

EVANGEL

The Good News of Jesus Christ



A radically

Bored with living

Many people are unhappy with the kind of life they are leading. Their friends bore them. Marriage is a chore to them. They consider their children a nuisance. The jobs they have go nowhere. They are tired of spending their free time at the bar. The things they buy produce no satisfaction. Television, videos, alcohol, drugs, nothing seems to fill the void. Finally, you can hear them asking, “Is this all there is to life? Is there nothing else to it? Nothing more? Nothing better? Nothing more fulfilling?”

Quite simply, what many are looking for is a better and more meaningful life. They are fed up with living just for themselves, for the weekend, for a future holiday, or for the next “kick” that they can find. They hunger for a life that is filled with real purpose.

But where do you find that kind of life? Where can you plug-in to a life like that? Does it even exist?

Finding a new life

It does exist. It can be found and it can be attained. How? Where? This life cannot be discovered by going somewhere, like

Tibet, India, Mecca or Jerusalem. Neither does it become a reality by taking something, be it alcohol, drugs or some other substance. No, this new life comes to you only when you look to a certain person and wholeheartedly commit your life to him and to his teachings.

Who am I referring to? Why, to none other than Jesus Christ. New life, meaningful life, purposeful life, blessed life, and most important of all, everlasting life, will only come to you through Him.

How do I know this? By looking at my own life, as well as at the lives of others. Indeed, let me refer you to one of those “others.” You can find his story in the Bible. More specifically, it can be found in the Gospel according to Mark, chapter 5, the verses 1 - 20.

Examining a miserable life

There we meet a man who in every respect was in dire straits. His life was a horror. We are told that he was a man who was possessed by “an evil spirit” (v.2). In other words, he was not at all in his right mind. This man was mad. He was also a danger to himself and would cut his body with sharp stones. People had tried to help him. They had even gone out of their way to restrain him. On occasion they resorted to chains even. They bound him hand and foot. But it was all to no avail. Time and again he would break free and head for the hills.

There he lived, not in a house, but among the tombs. Indeed, he lived there as a naked man. In his parallel account, Luke brings out this point by telling us that for a long time already he had been homeless and without any clothes (Luke 8:27). No doubt this added to him being the

talk of the local towns and villages.

So what do we have here? We have a man who is living a tortured, lonely, and demented life. We have a man whom the world fears and has written off. He is truly a hopeless case.

Do you have it tough? I dare say that in comparison to this man your life is most likely a piece of cake. If your life needs an overhaul, this man needs it far more.

Rescuing a miserable life

So what happens to this man? Does his life of misery continue? Is he beyond redemption?

No, for now a most amazing thing happened to this man. He was confronted by the person of Jesus Christ. From a distance he saw Jesus traveling through the region where he lived. He ran to him and fell down before him. Looking at him Jesus issued but one command. He told the evil spirit to get out of this man.

And it happened! The evil spirit had no choice whatsoever. Confronted by the Son of the Most High God, all he could do was obey. He went out of the man.

Transforming a miserable life

Instantly the man's life was transformed. His sanity returned. Luke tells us that when the villagers came out to investigate all that had happened, they found the madman dressed and in his right mind. Not only that, but it was obvious that in the meantime he had become a disciple of Jesus. The same villagers saw him sitting at Jesus's feet. He was no longer uncontrollable and restless. No, he was sitting there

new life



quietly and attentively taking in the teachings of Jesus. Obviously, this man's life had been most miraculously altered. The contrast between his present and former state could not have been greater.

Still, sanity and submission were not the only new features in his overhauled life. There is something else that we need to see as well. This man wanted to become more than just a student of Jesus, he also wanted to become a full-time disciple of the Christ. Wherever Jesus went, he wanted to go. So as Jesus was about to depart the region, this man begged to go with him.

Christ Jesus, however, refused. Instead he told this man to go home to his family, but then he added something, for he sent him home with a mission. He gave him something very special and specific to do. What? He was to tell them, and all who would listen, how much

God had done for him. He was to tell them about God's mercy (Mark 5:19).

And that is precisely what he did. Both Mark and Luke tell us that this man went home and that in due time he became a walking, talking billboard for his Saviour Jesus Christ and for God's mercy.

What a story! Here you have a man whose whole life was turned upside down and inside out by Jesus Christ. At one time he was caught in the terrible grip of hopelessness, madness and despair. But then Jesus came along and gave him a new lease on life. This man discovered meaning, purpose, direction, wholeness and healing. He was given a completely new reason for living.

