

SERMON THEME: THE GOSPEL MATTER**SERMON TITLE: GOD IS THE SOURCE OF THE GOSPEL BY REV JEREMY YAP****SERMON TEXT: GALATIANS 1:11-24 (NIV)**

¹¹I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel I preached is not of human origin.

¹²I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.

¹³For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it. ¹⁴I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers.

¹⁵But when God, who set me apart from my mother's womb and called me by his grace, was pleased ¹⁶to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, my immediate response was not to consult any human being. ¹⁷I did not go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went into Arabia. Later I returned to Damascus.

¹⁸Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Cephas and stayed with him fifteen days. ¹⁹I saw none of the other apostles—only James, the Lord's brother. ²⁰I assure you before God that what I am writing you is no lie. ²¹Then I went to Syria and Cilicia. ²²I was personally unknown to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. ²³They only heard the report: "The man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy." ²⁴And they praised God because of me.

PROLOGUE

- The book of Galatians is one of the earlier letters written by Paul, about his personal testimony.
 - How his life turned around from being a unrelenting persecutor of the Christian faith, to a firm believer and a strong advocate of the Christian faith.
 - Using his personal faith walk in defence of his apostolic authority, hence also protecting the legitimacy of the True Gospel, against the heresies.
- As the book study on Galatians progresses:
 - Keep in mind the differing views on "of Jesus" vs "from Jesus".
 - A suggested supportive aid would be the New English Translation for the footnotes, facts and arguments to attract a deeper study and understanding of the Bible.
- Today's text tells of Paul's encounter with Jesus and the profound impact it had on his life.
 - He encountered his personal conversion and received his calling in life – to be an apostle, evangelist, and to plant churches.
 - He experienced this solitude (moment in life) with Jesus, and moment of community with the saints.
 - All these calls out to the source of the Gospel – God (v12).

A. GOSPEL = REVELATION ABOUT WHO JESUS IS (v12)

- While in NIV translation, this verse reads "by revelation from Jesus Christ", other Bible translations (e.g. ESV) reads "by revelation of Jesus Christ".
- Bible translators are trying to closely interpret the Greek possessive noun "Ἰησοῦς Χριστός (Iisouís Christós)" amidst the many ways of understanding a Greek possessive noun.
 - The meaning of this noun is not immediately obvious and can take two differing values:

“ <u>from</u> Jesus Christ” Jesus = Subject of the revelation.	“ <u>of</u> Jesus Christ” Jesus = Object of the revelation.
The revelation came from Jesus, He is the actor that communicates this good news.	The revelation is Jesus Himself.
This verse then would mean that Paul had received the revelation directly from Jesus, i.e. <u>God spoke directly to Paul</u> and gave him the True Gospel.	This verse then would mean that the revelation that Paul had received <u>is about who Jesus is</u> – He is the good news, Gospel, God’s plan of salvation.
This ties in with v11, where Paul explains that the Gospel is from Divine origin.	This ties in with Paul’s later explanation of Jesus’ fulfilment of the Jewish scriptures, making Him not just the Messiah for the Jews, but for the whole world.

- Considering both translations, coupled with v16, that God “was pleased to reveal his Son to” Paul, we now have the understanding that *the Gospel is a revelation from the Son, about the identity of the Son.*
- The revelation and encounter with the risen Christ is a truly transformative experience for our lives.
- The Gospel is:
 - About facts –
 - Jesus is a man who dwelt among us.
 - He died for us and our sins.
 - He is resurrected and conquered death.
 - If we believe in Him, we will have eternal life.
 - About encounter –
 - We can have a personal relationship with God because He is with us.
 - We can live and walk with the reality that Jesus is the risen Christ.
 - *About Jesus’ life and identity, and at the heart of it, our personal encounter with Christ.*
 - Unless we have our personal study and experience of who Jesus is, we will not be impacted by and fully comprehend the Gospel.

B. GOSPEL = LIFE CHANGING (v13)

- Paul’s encounter with Jesus on his road to Damascus changed his life radically.
 - He had a painful revelation – everything that he had believed in were wrong, and he had been hounding the Christians wrongfully.
 - From persecuting the Christian faith, he changed and began advocating for and advancing the Gospel (v13).
- The book “Son of Hamas” writes about the conversion of Mosab Hassan Yousef, oldest son of a Hamas leader (Hamas is a Palestinian militant movement).
 - With his family heritage, Yousef grew up and quickly rose through the ranks in Hamas.
 - He was struck by the brutality of the Hamas movement one day, and subsequently recruited as an informant for Israel’s internal security service Shin Bet.
 - In 1999, he met a missionary, had a conversion in faith, and a radical change in life – from being a leader in Hamas to being an advocate for the Christian faith.
 - He discovered and experienced this love from God which was missing from his life.

