

IT'S ALL GOOD, Part 3: **Be the News**

(Title GRAPHIC) If you are able, would you **PLEASE STAND**, to honor the reading of God's Word to us this morning? We'll be reading from the Gospel of **Luke 2 (:10-11)**: *"But the angel reassured them, saying, 'Don't be afraid, for I have come to bring you good news, the most joyous news the world has ever heard! And it is for everyone everywhere! For today in Bethlehem a rescuer was born for you. He is the Lord Yahweh, the Messiah.'"* **LET'S PRAY.**

I heard a pastor on a podcast last week talking about a book that he had just finished, written by an ex-pastor who's become an atheist. And in the book, he says, the guy tells this whole story. He's so transparent. He goes into why he doesn't believe the Bible is true anymore. Why he doesn't believe God exists. He was still in ministry, slowly losing his faith. And he was still in ministry, when he lost it. And, so, he tells that journey. And the pastor reading the book said that it was heart breaking, as you might imagine. This pastor tells about how he told his family. He told his wife, and they eventually got divorced. She wanted to be married to a pastor. In fact, she remarried another pastor. He remarried later, too. But the most gut-wrenching part of the book was when he told his mom. He tells his mom that he's de-converting from Christianity, and it doesn't bother her the way that he thought it would. And, very soon after, she de-converted as well. And she expresses her relief of giving up this faith, and all the baggage that came with her version of Christianity. And, at one point, she says — and this is a quote — she says, *"It's wonderful, because I don't have to hate anymore."* **(SLIDE)** *It's wonderful to be free of this religious burden."*

I've had some conversations about some of these stories with youth people. It seems to be happening all over in the church world — and not just with pastors, but lay people of all ages. And there are many stories — more than just this book about the pastor and the surprising thing that his mom said. We have more and more agnostics and atheists in this upcoming generation in America than ever before. And if you talk to them, many of them grew up attending church. And, this is something to think about. We have a whole generation of church-goers that have grown up with some kind of "US versus THEM" mentality. That it's the church trying to raise up a standard in an unforgivingly dark world. Versus the picture of "US for THEM", bringing the light into the darkness as a way of rescue. I mean, If I grown up in one of those churches, I don't think I would still be going to church either.

So, what is this that we're seeing? It's a version of faith, where you have to dislike a group of people in order to kind of keep your walls up. A version of faith where you basically have to hate a group of people. A version of faith, that you're constantly looking for a way out — that you just can't wait to get out of this thing, and kind of shake yourself free and move on. I mean, none of those versions of faith are good news, right? That's *not* good news! That's bad news! That's old news. And yet, we've got a generation that's leaving the church in droves because that's what they see the church — or that's what they have experienced.

Now, as we've said throughout this series, for some, the resistance to Christianity revolves around this question: **Is it true?** **(SLIDE)** But for other people — and more and more people in our culture and time — the question they're wrestling with is a different question. This question: **Is it even good?** **(SLIDE)** I mean, *"If Christianity causes me to hate, it may be true, but it's not good to hate. If it causes me to feel like I can't live my life and be myself, then clearly, it's not good."* Now, when we hear news — this is true for all of us... When we hear news that's not good, we hope it's not true, right? Whether it's a medical diagnosis, or something with your job. When you hear news that's not good, you hope it's not true. But when you hear news that's good — good news — you hope it is true. No matter what it is. Whether it has to do with your health, your finances, your job, somebody you're dating, or your marriage. When you hear news that is good — something you read — a headline... When you hear news that's good, you immediately hope it's true.

So, the question that we've been wrestling with is where we're gonna kind of land on today. If the message of Jesus is good, then why don't people lean in and hope it's true? And why is it, there are versions of our faith that aren't so good — that people are looking for ways to get out? Because, when Jesus birth was announced — it's so interesting, it could have been announced in lots of different ways, with lots of different words. But here's the initial announcement. Here's the headline! Here's the breaking news — **Good News (SLIDE)**! This is the terminology used. This was the phrase: *"Good news of great joy!"* That is, when you understand this, it's going to light something up on the inside of you! And it's not just for the people in that city — not just in that for people in that part of the world. This was the shocker! I mean, no one could even imagine news that would be good for ALL people! Because, generally good news for one group of people is bad news for another group of people. In fact, the Good News was so good that they actually just titled the whole thing "The Gospel", which means "The Good Story". I mean, why come up with anything else? Let's just name it what it is! This is a good story! But again, if it's *that* good, supposedly, why the resistance? Why would anybody be

