

The Gospel Is...

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[0 : 00] We're looking at chapter 19 verse 45 and going into chapter 20 and we're focusing on it down to around verse 19 So if you could please have your Bible kept open around page 1054 and 1055 If it's your first time here or if you've not been here regularly Over the last week while we are going through Luke's gospel We've been doing it over the whole of the last year and we're now moving towards the end of Luke's gospel this year And we're aiming to be looking at the end of the gospel and the resurrection of Jesus in a few weeks at Easter So we're starting to move now from Jesus life towards Jesus death and His claims about himself and about the gospel are now getting so explicit So overt that the religious and the political authorities of his day are now on a mission to have him killed

In chapter 20 we find Jesus in the middle of a really intense situation Loaded with danger full of intrigue He has not just got the attention of the crowd of the ordinary people if you want to put it in in Orwellian terms the Pools have been Listening to Jesus for ages the ordinary masses are hanging on his every word. He's healing. They're sick. They're listening to his preaching They follow him around But now he has caught the eye also of the inner party of the bourgeoisie the chief priests who are the religious leaders the Scribes the experts in religious law the ones who set the lifestyle of the ordinary people The the leaders the elders literally in the original it's that the prime people the number one people in the society He has caught their eye as well at this point and he hasn't just caught their eye in terms of well

Hey, that Jesus of Nazareth, you know, he's fairly rising to prominence keep an eye on him. He's one for the future He's gonna be chief rabbi Really young age. She's being rocketed to the top First century Jerusalem's movers and shakers have noticed Jesus But what they've noticed about him is that he is a threat and Their solution is death death for him is the only solution the only way to Nullify this threat so they're now trying to catch him out They want to make him say something punishable so that they can have him executed and they do that by sending spies after him Isn't that incredible that Jesus knows what it is to be chased by spies The the immediate catalyst to this situation in chapter 20 is What Jesus has just said and done at the end of chapter 19 which which we read he goes into the temple And he finds it full of people selling stuff

It was meant to be the place where you could go and pray where you could offer your sacrifices to God Where your sin could be atoned for But Jesus goes there and he finds it as a big commercial enterprise He finds a bureau de change where money changers are making big money charging foreign coins changing them into Shackles and charging interest and making a killing on the ordinary people who just want to go and pray and offer sacrifices He finds retail departments. He finds people buying and selling selling In one of the other gospels it tells us selling pigeons Pigeons are what you gave if you were really poor and you couldn't afford to bring a bull or a goat or a lamb and They were They had pigeons as that kind of a substitute because they were so cost-effective and yet you have people there selling them No doubt also inflating the price Again taking advantage of the poor

And I don't think it's too unrealistic a suggestion to say that Jesus probably also find a lot of people selling Rubbish superstitious religious trinkets So Jesus in the temple and the holiest of buildings and the holiest of cities gets furious He gets physically violent He starts throwing the tables over and he starts telling the retail people and the staff to get out and he Physically evicts them. He makes them leave Why does that make the social the religious and the legal leaders Send spies after Jesus. Why is what he has just done here so bad that it warrants his death?

[4 : 53] And we're going to see that As we go through the sermon sermon this morning has got two points. Our sermon is titled the gospel is dot dot dot Number one the gospel is Jesus Centric the gospel is Jesus centric and we're this point in chapter 19 verse 45 down to 20 verse 8 Then he

entered the temple area and began driving out those who were selling it is written He said to them my house will be a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of robbers Jesus hates it when people make money trading under his good name selling a load of Rubbish in his name and taking advantage particularly of the poor in his name I once Heard a sermon by mark driscoll in this Passage where he said that if Jesus returned today the first place he would go would be the local Christian bookshop

He would go in and he would take all these pseudo Christian Self-help books which have nothing to do with the gospel and he would throw them all out into a big pile and burn them He would be smashing up all these pseudo Christian CDs Contemporary Christian music he would destroy everything with left behind written on it. I Should say by the way that our local Christian bookshop instance He's is the free church college bookshop across the road, which is actually very good And I don't think that you know mark would be proclaiming divine vengeance on that But you know the point he's making here that Jesus hates it He hates what he finds at the temple a place of injustice Rather than a place of justice a place where the poor are actually oppressed and taken advantage of rather than helped and liberated a Place where money is worshiped rather than God So he sets about completely changing the temple. He throws all of these people out and what does he put in their place?