What about your life?

Why am I telling you this ancient story? Because it illustrates

the difference that Jesus Christ makes in peoples lives. Almost two thousand years ago He transformed the life of a madman and turned him into a missionary. He did a great work then, and He has not stopped doing great works. Today He lives at God's right hand in heaven and from there He is still, through the power of the Word and Holy Spirit, changing the lives of people everywhere. He takes bored, dead, and empty lives and fills them with meaning and purpose. He gives people a whole new reason for living.

Is your life a bore? Does it seem pointless? Go to Jesus Christ, ask Him to renovate it. Place yourself in his hands and submit to his will. If you do, you will not be disappointed. Your life will undergo a radical and lasting transformation.

James Visscher

The Counselling Ministry

As a pastor, every now and then, I have to make a visit to the hospital. Sometimes when I do this, I just cannot help but let my mind wander a little bit. As I leave my car parked on the parking lot and walk towards the entrance of the hospital, the brokenness of life stares me straight in my face. Already outside the hospital, I see patients sitting on a bench, enjoying some of the outside air or just sitting there smoking a cigarette. When I enter the hospital, the scene does not really change all that much. Wherever I look, I see nurses or doctors or patients sitting in wheelchairs or lying in their beds. Some have broken bones; others have some external injury; still others are suffering from all sorts of internal problems.

The brokenness of life

As I see all of this brokenness and more, I think to myself that *this* is actually what life is like now that we live our lives *outside* the Garden of Eden (also known as Paradise). Wherever you look, you see the brokenness of life. Relationships become strained and often break down. Husbands do not get along with their wives and wives do not get along with their husbands. Parents do not get along with their children and children do not get along with their parents. Employers do not get along with their

employees and employees do not get along with their employers. People who once were close friends now live their lives separated because of dishonesty and hurt. There just is no end to all the aches and pains that are felt in this world. Some are aching because of grief; others are burdened because of sorrow. Some are oppressed because of troubles; others are unsettled because of worries. Some are distressed because of affliction; others are hurting because of heartaches.

In the light of all of this it should not surprise us that there are a lot of cries for help. People want relief from their heartaches and affliction! People want to be freed from their worries and troubles! People want to live without their sorrow and grief! In short, people yearn, long, crave for lives that are whole and sound again! Lives that are filled with peace and contentment and that have some sense of meaning, purpose and direction!

In order to attain some of this peace and contentment, this wholeness and soundness, many people make their regular trips to counsellors. Some go to marriage and parenting counsellors; others go to grief and sorrow counsellors; still others make their weekly trip to their drug and alcohol counsellors. All sorts of counsellors abound and they all offer you their services, their expertise, their help in trying to get your life whole and sound again and in enabling you to experience some measure of peace and enjoyment.

Another Counsellor

There is a text in the Bible that also deals with counselling. It is a text you will find in the fourth book of the New Testament which is called the *Gospel of John*. If you were to turn to the 16th verse of the 14th

chapter of this gospel, you would find the following text: *But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.*

This verse that you have just read is part of a larger whole. It forms part of a conversation Jesus Christ is having with his disciples just before He is about to die and, once He has arisen from the dead, return home to his Father. In this conversation, Jesus has already spoken about this Counsellor. When He did, He referred to Him as *another* Counsellor (John 14:16). By designating the Holy Spirit as *another* Counsellor, Jesus is in essence saying that He Himself had been a Counsellor when He was with them here on this earth while He would continue to be their Counsellor once He had ascended into heaven and returned to his Father. But now alongside of his own counselling ministry, Jesus would also send them *another* Counsellor. As the Father had once sent Him to earth to counsel a people lost and forlorn in sin and to help these people in many and varied ways, so the Father would again send Someone to earth once Jesus had returned to heaven. This time, He would send the Holy Spirit.

When the Holy Spirit would be sent, He would teach Jesus' disciples all things and would remind them of everything He had said. This clearly means that once Jesus had ascended into heaven, the Holy Spirit would come and *take Jesus' place on this earth*. And once He did, He would *tutor* the disciples, give them *private instruction* and *review* with them what Jesus had already told them.