looking for an out? Why wouldn't people who don't believe it's true, wish it was true? Why would the resistance to Christianity be this? *"Wow! It's hard to believe. I'm not sure I can believe all that. But imagine if that were true!"* Because, when you hear good news, you want it to be true! You don't resist it. You hope it is true. And the original version was so good that it was compelling. And the original version was so compelling, it was worth telling.

And as we said in week one, it was so worth telling that no one had to pay anybody to tell it! Luke tells us that *many* people — and there's no parallel in ancient history — that *many* people endeavored to document the life and the teaching of Jesus. Not because they were paid to do so, but because they knew the story needed to be preserved. And it needed to be told. It was for every generation, and it was for every nation. So, the question that I want us to wrestle with today is this. **What happened? What, specifically, happened to the Good News?** Why isn't everybody leaning in? Why doesn't everybody want it to be true? And maybe what happened is, **WE** happened. Maybe it's a little bit our fault. Because the church has certainly Americanized the Good News. I don't know how we could have helped it. Right? We have certainly politicized the Good News. We've "prosperitized" the Good News. We have intellectualized the Good News. And we've internalized the Good News. And by that, I mean we've reduced it to something that you just believe, rather than a person, Jesus, that we follow. We've reduced it to, in some cases, fire insurance. Some of you, when you become a Christian, it wasn't because, *"I love God."* It wasn't because you wanted to follow Jesus. The way it was presented was trying to avoid experience in the life after this life. That's how some of us made the decision. It was out of fear.

But, when you read the Gospel — the Good News, the accounts of the life of Jesus — it's not primarily about what happens after you die. And it's not primarily about what you believe. It's about how you live your life! And it's about how we treat other people. And when it gets reduced to what's in it for me, in spite of how it might affect you, that's not "good news of great joy for all nations, for all people". And that's not the original news! That's the **PICK-AND-CHOOSE** — news. That's when you pick and choose the parts that suit you. That I pick and choose the parts that suit me and my family. I pick and choose the parts that I think are going to benefit me. But the moment we do that — the moment I do that, the moment I preach like that — in that moment, it is no longer "good news of great joy for all nations, and all people".

I'm going to give you an extreme example. And I acknowledge, up front, this is extreme. Have you ever heard of the Slave Bible? There are only 3 known copies left in existence. They have one at the Museum of the Bible, and they don't even own it. It's on loan from another museum. The Slave Bible was actually a Bible that was published. This isn't like a one-off. This was a published Bible in 1807. It was published by the Society for the Conversion of Slaves in the British West Indies. So, in London, there was an actual publisher that published the Slave Bible. And it was used to teach slaves how to read. And it was used to teach slaves the message of Christianity — to convert them to Christianity. But the publishers removed any part of the Bible that undermined the the legitimacy of slavery. So, they took out the whole Exodus story. In fact, they took out most of the story of the Hebrew people migrating to the Promised Land and throwing off captivity. They they took out so many verses that the Bible goes from about 1,100 chapters to around 300 chapters in the Slave Bible. They took the verse out where Apostle Paul writes, *"There's neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."* Because the Slave Bible was good news for slave owners. And it was bad news for slaves!

The point being this. If my version — and I'm not above this. I could be as guilty as anybody else. If my version of the Good News, and if your version of the Good News is not good for Jews and Gentiles, slaves and free, male and female, rich and poor, righteous and unrighteous, saints and sinners, your sister-in-law, your crazy uncle, that skeptical cousin, that part of the family that's coming for Christmas, and you're already wondering how long are they actually going to stay... That annoying neighbor, your ex-husband, or your ex-wife... If it's not Good News for them, then it's not the original news. It's not the original version. The Apostle Paul's story is so interesting. We're gonna get to a piece of it in just a minute. The Apostle Paul is an actual person, who lives in actual history, who is right at the epicenter of the transition from the Law and the Prophets to the Good News of the Kingdom of God. There was this huge transition. He was a Pharisee. He knew the old way backwards and forwards, and then becomes a Jesus follower. But here's what he's saying in this verse. He's saying, *"You have never met anyone for whom the Good News was not good news!"*