He puts himself in their place. He is the replacement When he throws out all the money changers and the retail staff Having evicted them he stays on preaching the gospel in the temple Verse 47 every day he was teaching at the temple But the chief priests the teachers of the law and the leaders among the people were trying to kill him Jewish life in the first century was Jerusalem centric You know you sing about Jerusalem in the Psalms when you're at the synagogue you look to Jerusalem as the the Mecca of your faith the emotional spiritual Centerpiece and within Jerusalem and your life is Jerusalem centric you have the temple as the holiest place there So your life is not only Jerusalem centric. It's temple centric Because the temple is the holiest place there Don't you see what Jesus is doing here which provokes this reaction against him?

He has come into the most important city in their world then gone into the most important building in The most important city in their world He has thrown out what he finds there and he puts himself in The middle at the center He has become the main focal point in the temple if you went to the temple who was everyone listening to?

Jesus the people are there hanging on his every word He's there every day His teaching is redefining God and how God should be worshipped in the eyes of the people He's that he's teaching them as he's preaching the gospel there that he's about to make this whole temple system redundant. He's Completely changing everything. He's replacing its sacrifices through his own sacrifice He's claiming the place of ultimate importance. He's saying however much your your whole life and worldview is focused on this place Focus it even more on me That's what he's teaching them when he asserts himself like this The effect of it is your lives have previously been Jerusalem centric temple centric now. I am making them Jesus centric And we go into chapter 20 one day as he was teaching the people in the temple courts and preaching the gospel You have the chief priests and the teachers of the law and the elders you have these three classes of of the inner party coming and

[9 : 31] Posing him this question. Tell us where your authority comes from. What's your authority for doing this? so Basically what they want him to say is I am from God or even I am God Because in their eyes, you know, that would be blasphemy to say that they could have been killed Problem solved so they set him up with this question about where his authority comes from but Jesus With this brilliant intellect turns it round and completely catches them out by answering their question with another question Was John's baptism from heaven or from men now to understand that we need to unpack the background in the context a little bit He's speaking about John the Baptist is a figure that we find at the beginning of the gospels and He was a guy who was widely regarded by the people as a prophet who was sent from God He spent many years in the wilderness and then he emerges as this classical Old Testament prophetic type

Preaching outside Jerusalem and his message if you want to sum up I think you can do it in four Really brief points number one his message is we are all sinners becomes preaching repentance and we all have to repent because we're all sinners Number two we need to repent on the basis of the fact that we're sinners Number three in his message. God is angry with us for our sin repent flee the wrath that's coming Number four God has sent Jesus to pay the penalty for our sin. So Jesus

takes the wrath instead of us That's why when John the Baptist saw Jesus he shite of look That is the lamb of God the sin sacrifice that takes away the sin of the world and when people accepted this message He would baptize them in the River Jordan John publicly proclaimed that Jesus was the Christ the Messiah the Savior Okay, so in Jesus asking Was John's baptism from God or did he make it up? He although he's asking a question immediately about John

It's actually a question about Jesus because the consequences will okay if John sent God to say that Jesus is the Savior Then Jesus is the Savior that God has sent So it's really a question about himself Was John right when he said I was the lamb of God he takes away the sin of the world Was he right because God told him to say that or did he just make it up?

If they say that John came from God They have no choice but to believe and to say yes Jesus. He deserved the central place in the temple. Why wouldn't you you're sent from God?

But if they said No, that John was making it up. They know that they have an angry mob to contend with the people will storm them to death Now when we read this as you know 21st century Western people Post-Christian post religious post enlightenment society We think that must be some kind of exaggeration You know if you have a religious dispute no one's actually going to stone you to death But we have to remember the culture that this takes place in the mob here really would stone them to death For denying a prophet of God To get a kind of flavor for this think of if you dishonor a prophet in a modern day Even Semitic society you risk your life. I've used this example before in preaching Remember Jillian Gibbons. She was a what she is a She's a teacher from England who was teaching in Sudan last year and she allowed her class