I'm sure you know what a tutor does. Sometimes, students do not do so well in a certain subject at school. For some reason, they have difficulty in understanding the concepts. And

of the Holy Spirit

so the teacher arranges for someone else to come in and give them some extra help. This other person, also known as a tutor, will often review the material the teacher has already taught the student. She will do her best to explain it to him in simple and easy to understand words. She will try to give the student further insight into the material that has been taught. And she will do her best to train his memory.

Well, in a somewhat similar manner, the Holy Spirit, the other Counsellor is also the tutor of Jesus' followers. He is called in alongside of them and is going to enable them to remember what Jesus said and give them further insight into these things. And in doing so, Jesus' disciples will be able to fulfil the task to which Jesus Christ had called them.

For what was this task again? Was it not to witness to the ends of the earth to what Jesus had said and done? In order to do this, they would have to preach about what Jesus had told them while they would also have to write letters to churches instructing these churches in this teaching of their Saviour. How in the world would they ever be able to do this? Their memories were broken so that they could not always remember what Jesus had told them. Their insight was limited so that they could not always understand the truth of the gospel. Their courage was sometimes waning so that they did not always dare to speak up when they had to speak up. "Well," says Jesus, "do not worry about all of this and more. As I have counselled and helped you while I was with you during my ministry on earth, so I will continue to counsel you and help you when I continue my ministry from heaven. I will send you another helper, another Counsellor, the Holy Spirit Himself. He will teach you all things and He will remind you of everything I have said to you."

What an encouragement this must have been for those disciples gathered together with Jesus! Living outside the Garden of Eden as they did! Living in a broken world! Not being those perfect people their first parents has once been! And yet, not having to worry! There was help! There was counsel! There was assistance!

Counsel for you and me

A similar counsel is also there for you and me. For also you and I live in a broken world. And whether we like it or not, there is not one of us who escapes this brokenness of life. A visit to a hospital will remind you of this. A visit to a jail will do the same. And so does our own daily experience. How are we going to deal with this brokenness? How are we going to deal with the strains and challenges in our homes and outside our homes?

The answer to this question is really quite simple. The only way to deal with our strains and challenges, the only way to deal with our pains and aches is to go to our heavenly Counsellor. To allow Him to do his tutoring work in our lives, reviewing with us what it is that our God wants us to do.

Reading and studying your Bible

In order for us to undergo the influence of the influence of this Counsellor, we have to take our Bibles and begin to read in them. We have to study these Bibles and meditate on what we have read and studied. When we do this in faith, trusting that God will work through our reading and studying of his Word, the Holy Spirit will truly counsel us with this Word. He will give us guidance and direction in the midst of our darkness and confusion. He will show us what is

pleasing to God and what is not pleasing to Him. He will show us what will truly lead to peace and contentment and what will not. Simply asserting yourself and standing up for your rights will, for instance, not do this. But denying yourself and looking out for the interests of others will. Simply focussing on your own dignity and value will also not give you this peace and contentment. At least, not in a lasting and enduring way. But focussing on the dignity and value you have because you have been created by God, will. Because then you will learn to see your life in the light of God's authority over you and you will learn to do things his way and not your own. And doing things God's way always leads to true peace and contentment.

Attending a faithful church

Besides reading and studying your Bible on your own, you should also go to a church that bases its teaching on this Bible. For when you do, you will undergo the counselling ministry of the Holy Spirit as you place yourself under the biblical preaching of this church. While at the same time, you will undergo his counselling ministry as you fellowship with Christians who are filled with the Spirit. Christians who want to be a hand and a foot to each other and help each other in any way they can.

If you are in need of counsel – and we are ALL in need of counsel – then I urge you to wipe the dust off your Bible and begin reading and studying it again. At the same time, I urge you to look for a church that is faithful to the Scriptures. There may be a lot of brokenness in this life. There is no need to refuse the help and counsel that is offered. Why don't you make a beginning today.