The question is: **what about me?** Am I good news? The question is about you, if you're a Jesus-follower. Are *you* "good news of great joy for all people"? Or just the people like you? Or the ones that you like? Because I have a feeling — and you're smart enough to know this is the case — that if we had gotten this right, our communities, maybe our nation, maybe the world would be in a different and GOODER/better place. Remember what Jesus said? This is so fundamental, it was so at the epicenter of this transition of what God, through Christ, was introducing to the world — a kingdom of

God and the kingdom values. Do you remember? I know you do. Do you remember what He says was to characterize His followers? Was it correct belief? No. He said, *"By this, all men and women, and everyone in the world will know that you're following Me — by the way that you TREAT — by the way that you love one another."* And the way that you treat, and the way that you love other people, that's Good News! And every single generation of Jesus followers is responsible to ensure that the news we carry is the original news. That our news is the Good News! Again, Jesus could not have been clearer. How do we miss this? I have a feeling I know how we miss it, but I'll ask the question anyway. How can we miss this? Jesus couldn't have been clearer. One day, He's preaching and He says to the people who are gathered to follow Him... He says, *"You..." (Matthew 5:14)* And you is you, and you, and you, and me. It's all of us. He says, *"You... let Me tell you who you are. If you're gonna follow Me, you are the light of the whole world!"* Not just Judea! Not just Samaria! Not just Galilee! *"You are the light of the world!"*

The group — they're gathered with Him that day. I mean, their *world* wasn't bigger than 25-miles in any direction. That was their whole world! He says, *"You're the light of the whole world!"* And their thinking, *"We can't be the light of the whole world! I mean, we're not going anywhere."* He says, *"No. No! This isn't even just about you! I want everyone who chooses to follow Me to understand: you are the light of the whole world. This message is for the whole world! And when it's understood properly, it will be perceived as LIGHT!"* Like, *"The lights came on!"* Like, *"Suddenly, I see myself in a way that's different than the way I've seen myself before! And I see You in a way that's different than the way I've seen You before! I see my enemies different! I see my responsibilities different! I see everything different!"* *"You're the light of the world. Let your light shine before others, that they may see..."* something. *"That they may see your good deeds..."* that come from this Good News. And, as a result of what you do, not just what you believe — *"...that they may see your good deeds, and look up, and recognize: there is a connection between your good deeds and your good Father in heaven."* Because your light may be the only light they ever get! Your light might be the only thing that magnifies — that's what it means to glorify — that magnifies who God really is! In other words, my responsibility — your responsibility — is to **PERSONIFY** the Good News.

Now, back to the Apostle Paul. Initially, when he heard about the Good News, he did not think it was good news. Primarily because he didn't understand the news. He got a version of the news, and he was a Pharisee. And his future, and his finances, and his popularity, and everything about him was tied to the old ways. And here's something you understand. People who benefit most from the old view — people who benefit most from the status quo — they are least inclined to ever let it go! Right? So, the Apostle Paul — everything about him is bound up in the old way. And then, he goes and gets himself deputized. And he is a violent man! He's an activist! He's a violent activist! And he decides to single-handedly, if need be, put this Good News thing — this Nazarene sect — that's what they called it. Because Jesus was from Nazareth. This Nazarene sect — this thing called "The Way" — he's going to put it out of the way! He's going to put it out of business.

And then, he runs headlong into the buzzsaw of the grace and the mercy of a God he didn't even know! And when that happens — when he understands what the real news is — this is amazing! This is the untold part of his story. He lays down all of his violent, coercive, fear-driven ways. And he continues to be an activist. And he continues to be an apostle. He continues to be a missionary. But, now, he's got a different message! And he says, in one of his letters, *"The only thing that really matters..."* This is amazing! *"The only thing that really matters is faith working it's way out through love."* Like, *"Wait. Wait! You're the guy that arrested people — had people tortured!"* And he would say, *"I didn't understand the news! I didn't understand how GOOD it was! I didn't understand that it was for all nations, for all generations!"* And he gave his life to clarify, for Gentile people, just how good this Good News really was! And he became a better man.