[13:17] And Sudan is a Muslim country She allowed her class to name their class teddy bear Mohammed and You know she really risked her life. She was arrested. She had mobs who wanted to kill her who would have if they could have and It's the same kind of mindset here if you dishonor one of God's prophets You are dead and that's they know that they're facing that because the crowd think that John the Baptist is actually a prophet So Jesus puts them in this really difficult position Where if they say yes, they have to let him take the center place if they say no, they're facing death by stoning That's where Jesus puts them so the response is a It's really a lie motivated by fear and coward cowardice. We don't know So Jesus refuses then to tell him explicitly where he gets his authority But he he's really just told them implicitly He's left them with two and two to put together and they're saying We don't know what that is. It could be three. It could be four. It could be five

What's this saying though? How does this apply? Well, if you look at the context here verse one Jesus was preaching the gospel. He is explaining his message. He's explaining who God is who we are how the relationship between the two How it doesn't work and how it can work? He's preaching about himself He's explaining himself to them about how he is going to offer himself up as a sacrifice That's going to replace all these goats and bulls and pigeons He's demonstrating his own total centrality. He's shown that the gospel is Jesus centered Accepting that gospel therefore because the gospel is Jesus centered means When you accept it that you center your life on Jesus Means centering your life on him as opposed to anything else in this case for these guys It meant accepting that Jesus is more important than the temple Centering your life on Jesus frees you from being Either self centered or centered on other things other people as opposed to centered on him Okay, your life if you accept the gospel becomes free from We'll call it the idolatry of self Worshiping yourself putting yourself as the most important person and thing in your world If you won't center your life on Jesus, this is a really obvious place to start To center your life on yourself because you the autonomous Individual person are the most important the most central person in your existence Your reason for it living your chief end is to glorify and enjoy yourself forever And when you live like that when we live like that the thing that drives our lives at the core is pride

It Effects are every decision. It's a pride driven life the reason that we have deemed ourselves Worthy of this central place as opposed to your neighbor or anything else or as opposed to Jesus It's because we think we're worth it We are better we are more important than our neighbors pride drives everything the the reason for our virtue becomes pride We do good things and are good people because we're too proud to do anything else if I didn't then I wouldn't be more worthy of all my affection and my attention than my neighbor because I wouldn't be better than him You're too proud to be a bad person The thing is accepting the gospel is What can set us free from that from living a pride driven life?

And that's a really important thing particularly for a lot of us if we're religious people because it's so natural To to start thinking well, you know my religious performance is the most important thing I'm better than than my non-Christian next door neighbor because I do x y and z And and life becomes pride driven like that But the gospel itself is the thing that that liberates us from that So as well as the gospel setting us free from the idolatry of self where we place ourselves at the center It also sets us free from the idolatry of others of other people of other things if you won't center your life on Jesus It does not necessarily follow that you'll center your life on yourself and that you'll become a pride driven self worshiper and In fact for many of us that will not happen and it doesn't happen because When we look at ourselves and try and assess

[18 : 19] Do I deserve to be at the center of my life? Am I good enough to be the most important thing in my existence? A lot of the time we realize no way I'm not And we think we're rubbish. We're not talented enough. We're not good-looking enough. We don't earn enough money We're not doing something exciting enough with our lives so Our self-esteem completely crashes because in good conscience we cannot worship ourselves because we know we don't deserve it But instead of centering our lives on Jesus we instead End up putting something or someone else in the center So we worship someone else another person tends to be the person that you wish you were Or we idolize Ideologies or football teams or the list could go on forever of the things that we of the good things that we turn into ultimate things

And we do it all because we're fundamentally driven not by pride, but by the opposite by fear I am afraid because I am not worthy of worship So I've picked something else to live for I hope I can keep my idol happy The thing is accepting the gospel also sets you free from that from living a fear-driven life and This is so important for us in our culture in our society because we live in the society of the airbrushed Photoshopped celebrity and for that celebrity is King or Queen for a multi-billion pound industries Thrive on making us feel like we're worthless and nowhere near as good as the A list stars So because of that instead of being self-worshipping idolaters we should be star-worshipping idolaters We have this whole society that works on that premise that you are rubbish and they're amazing

Even though they're airbrushed and photoshopped all the way therefore, they're worth more than you and you spend your whole life looking to them wishing you were them and Lamenting over what you actually are So you can have a life that's centered on yourself and driven by pride or centered on others and driven by fear or the gospel offers a third way We're knowing God through Jesus by grace alone with complete acceptance from him Means that while you're more unworthy Then you could ever fully grasp You're simultaneously more loved than you could ever imagine or hope for or dream But you have both of those things and that is that's the only way to be free From a pride driven life from a fear driven life from a self-centered life from an other centered life If you accept the gospel it puts Jesus at the center and The practical consequences of that acceptance are huge whether you're driven by pride or by fear or by grace

Effects so many other different things and how you think and how you live your life How you look at yourself how you look at others why you make your decisions? So the gospel is Jesus centered and those are some of the implications of that Point number two the gospel hides victory Maybe we could say the gospel finds victory in Defeats the gospel hides victory in defeats After after this Jesus goes on to give a short message Which explains something of what's happening to him in this situation what he's doing?