Dick Moes

Washed Clean

Bible Story

Based on Genesis 6 - 9

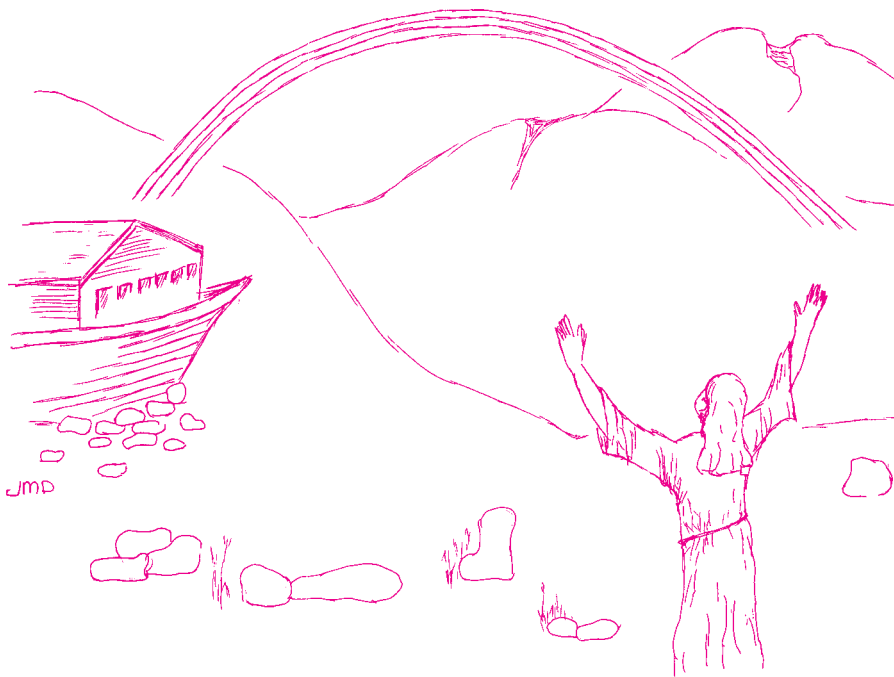
Finally. The ark was finished. It had taken Noah and his grown sons many months to build this very big boat. The job had not been easy. True, the Lord had given some clear instructions about the size of the boat. But it had been up to Noah to decide how to build the hallways and rooms, where the stairs and ramps had to go, how all the food had to be stored. That required much planning, since the ark would have to house thousands of animals. It was in fact a very big, floatable, three-story barn.

The already difficult job of planning and building the ark was often made more difficult by the biting remarks of Noah's neighbours. The curious onlookers had no idea what Noah was doing. To them it made no sense at all. Who would build such a big boat on a spot with no water in sight? Normal people build their boats right beside a big river, or near an inlet. But Noah was doing it right on his land. Was he out of his mind?

Little did Noah's neighbours understand that they were the very reason for the building of the ark. They had stopped trusting the Lord. Instead, they followed the wicked wiles and wishes of their own hearts. People had become very hateful of each other. And they were not afraid to show this in violent fights. When the Lord saw how evil people had become, He decided to make an end to them. They would all be destroyed by a mighty flood of waters. These waters would have to wash the world clean from all wickedness.

There was only one man who still feared the Lord, in his heart and in his walk of life. Only Noah, and his family, still served the Lord. Noah's faith in the Lord was so strong, that he did not doubt that the flood would come. His faith made it possible for him to finish the ark, though his neighbours tried to make him doubt.

But as the animals started to arrive in pairs, sent by the Lord, the neighbours suddenly didn't feel so smug anymore. The sight of the long line of animals, obediently filing into the ark at Noah's instructions, scared them



tremendously. They sensed that something very terrifying was about to happen. But their proud hearts were turned against the Lord so completely, that they were still unable to admit that Noah was right. Even at this point they ignored his words of warning about the coming flood.

Soon after the arrival of the animals the Lord told Noah to go into the ark as well, with his entire family. The Lord himself locked the door securely after them.

Then it started to rain. Thick sheets of water fell on the earth. At the same time the earth burst open and the spouting fountains joined the rain in covering the earth. For forty days the waters poured over man and animal, over house and field, over hill and mountain. There was no escape for anyone. The earth with all its living creatures lay deeply buried under the water. But high on top the ark floated back and forth as a promise of continued life.

After the rain stopped it took many months for the waters to go down. But one day Noah and his family felt a thud. The ark had been stopped by a mountain peak. Perched high above the earth, the people in the ark had no idea when the rest of the earth would have dried up. Noah sent out a raven to test if the land had become liveable again. But since ravens feast on dead creatures, Noah's bird did not come

back. There was lots of food for him. Then Noah sent out a dove. Would the dove already be able to find food on the battered earth? No. After flying back and forth a bit, she wanted to go back into the ark. A week later Noah tried again. This time the dove came back with a tender olive leaf in her beak. Life had returned! When another week later Noah let the dove go again, she did not come back. The earth was ready.