So, he writes these letters. And I want to read a portion from his letter to the church in Philippi, in Greece. If you grew up in church, you've heard this before. But I, just as I read these verses, I thought about just reading them without commenting. But I just want you to think for a moment. What if this characterized every single Christian in our community? What if this characterized every Christian in the world? What if this characterized every Christian father? What if this had characterized your father? Every Christian mother? Every Christian high school student? Every Christian college student? What if this was the way we live? What if our lives characterized and personified the Good News? And that's what the Apostle Paul teaches over and over, and over, and over!. He takes Jesus' message of *"You're the light of the world,"* and he teases it out in ways that we can understand.

Here's what he writes to the 1st century Christians in Philippi. Here's what he writes to me. Here's what he writes to you. He says, *"Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ..."* — now that you're in Christ, now that you're in this brand new covenant with this brand new understanding, now that you've entered this new kingdom that's forever... if there's anything encouraging about that, *"...if any comfort from His love, if any common sharing..."* —

among those of you in the community of these little ecclesia, these little churches — *“...in the Spirit, have any tenderness and compassion...”* In other words, if there's anything about following Jesus that's come your way that's good... If you benefited from the Good News from following Jesus, he says, *“Then, look. Do me a favor. I want you to ‘... make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.’”* (Philippians 2:1-2) He says, *“When people look at your little ecclesia — your little community, your little church — in those little those Roman provinces, I want people to see something unique about the way you treat each other. Allow the GOOD that has come your way to overflow into your relationships.”*

This isn't simply something you believe — about a new kingdom and a new way of viewing God. This is something you do. *“So, Paul, tell us. What exactly do you have in mind? I mean, that's kind of flowery language.”* So, he goes, *“Aight! I'm going to get really specific.”* Okay, *“We're ready.”* And he says, *“You're going to be sorry you asked.”* *“No, no. We really want to get this right. How do we live lives that are so good that people think the Gospel is good?”* He says, *“Okay, here we go. Number one... ‘Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit.’* Wow! That'd be good, wouldn't it?! Wouldn't you like to work for somebody like that? If you're hiring people, wouldn't you like to hire people like that? Don't you wish your father had been that way? Aren't you glad your father is that way? *“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather,”* he says, *“in humility, value others above yourselves.”* Value them above yourself. Not because they're more valuable. You treat them as if they are more valuable.

Why would we do that? He says, *“I'm so glad you asked! Because that's right at the center. That's the point of the spear of the Gospel. Because, ‘For God so loved the world...’ — for God so valued you — He put you ahead of Himself. That He sent His Son to die for your sin. You are NOT more valuable than God, but He treated you as if you had greater value!”* He says, *“Now, that's the Good News! That's the good message! I want you to live your lives in such a way that you ‘do for others what God, and Christ, has done for you! That's GOOD!”* And when people see that, they're gonna say, *“That's GOOD! I don't know if I can really buy into everything they believe about the person of Jesus, but what if that were true? What if that characterizes the behavior of the people around me — my boss, my friends, my teachers, my coaches, the people I work with?”*

Paul goes on to say, *“...not looking to your own interests but each of you look to the interest of others.”* Why? Because that's what Jesus did for you! The essence of the Gospel is that God put you first, not because, again, you *should* come first — or I should come first. He chose to put you first! He said, *“Follow Me. This is how I want you to treat people — all people. The people that you think deserve it, and even more importantly, the people that you are sure don't.”* It's what Jesus followers DO — not believe. We've got that down. It's what we do. And then, this statement... I mean, I don't know how we miss this! It's not tucked away somewhere. It's front and center. He says — and this is so powerful — *“In your relationships with one another...”* Which relationships? All of your relationships! *“In your relationships with one another...”* — your husband relationship, your wife relationship, your fiancé, your boyfriend, your girlfriend, the guy at work, the woman at work, the person you love, the person you don't like, the person you hate to have one-on-ones with, the person in the other political party that you can't stand — *“...in your relationships with one another...”* Ready? *“... have the same mindset as Christ Jesus.”* Why? Because it's GOOD! Because when you have the same mindset as Christ Jesus, in your relationships, you will defer to them! You will do what's best for them! You will put them first! You will place yourself under their burden instead of requiring them to place themselves under you! You will not power up; you will step down. And that's unusual. And it's not the way the world works. But it represents the value system of the kingdom of God that was introduced when a baby was born and proclaimed king, and the earth shook! And King Herod was afraid of a baby! And little did he know, that he would become a footnote in the story of the birth of the Savior of the world. That's goodness!

