there was nothing in Jesus for death to get hold of. Jesus was the perfect and pure and spotless sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. Great News. How do we know? Easy. Jesus

came back to life; He was raised from the dead and ascended into heaven and is Christ the Lord. Just as the angels had promised. So, lots of very good news for you, and for everyone and anyone who recognises the need to be rescued from their sinful state and be forgiven all their wrongdoing.

Come to Jesus and you can be forgiven. His blood, representing the life He gave for us, washes away our sins. There is the need to confess what you have done wrong, and the good news is God, we are told, is merciful to all our wrongdoing. Good News--- Yes

The good news does not stop there. You can be changed. You can receive Jesus into your life. He does this by giving you the Holy Spirit, who is just like Jesus in nature; He comes into your heart and takes away the part of you that causes the wrongdoing. He will give you spiritually a new heart and a new spirit and stays in your heart, beginning to bring into your life and living the love of God. It comes from within, instead of the wrongdoing. God puts His love in our hearts; we are secure and don't need to be selfish and unkind or unclean any more. God is for us, so who can be against us? the Bible says. Good News -----Yes

Jesus said, "Because I live you will live also". He gives us His life, that is what happens when the Holy Spirit comes, and that life enables us to live in the will and for the glory of God. We can please God. It is eternal life, it never ends, and it means death cannot hold us either. We have the eternal life now as Jesus has come into our hearts, and when we die, we will go to be with Him. 'Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to God but through Him.' Only with Jesus is the

guarantee of eternal life, only Jesus was raised from the dead, only Jesus is alive for evermore. Good news-----Yes.

The final bit of Good News. Jesus is coming back again. Maybe soon, looking at what is happening in the world today. He will change even our bodies in that day and take us away to the new heaven and the new earth. No wrongdoing there. We are told righteousness, right doing, lives there.

What the angels told the shepherds was right, good news of great joy to all. Jesus really is the saviour. He lived, He died, He rose again, He is alive for evermore. He comes to all who will receive Him and forgives them and changes their lives. He is coming back again for all who belong to Him. It is all good news. Come to Jesus today, receive Him and you will know the good news, and you can then share the good news with others.

