

Something to Pray About

By Cindy Sears – July 2011

“The Good News”

“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel” —Mark 1:15 NKJV

The word “evangelism” in Greek, which is translated as “good news” or “gospel”, combines “angelos”, the word for one announcing news, and the prefix “eu-”, which means joyful. So Gospel means *news that brings joy!* During Mark’s time, this word was used for history-making, life-shaping news as opposed to daily news. As Timothy Keller says in *King’s Cross*, “A gospel is an announcement of something that has happened in history, something that’s been done for you that changes your status forever. Right there you can see the difference between Christianity and all other religions, including no religion. The essence of other religions is advice; Christianity is essentially news.” All other religions will tell you what YOU must do to be saved, but Christianity tells you WHAT HAS BEEN DONE TO SAVE YOU—joyful news! You can stop searching for a savior. You can stop trying to earn your way to heaven.

“The gospel is that God connects to you not on the basis of what you’ve done (or haven’t done) but on the basis of what Jesus has done, in history, for you. And that makes it absolutely different from every other religion or philosophy.”

Yet, even Christians can fall into a works-based belief. Sherry Austin was telling me of a sign she had seen at a church that said something about “earning your wings” to get to heaven. First of all, we don’t receive wings even if we do get to heaven. We are humans, not angels, and we will remain human even in heaven. And second, we are not capable of earning our way to heaven at all. That’s what the Genesis story of the Garden of Eden (and all the rest of the Bible) shows us. Adam and Eve were set down in a perfect environment, given absolute freedom to be and to do; and all God asked from them was one thing—not to eat from one tree in the garden. There are thousands of species of trees and plants. Adam and Eve had plenty of other plants to choose from for food. But they took and ate from that one tree anyway. (And why were they standing near the *Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil* when the serpent tempted them? They were already intrigued enough to be where they could be tempted when the serpent (Satan) came to call.)

When God placed Adam and Eve in the garden, they lived in a world where all relationships were psychologically and socially perfect, because God was King. Then in Genesis Chapter 3, man chose to be his own king and everything fell apart; physically, socially, spiritually, and psychologically. Since then, man has been trying to return to the Garden of Eden on his own power—but it cannot be done. Men have tried to return to Eden using all kinds of religions, philosophies, and forms of government (force). Millions have died in some of man’s attempts to perfect the world (World Wars I & II; the Holocaust; Communism), but every attempt has failed. Even democracy is beginning to suffer from man’s desire to be his own king.

There is only ONE TRUE KING, ONE WAY to Heaven—through HIS work of redemption—not ours. The Good News is **Jesus did it for us**. And some religions say that this material world will end and the righteous or enlightened will enter an ethereal paradise; others say the world is only an illusion; and others believe that the world will eventually be burned up when our sun dies. “But the good news of the kingdom of God is that the material world God created is going to be renewed so that it lasts forever.”

So why shouldn’t joy be the defining characteristic of Christians? Let us enter into *the joy of the Lord* (Matt. 25:23), *come before His presence with singing* (Ps. 100:2), *make a joyful noise unto the Lord* (Ps. 100:1), and tell the good news story to the nations! (Matt. 28:19) (Quoted material is from *King’s Cross* by Timothy Keller, unless otherwise noted.)