He goes on. He says, *“Who...”* — talking about Jesus. This is amazing! This is the most amazing part! Now, again, don't just hear me reading the Bible for a minute. Here me reading a letter from the 1st century, written by someone who knew Peter — who knew James, the brother of Jesus, who knew John, who had been to Jerusalem and met with the people who had spent time with Jesus. And here's what Paul says, talking about Jesus. *“Who, being in very nature God...”* *“Peter, tell me tell me what when you think of your Rabbi, Jesus. How do you describe him?”* Peter would say, *“It was like He was God in a body. I don't I know! It doesn't make any sense! It's like we were with God! We realized His words were the words of God!”*

“James, explain your brother.” *“It's hard to explain my Brother. Growing up, He was different. Okay? In fact, He was so different, than when He began being a rabbi, I thought, ‘You're not a rabbi!’ And then, after the resurrection, I realized, no wonder! It was like God had come to us! It's like He had come to introduce something new in the world!”* So, listen to this, with that in mind: *“Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to His*

own advantage.” What?! Yeah! That God showed up among mere mortals and never powered up! He never played the God-card — never use His power and influence for His own benefit! Do you know what He did? Now listen to this! This would change your office. This will change our community! This would change our country! This would change the world! In fact, it changed the world, one time. He leveraged His power and His influence for the benefit of those with less power and less influence! He leveraged His power and influence, as God, for the benefit of those who had less power and less influence.

There are communities in our country, and there are nations around the world, that that one simple idea would liberate so many people! It would free so many people! It would increase the lifespan and the quality of life for millions and millions and millions of people! If there would be world leaders who would embrace this one single idea that is at the center of the Gospel message. It would bring so much GOOD, you wouldn't even be able to measure it! Is the message of Jesus GOOD? Are you kidding? That God came to earth and leveraged His power and His influence for the sake of those who had no power and no influence? There is nothing better than that! That's the father you *hope* raised you! It's the father you want to become! It's the mother that you're so grateful for! It's the mother that, you look back, and you think, *“If only she had understood this one idea, it would have changed everything.”* That would be good for the whole world!

Paul's not done. *“Rather,”* — instead of powering up — *“He chose to make Himself nothing...”* He chose to make Himself, in the 1st century, a nobody. And how far did He take it? This is unprecedented. It is *still* unprecedented. This is why it changed the world. It's why the world sat up and paid attention to this amazing story that no one would have made up! There was no parallel. There was no framework for this kind of story! *“...by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled Himself...”* — He chose to place Himself under — *“...He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to death.”* And here's the part that, for us, is maybe hard to grasp — because we'll never see one, and we'll never smell one. *“...even death on a Cross.”* The moment that your God, and my God, was most glorified, would have been the moment we would have been most horrified. We would have looked away.

Do you know what the goal of crucifixion was? The goal of crucifixion was oblivion. The goal of crucifixion was, *“It's as if you never existed.”* It was so horrible that your friends would never claim to have known you, and your family would have already disowned you! No one would know where you were buried. It was as if it was as if you had never existed. And this is the end your Savior chose — to make sure He punctuated His point. *“I have come to serve and to give My life a ransom for many. I have come to leverage My power and My influence for those who have virtually no power and no influence. Now, I want you to follow Me. And I want you to learn from Me. And I want you to figure out, in your own worlds, with your own family, and your own finances, and your own opportunities, how to emulate that. Because THAT is GOOD.”* And that is good for the whole world of medicine. Good for everybody in the whole world! Is Christianity GOOD? Are you kidding? Is there anything better? He was the King who came to reverse the order of everything! And He invites us to follow. Imagine if the kings of this earth — if the politicians, if the global leadership of this earth — embrace that one single idea. How much GOOD would be released on this planet? Yes, it's GOOD!