- It cost him everything that he had known – his family severed all ties with him, his friends and community spurned and called him traitor.
- There were death threats made against him, and he eventually relocated to USA.
- The Gospel holds transformative and radical power.
 - It moves us from a life in this world to this life we have in Christ.
 - Our lives may not be as radically changed as Paul's or Yousef's, but there surely have been changes exacted.
 - How has your life changed since encountering Jesus?
- After Paul's transformative encounter with Christ, he immediately embarked on his personal journey of serving God.
 - He had this rhythm in his life, alternating between seeking God and living amongst Christian communities (v16), for a 3-year period.

C. GOSPEL = ENCOUNTER

- As shown in Paul's life, there are two ways that we can abide in God after encountering Him.
 - In moments of solitude: where we seek God for ourselves.
 - As we reflect on our personal journey and focus on the voice of God.
 - This only happens when we schedule protected time to commune with God.
 - God will lead you to the space of meeting – The place is holy because God lead us to where He wants to meet us at.
 - God makes the common and mundane things sacred and holy, we need only to follow the leading and promptings from the Holy Spirit.
 - In times of living in community with God's people.
 - We were created to thrive, worship, and nurture each other in community setting.
 - The Gospel is lived out in life through community living and service:
 - ~ Being in cell groups, journeying together through the celebrations and challenges of life.
 - ~ Serving in church ministries and outreach programmes.
 - We are encouraged to live this rhythmic life as Paul did.
- Encountering God leads us to conversion (faith in him) and response to calling (growth direction).
 - After encountering Jesus, Paul not only had a faith conversion.
 - He also answered the call to live a life for God – his specific call was to be an evangelist, specializing in planting church.

D. VOCATION FOLLOWS ENCOUNTER

- We are all called to a full time Christian ministry, by living for and submitting every aspect of our lives to Jesus, and to be involved in the vocation.
 - Vocation ≠ occupation/career/job.
 - No one occupation/career/job is more or less than another.
 - When we misunderstand that our calling = job, the grave mistake of associating our identity with our job happens.
 - Our identity is sacred and is established in our encounter with God – we are children of God – and that is when we receive our vocation from Him.
 - Vocation = life calling of what God wants you to do.
 - In Community: Being God's light in our sphere of influence on the daily basis.

- In Church: Serving in the various ministries.
- In Career: Bearing testimony in the marketplace.
- *When we understand this wholesome meaning of vocation, we can then truly be salt and light in all areas of our lives.*
- We discern vocation through:
 - Affinity – “Look out”
What are the needs in the communities that I am involved with?
 - Ability – “Look in”
What gifts has God blessed us with?
 - Opportunity – “Look up”
Take counsel from the community about how we discern ministry/calling/vocation, how and where we can be an asset in service.
 - God don’t always call us to serve in our strengths, but to serve in our weakness.
 - “Your vocation is a part of God’s work in the world, and God gives you resources for serving the human community.” – Time Keller (1950-2023)
 - A vocation is essentially a call from God to us, and we render our service.

E. CONCLUSION

- God calls and speaks to us in many ways – through our experiences, through people around us.
- We exist and experience through God’s crafted plans, nothing is by chance.
 - The life that we have lived, is a life given by God.
 - He blessed us with our families, provided for all our needs, given us the multitude of life experiences that we have thus far.
 - He has forged us into the persons that we are today.
- God is always at work in our lives.
 - What will our testimonies be?
 - Where is the path He is leading us to?
- *Everything begins with our personal encounter with God.*
 - Paul has shared his amazing and radically life changing encounter with God.
 - Have we had our personal encounter with God?
 - Has our encounter moved us into recognizing and responding to the vocation from God?
- *The Gospel is not merely facts, it is also about a person who is with us today – Jesus Christ.*

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What was your deepest encounter with Jesus? Share this with somebody.
2. How has your life changed since you have accepted Jesus as your Lord and Saviour?
3. Has God called you to a specific area of service or a special calling in this season of your life?
4. Do you experience more spiritual growth with solitude or in a small group setting? Why?