

lii) Not ashamed of a Gospel that needs a response

Jesus said 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.' *John 14:6*

'Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God' *John 1:12*

'If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.' *Romans 10:9*

Jesus is clear that there aren't many ways to God, He is **the** way,

We each have our own journey of faith but at some point we need to be clear;

We need to receive Jesus

We need to believe in his name

We need to declare with our own mouth that he is Lord

We need to believe in our heart.

Every relationship takes time to grow and our faith with God takes time to grow but at some point we need to commit, God needs a response.

God has had your response but what about the people you love and care for?

This is not about pushing but will you commit to pray and encourage them until they too make their own response and are sure of their own salvation?

Pause for Personal Prayer



Who are you praying for?

Discuss



- Why does God need a response?
- How can we help someone take their next steps in faith? Discuss.
- How do you continue praying with hope if someone doesn't want to hear?

Taking it Further

- Take time this week to thank God for your own salvation.
- Ask God to lay on your heart 2 people who are not yet committed Christians who he wants you to pray for and encourage in their faith journey.



2019 Watchword:

'I am not ashamed of the Gospel; it is God's power to save all who believe'
Romans 1:16



1: I am not ashamed of the Gospel

2000 years ago St Paul declared;

'I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile'. Romans 1:16

The world is waiting for you and I to proclaim the same Gospel with the same confidence today - in our homes, community and workplaces.

The word 'gospel' simply means 'good news'. From those first shepherds in the field at Bethlehem, through the ages to our needy world today.

Our 2019 Watchword invites us

To be confident in the Gospel we have received

To be confident in its power today to save lives

and to share it gently but boldly with a waiting world.

Let's pray that the eyes of our own hearts will be opened as we read on' Eph 1:18.

A suggested outline for the session

Open with worship and prayer

Divide your time between the 3 sections

In each of the 3 sections ...

. Ask someone to read the scripture & reflection

. Pause for a few minutes of personal prayer

. Then discuss the questions given

. At the end allow 10mins for personal prayer

i) Not ashamed of a Gospel that confronts sin

'for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God' *Romans 3:23*

'the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord' *Romans 6:23*

'Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it.' *Matt 7:13*



We've become afraid to talk about sin today.

'Everything's relative' ... 'we don't want to judge' ... 'just speak of love' ...

But we don't do people or ourselves any favours. People generally know when they get things wrong, they're just not sure what to do about it.

If we're not careful the Church can seem like a place for people who've got it right rather than a place for real people who need forgiveness.

Sin has a powerful effect if it's not dealt with. 'The wages of sin is death' *Rms 6:23* and hell is a very real place *Mtt 7:13*. We don't want to frighten people off but are we helping them if we don't warn them?

Jesus said 'It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.' *Mark 2:17*.

When a friend is ill we press them to go to the doctors, it's the same with spiritual sickness - and that's more critical.

We quickly pass on good news of health remedies which have helped us – why not do the same with the good news of God's forgiveness?

Those in need flocked to Jesus (*Mt 9:10, Lk15:2*) they didn't see condemnation - they saw love, salvation, a second chance.

Are we and our world any different today given the chance?

Pause for Personal Prayer



Remember how precious God's forgiveness has been to you.

Discuss



- Why are we afraid to speak about sin and hell today?
- What's the effect of that fear in our church & in the gospel we preach?
- How can we be honest about sin & share the forgiveness we've found?

ii) Not ashamed of a Gospel that declares love



'For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.' *John 3:16*

'God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ' *2 Corinthians 5:19, 20*

The Gospel is simply God declaring his love for a fallen world and giving us the way to be reconciled to him, the way to come home! (*Luke 15:11-32*)

The Gospel declares a divine love that's so strong for each person that it compelled God to give his son to die for us. He believes we are worth it.

A God of love that's made us, known us (*Ps 139*), that's known the mistakes we've made and yet has kept a place in his heart and home for each of us.

We belong to him, every lost person belongs to him – he wants us back.

God has already reconciled 'the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them' - that work was paid for at the Cross.

And now 'he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.' We're his mouthpiece, the ones appointed to proclaim this good news, to help people to know that no matter how far away they've gone that there's a way home.

How can they come home if they haven't heard God's call (*Rms 10:14*). They must hear from someone they trust, in a way which they can understand.

We are each an 'ambassador for Christ' in our own life setting, in our family, work place, street and community.

What a privilege, what a responsibility.

Pause for Personal Prayer



You are an ambassador for Christ' - how does that sit with you?.

Discuss



- Why does God want his world (each person) back?
- 'He has committed to **us** the message of reconciliation' – discuss
- Where and how can you do that in your own life? Try not to focus on what makes it difficult, see what's possible.