Let's get down to **verse 12**. Paul says, *“Okay, look. You've got a part to play in this. So guys,”* he says. *“Men and women, I want you to... “...continue to work out...”* I love this idea. *“I want you to continue to allow God to squeeze out of you, everything associated with “...your salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God who works in you...”* — look at this — *“...to will and to act in order to fulfill His...”* — here's our word — *“...GOOD purpose.”* And what is His good purpose? For the world to know that there's a God who has invited the world to call Him Father! And that He sent His Son to do the ultimate, and pay the ultimate price, and invites us to follow Him! To set up a brand new world order — not a world order we've ever seen before — a kingdom of conscience! A kingdom where the heart rules, and the heart is in sync with the heart of God! That's the invitation! Is that GOOD? *That* changes everything! Because it changes humanity from the inside out! And when we do that, good things happen around us! The perversion of the Gospel says this: *“No! Good things happen TO us.”* The Apostle Paul would say, *“No. Good things happen around us.”* When we embrace that perversion, it becomes about us, and we are no longer good news.

Paul wraps up with this. He says, *“Look. Do everything without grumbling or arguing...”* — talking about believers — *“...so that you may become blameless.”* Do you know what it means to be blameless? It means nobody can blame you for anything! It doesn't mean you're perfect. You know what a blameless person does? A blameless person messes up. And then, a blameless person immediately apologizes. Before somebody *can* blame them, they've already taken care of it! *“I'm going to go in there and talk to her. Oh! She already owned it and took care of it! I'm gonna go in there and blame them. Nope! He already apologized.”* Blameless means, *“I'm not carrying around any blame. Yes. I'm gonna goof up. Yes. I'm going to do some not good things. But then, I'm going to own it. And I'm going to own it so quickly, you don't even*

have an opportunity for blame. You're not going to catch me, because I'm going to find you and confess it." That's good! *"Do everything without grumbling or arguing so that you may become blameless and pure..."* Get this. *"...children of God,"* — like Father, like Son — *"...without fault in a warped..."* — what's in it for me? — *"...and crooked generation."*

And then, this is so great! The Apostle Paul reaches back and grabs the very terms that Jesus used in the Sermon on the Mount. He said, *"When you live this way — when you lean into, not only this Good News, but this good way of living, because of your good Savior."* He says, *"When you do this — and especially when you do it as a congregation, especially when you do it as a group of people in a city, or community, or town, or a nation."* He said, *"The results of that are going to be exactly what Jesus said, you're going to "...shine in the world like stars in the sky."* Your selfLESSness will stand in sharp contrast to the selfISHness characterized in the kingdoms of this world. Imagine a world like that. This is what we've been invited to! This is how you change the world! Regardless of how the world pushes back. Because everyone intuitively knows, *"That's GOOD!"*

So, I want to be very specific. How does Good News behave? What happens when we personify Good News? What positions us to not just believe, but **BE** Good News? I want to give us 4 quick suggestions. I've already touched on all of them, because they come right out of this text. 4 suggestions for the rest of this Christmas season. Because during this this Christmas season, you are going to have opportunities given to you by God to be the light of the world. In your little part — and my little part — of the world.

#1) **APOLOGIZE** immediately. Apologize immediately. We're not always Good News, are we? I'm not. Apologize immediately. Let's just own it, and own it quickly. Now, can I say something to guys real quick? I've been a man a lot longer than I've been a pastor. So, I understand this. Ladies, maybe you, too. But, men. When we screw up, you know what we do? Our ego likes to get in the way and we walk around the house and we justify and justify. And we talk to ourselves. We have imaginary conversations with our wives, and our girlfriends, and the people we've hurt, and we justify and justify. And the whole time we're doing it, we know we're wrong! Instead of apologizing quickly, we spread it out, and stretch it out, and ruin their afternoon, or ruin their day, or ruin their weekend! And then, eventually, we realize, *"Okay. I gotta apologize."* Let's just not do that! How about we just apologize immediately? Then, guess what, men? You can become blameless. Not because you're perfect. But you owned it. That one shift — one change — for somebody in this room that may be the thing that opens up a brand new level of love, and respect, and communication in your family, or with somebody that you care about.