He tells the people a parable and it's really a story again about himself he tells a story about a man who plants a vineyard and That is God the father And the vineyard is let out to some humans and to some farmers and Basically, that's that's where where we fit in human beings and in particularly in this context he's applying it to the The kind of social movers and shakers who want him killed and then there are servants who are sent every so often to collect rent and so on and The people who have the farm the farmers that they consistently reject and they beat and they send away The people who are sent now the servants who are sent are the prophets that God sends to speak to us He has through the Old Testament and The people consistently reject and beat and ignore the prophets So the father then decides what will I do here?

[23 : 08] I'll send my son perhaps they'll respect him now in in a kind of Semitic Middle Eastern culture Sending your son is so important much more so than than we grasp probably in our culture Sending your son is is a symbolic act when you send your son. It's as good as going yourself your son carries your name your full authority When you send your son is massive much more so than

than it probably is for us if you send your son to take care of your business And Jesus says that when the son is sent that the farmers know about this and they decide in advance. We are going to kill him That way we'll get the inheritance This is a story about himself. Jesus knows that he's heading towards his own death. He knows they're trying to kill him And he knows that he will be killed and when you get to this point in the story where Jesus knows he's heading towards his death You think well, it's Jesus just a tragic figure Was he you know a good man in the wrong place at the wrong time? Is the gospel just a tragedy that has a sad ending and no more and answer to that is no because Jesus tells the story about his death But then what he follows it up with is what we probably wouldn't expect He applies a verse from the Old Testament to himself from Psalm 118 The stone which was rejected has become the chief cornerstone the stone the builders rejected has become the capstone See he tells them the story about how he's going to be killed and all the people say no don't let that happen may this never be But Jesus doesn't resist this and say yeah, I really hope it doesn't happen, but but it's going to he says Made what they say made this never be Jesus looks directly at them and says then what is the meaning of That which has written the stone the builders rejected has become the capstone. I need to die. I need to lose And he needs to do it in order to win. He needs to be rejected before he can be exalted He needs to experience defeat in order to experience victory in dying Jesus will win as we're moving towards Jesus death over the next few Sundays We're not moving towards the end. We're not moving towards the defeat About one level we are But a greater level. We're actually moving towards Jesus victory In coming last Jesus is going to come first in making himself nothing. He's going to win everything What's the practical impact of that again very briefly the practical impact of this that the gospel hides Victory in the guise of defeat the gospel finds victory in defeat That is huge because if you accept that gospel Which is a message about victory hidden in defeat it changes the way that you look at life changes the way that you live your life This is the thing that teaches us to put others first It makes you willing to come last In order to become first to come last in the service of others Because the first shall be last and the last shall be first the gospel sets a new way of living where we start to find glory in Unexpected places where we find victory not in a life of ruthless personal advancement but rather in Radical wholehearted self-sacrifice for the benefit of others We're now moving towards Jesus death, but we are not moving towards the end of Jesus Or the defeat of Jesus full stop. We're moving towards the victory of Jesus hidden in the guise of defeat amen, let's And respond to God in his words in prayer Lord our gods your gospel mystifies us in so many ways. It is so counterintuitive Lord how we look at Jesus and we see a man who died on a cross a man born into Such humble circumstances a life of so much disadvantage and yet Lord you have exalted him to the highest place. He is your eternal and Loved some and we thank you that you have given him to us for our salvation We pray that you would help us because we are looking into Jesus life and seeing him Coming last in order to come first seeing him find glory Not in personal advancement, but in giving himself for others help us to look at life in the same way Help us to give of ourselves. We also pray that you would help us to put Jesus at the center of our lives [28 : 25] It's so natural for us to either be driven by pride because we think we're good Or to be driven by fear because we think we're not Lord help us to think in a way that is so different to both of those where we know Jesus You and where we find ourselves and our identity and our way of living in him Amen