

25/10/15

Golden Building Material

A golden moment during our Long Service Leave; a visit to the Royal Mint in Perth. On display a \$2 coin. No ordinary \$2 coin. A solid gold \$2 coin taller than a car tyre worth \$54 million. On display for all to see causing gasps of wonder from the gaggle of tourists of which we were a part. Dazzling under a special spotlight in all its useless glory. Useless because that \$54 million is doing nothing of value for humanity. Brothers and sisters we have precious gold. Golden building material for our ministry as co-workers in God's service. It is the gospel. Of eternal value and life changing significance. Unlike the golden coin, rarely in the spotlight and surrounded by confusion as to its content. How would you define the content of the gospel? There are nearly as many gospel definitions as there are varieties of milk. Remember that TV ad where the man enters the corner store and asks for a bottle of milk only to be confronted with a bewildering range of options. There is no low fat, high calcium, homogenised gospel I'm aware of but there is a gospel of inclusion, gospel of unity, gospel of cosmic renewal, gospel of social justice, gospel of wealth and health to name a few on display for us to choose from. Is it simply a matter of choice as to which one we preach? Are they all true and of equal value? How do we decide? In my recent reading my thinking about these questions was sharpened in a way that shapes this message. I am thankful for that. I hope by the end of the message you will be thankful too! The article I read reminded me that we discover the character and content of the gospel by opening our Bibles. When we do we discover in words from **Jude v3** there is a *'faith that was once for all entrusted to God's holy people.'* This once for all content of faith probably extends further than the content of the gospel but certainly includes it. It is a deception to believe there is a range of gospel options like there is a range of breakfast cereals. There is one gospel; the content and character of which is found in the Scriptures. The gospel's content is not my focus this morning. We covered that extensively in our DVD series Christianity Explored. The two fold purpose of which was to call people to become Christians and to clarify our understanding of the gospel to ensure we use golden building material as co-workers in God's service. The Christianity Explored DVD ought to find a place in each of our homes. Brothers and sisters, to share a distorted gospel is on a par with negligently giving a seriously ill patient the wrong medication. It is worse, it leads people astray about their eternal relationship with the living God. The Apostle John says. *'Anyone who runs ahead and does not*

continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. If anyone

comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take them into your house or welcome them. Anyone who welcomes them shares in their wicked work. **2 John 9-11** Go beyond what is written in the Scriptures you lose touch with God; move beyond Christ as the only way to the Father; teach the possibility of relating to God apart from Jesus. In strong words John urges us not even to have fellowship with those who teach such things. Their teaching is not simply presenting false information but is described as a wicked work. Mindful of that, in discovering the Bible's definition of the gospel we find 4 things I hope we will commit to memory. Each forms part of a larger whole just like the piece of a jigsaw puzzle. The first piece: The gospel is a message. Jesus spoke the gospel. He did not act it out like a charade. He verbally passed it on. **Mark 1:14-15** *'After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!'* We cannot take any credit for the message or claim to be superior to it for it was spoken to us and for us. The gospel is a message. The second piece: the gospel is God's message. Listen to Paul in the opening verse of Romans, *'Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God.'* **Romans 1:1** The gospel belongs to God and has its origins in him. It does not come from our spiritual reflections or study. We do not have a right to alter it to suit our own beliefs or water it down because we think it might create waves. It is what it is because its origin is in God. It is God-breathed. The gospel is God's message. The third piece: the gospel concerns God's son. The heart of the gospel is what God wants us to know about his son Jesus Christ; who he is and what he has done. Paul continues in Romans, *'the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures regarding his Son,'* **Romans 1:2-3a** Not unity, not justice, not health and wealth. If what we are sharing with people does not put Jesus at the centre we are not sharing the gospel. The gospel is God's message concerning his son. The fourth piece: the gospel is about the salvation Jesus has won for us. **Romans 1:16a** *'For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes'* As the message of salvation it speaks of what we are saved from and what we are saved for. We're saved, or delivered, from the justly deserved judgement and wrath of God for our rebellion against

his rule. We're rescued to live under the reign of Christ, the Lord. Brothers and sisters, this is what I encourage you to commit to memory. ***The gospel is God's message concerning his Son and the***

salvation he has won for us. This gospel is not just a piece of information. It is a message that cuts us to the core, calling us to turn back to God in repentance and faith. Christ crucified is the means by which we are bought into God's kingdom. The gospel message is the power of God effecting that in us. If we are serious about being God's church the focus of our ministry must be sharing the gospel. As members of Northern Beaches Anglicans we are to be gospel people, knowing, responding and sharing the gospel. We are to be a gospel church, embracing God's vision, growing appropriate strategies for living out that vision here and now, using our resources to spread the gospel though out the Northern Beaches and to the ends of the earth. Sharing the gospel bears fruit. Asking people to consider the claims of Jesus is awakening people to him. It is happening in our parish and beyond. Recently in Hay, population roughly 2000, 150 children attended a holiday kids club. Some parents took gospel tracts to check out Jesus. In the last 3 weeks Leone gave out Bibles to two SRE students who asked for one. A dozen or so of my Year 6 students took An Essential Jesus at my invitation and last week one student came up after the lesson to excitedly tell me he had started reading the Bible. How exciting is that! It is foolish and non-productive to use anything less than the best materials as co-workers in Christ. The gospel is golden building material.