Happy Mothers’ Day! Over the past couple of weeks, we have been looking into the church of Ephesus and Paul’s encouragement and ministrations to them, trying to help them remain awake to the things of God and to the Gospel. He wants them to return to their first love, to Christ’s love. Paul discusses how believers can come awake and alive in the Grace of God. Family, listen. It all begins with the gospel. The word “gospel” simply means “good news.” But “Gospel” means the good news that Jesus shared with Nicodemus (John 3:1-17): The good news of the gift of available salvation through Jesus alone—yes, Jesus ALONE (Ephesians 2:1-7)see “Passages offered in support of this sermon”). This good news had rocked the city of Ephesus, and the good news changes lives today (\*Romans 1:16). While Paul addressed believers in Ephesus in Ephesians 2, he also addresses the power, the need, the means, the love, the way, and the blessings of salvation. Paul writes of The power of God in Christ that rescues, brings to life, those who respond to the Gospel. He addresses our need to respond and to be born again.

 This week, I heard the story of a young man who was raised in the church but had never heard the gospel. My heart hurt as he told how he had heard about Christian morality and behavior but never heard about the power of God through the sacrifice of Christ for salvation. Equally frustrating and sad for me is the story of a woman who spend thirty-eight years as wife of a deacon but never heard during all those years of the saving Grace of Christ. Family, the Gospel is about a love relationship with Christ. Eighty to ninety percent of the preaching in the New Testament is directed toward believers! The Gospel is about being known by Him and our coming to know Him. The intimacy and the beauty of the Savior is the essence of

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\*Romans 1:16

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.

Gospel. It is not a contractual relationship; it is not based on effort. It is reflected in the covenant of Christ, grounded in love (\*Ephesians 3:14-21).

 Listen. We cannot become Christians by behavior modification or religious activity. The Gospel is not something we add to our personality. It reconciles us to God, and with Him is where we were created to be. Salvation is redeeming grace applied. Family! We all need Jesus as savior. He conquers sin completely and forever. He forgives and makes all things new (\*\*1 John 5:11-13). Very simply, I was not living until I came to Christ. Twenty-five years ago today, I gave my life to Christ. I was saved, and I haven’t gotten over it yet!!! What blows my mind is that Christ knew what He was buying on the cross, the flawed, unadulterated, whole, sad identity of every human who turns to Him.

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\*Ephesians 3:14-21

14 For this reason I bow my knees to the Father [a]of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15 from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, 16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, 17 that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height— 19 to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

20 Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, 21 to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

\*\*1 John 12:11-13

11 And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. 12 He who has the Son has [a]life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. 13 These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, [b]and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.

 The letter to the Ephesians is about what it means to be in Christ, what it is to be part of the master plan for eternity. It is about coming awake and embracing the Gospel, which brings us to understanding of the resources Christ provides. Awaking to the Gospel empowers every believer to be obedient and to surrender. The individual cannot earn salvation by good works. No, the new, surrendered, obedient believer is created for good works *as a result of salvation*. Jesus moves toward you, the potential believer, and saves you at your worst. His salvation makes you part of a family, blessed in unity among them and given purpose. The Master’s enfolding you in his Gospel arms allows you to grow in holiness, shaping the new you by Him. He makes you alive and awake to His glorious riches.

 Church, here is another truth about the Gospel: affection for Jesus drives out all other affections. The more we get to know Jesus, the more we love Him, and many of the lesser things begin to lose their luster. The things of this world just don’t match the gifts He gives. Embracing the truth Gospel brings assurance: assurance of our place in eternity and assurance of our position in Christ (\*Ephesians 2:13). Nothing is more important than your salvation—receiving the free gift of salvation. My heart hurts for those who don’t know Jesus as Savior. Listen, it is not the perfection of your faith that matters. You are loved by a perfect Savior, who died and rose again so that each and every one of us could live forever with Him (\*\*Romans 10:9-11). Perhaps, you have been saved, but you’ve fallen asleep to the beauty and intimacy of the relationship you can have with Christ. I pray that today you find your affection again. For those who are awake and aware, secure in the Gospel of your

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\*Ephesians 2:13

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

\*\*Romans 10:9-11

9 that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. 11 For the Scripture says, “Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.”

salvation, I ask you to join me in praying for everyone to receive the blessing and the truth of the Gospel and the free gift of salvation today (\*Romans 3:23-25). We all have a great need for a great savior. And Christ stands ready to redeem:

 Luke 15:7 “I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.”

Heaven stands ready to rejoice! Thank you, Lord, for the gift of the Gospel. Help us all come alive in Christ this morning.

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\*Romans 4:23-25

23 Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, 24 but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, 25 who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification.

Passages offered in support of this sermon:

John 3:1-17

There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. 2 This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, “Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.”

3 Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

4 Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?”

5 Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ 8 The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

9 Nicodemus answered and said to Him, “How can these things be?”

10 Jesus answered and said to him, “Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things? 11 Most assuredly, I say to you, We speak what We know and testify what We have seen, and you do not receive Our witness. 12 If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things? 13 No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven. 14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, 15 that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. 16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. 17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

Ephesians 2:1-17

And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, 2 in which you once walked according to the [a]course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, 3 among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

4 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.