#2) **FORGIVE** quickly. We have to forgive quickly, because we're forgiven. As Jesus followers, we have no excuse to hang on to bitterness or anger! We have zero! I mean, we're going to get hurt. We're going to deal with our emotions. But in terms of forgiveness, forgive quickly.

#3) I love this word. We don't use it much. **DEFER** habitually. I love this word. Defer means, *"You first."* The verb means *"You, go first."* I heard a story about a very rich man that insisted on always holding the door open for his limousine driver, and it just drove the driver crazy! He didn't know what to do with it! And he's like, *"No! See, this is a limousine company. I'm working for you! I'm not just gonna let you open the door for me!"* The wealthy man deferred. What does that look like in your world? Why should we defer? Why should we put other people first? Good news of great joy for all mankind! Come on! A King was born! A King who gave His life for His subjects instead of asking the subjects to give their lives for Him! That's why!

And then, the last one is **GIVE** sacrificially. *"For God so loved the world He gave..."* Let's do this! Because, if everybody does this, everybody knows it's Good News whether they believe it's true or not. The Good News becomes bad news when I'm bad news. And the good news, for somebody, becomes bad news when you're bad news. When the news becomes more about a WHAT than a **WHO** — when the news becomes more about a VIEW than the YOU (standing right in front of you) — when that happens, it is no longer good news.

So, one last time and we were done. Are you Good News? Am I Good News? Because, come on, you know this. If the Good News lives inside of us, shouldn't there be something about US that's Good News for our world? Last thing. If the life and teaching of Jesus doesn't strike you as Good News, it may be because the **CHURCH** hasn't been Good News for you. And if that's your story, I just want you to know, as a pastor, — I don't represent anybody but me in our church — but I just want you to know, I am so extraordinarily sorry. And I think that your mistrust, and your disinterest, and your lack of faith are all justified. I can't change your past. And I can't change what you've experienced in the past. But I'd like to leave you with this.

In the distant past, in a world where MIGHT made RIGHT... where the pagan gods toyed with humanity and favored the powerful... where the Jewish temple only seemed to favor the religious... that God sent His Son into *this* world, to replace and to establish a brand new kind of relationship — a brand new kind of covenant between God and man. And on that very first Christmas, this brand new arrangement was announced this way. *“Do not be afraid. I bring you GOOD NEWS that will cause great joy for all the people! Today, in the town of David a Savior has been born to you, and He is the Messiah, He is Christ, the Lord.” (Luke 2:10-11)* And when that baby grew to be a man, and stepped onto the pages of history as Jesus of Nazareth, He extended a simple invitation to all of you, and all of us. He said, *“Follow Me.”* And it was an invitation to *good* people. It was an invitation and *not so good* people. And it was an invitation to people who weren't sure there was anything left good in the world.

So is the message of Jesus. Is it true? That's a question for another day. But was the message — *is* the message of Jesus GOOD? It's *better* than GOOD! And it's good for you. And it's good for me. And it's good for the whole world!

I'm going to leave you with these four questions. You'll find them on our social media. You'll find discussion questions like these on our GOING DEEPER QUESTIONS that get sent out every week. You can take a picture. But I want to draw your attention to the last question. Is anyone coming for Christmas who needs to see and experience the Good News through you? Is anybody coming for Christmas that needs to see and hear the Good News through you? And what... you're going to hate me for this, but... what is one unexpected thing you could do for that person that would make your light shine a little brighter than usual? Let's be the Good News!

1. Do you know anyone who de-converted from Christianity? What reason(s) did they give?
2. Have you been tempted to give up on faith because of an encounter with a person of faith?
3. Read **Philippians 1:1-8**. What stands out to you? Have you ever met a Christian whose approach to relationships reflects Paul's instructions in these verses?
4. Is anyone coming for Christmas who needs to see and experience the Good News through you? What's one unexpected thing you could do for that person that would make your light shine a little brighter than usual? Any of the four things we wrote down? Apologize, forgive, defer, or give.