How thankful Noah and his family were. As soon as they had released all the animals, they made an offering of thanks to the Lord. Their God had saved them from the mighty floods. As an answer the Lord called Noah and showed him a beautiful rainbow in the sky. "Look at the rainbow," the Lord said. "This rainbow is a sign for you, Noah, and for all your children after you, that I will never destroy the world with a flood again."

The Lord had used the great flood to cleanse the earth. In a similar way He makes his people clean. As water washes dirt away, so the Lord flushes out the sins of his children. He makes them spotless in his sight. But this can only be done through the death of our Lord Jesus, who paid with his life for our sins. God's children are washed clean in the blood of their Saviour Jesus. What a joy it is, to live as a clean child of God.

Jane

Activity Page

We are all special!

Have you ever gone on a trip with your family to a local restaurant or park and seen someone in a wheelchair? What did you think? Were you shy or scared to talk to them or were you a bit curious? I must admit that the first time I ever saw or talked to someone who was physically or mentally challenged that I was a bit scared and unsure of what to say or do. So I just walked away and didn't say or do anything. Now I work with handicapped children and WOW what a lot of fun I have!

Did you know that just about anyone you know has some kind of special need? I do. I have to wear glasses so that I can see where I am going. Some people can't hear very well so they have to wear a hearing aid in their ear.

Lots of older people have hearing aids. My grandpa does. Some people are blind and have to have a 'Seeing Eye dog' to show them where to go. Some people stutter when they speak, others burn very easily in the hot



summer sun. Those are all special needs that you and I sometimes don't notice right away, whereas you can notice if a person is in a wheelchair or can't talk and needs to use sign language to talk much easier.

So . . . why are there handicaps in the world anyway? Did you every think about that? Well, because of sin, human life became broken causing handicaps and hardships for us. Some of those handicaps and hardships are more severe or obvious than other handicaps. We will all one day be healed because Jesus Christ died for all our sins (Isaiah 53) and will return one day to heal all that brokenness. (Psalm 130:7-8)

Now, the next time you see or have the chance to talk to a person with a disability, be it small or big, hidden or obvious, treat them as you would want to be treated yourself. Be a friend, lend a hand and remember that God is the Creator of all mankind and that for His Glory we all are created. Help each person

contribute his gifts and help him to participate in special activities happening in your church, school or neighborhood. Anyone with a handicap loves to have friendships and you can be a special friend.

The Lord loves those with disabilities too. He said, "In as far as you have done it for the least of my brothers you have done it for me."

Matthew 25:40

The Bible – God’s Word to Man

Throughout the centuries, mankind has solved many of the world’s mysteries. Man has walked on the face of the moon. He has penetrated the depths of space. We have conquered many of the childhood killer diseases. Chemists and geneticists are unlocking the mysteries of the basic building blocks of human life. And yet, the most important questions remain unanswered. Why are we here? What does the future hold? What is my future? What will happen to me when I die?

These are very important questions. Mankind, in his great wisdom, has made desperate attempts trying to come to grips with these questions: however, he has not been very successful. Questions remain. Furthermore, the “answers” often contradict one another.

What are we to do? Well, we can begin with being very happy that God has given to mankind his Word, the Bible. God, in the Bible, gives us the answers to these important questions.

What is the main message of the Bible? It is that God created everything; that man ruined it by falling into sin; that God has fixed up the mess man made by sending his Son, Jesus Christ, to die for the sins of man; and finally, that God will, in the future, reveal his new paradise to man and invite into it all those who believed in Jesus Christ. Let’s briefly look at these four themes around which all the words in the Bible are woven.

God created the world

On the first page of the Bible, God tells us that He created the universe and everything in it. The scientists and philosophers of the world dabble in all sorts of theories. They present to us various farfetched conjectures about how the universe

came about. An honest scientist will tell you that the theory of evolution is, in fact, unbelievable. The scientific community inconsistently accepts the theory as a working model, even though everyone knows it is not a valid one. The Bible, on the other hand, speaks with absolute and consistent certainty. It states that the Almighty God created all things simply by speaking and calling everything into being.

The world became evil through sin

When God created the world, He created it perfect. However, it did not remain perfect. Man introduced sin into the world. What is sin? Sin is doing something against the will of God. Since God is our Creator, He has the right (a right which He, indeed, does exercise) to demand that we live according to his will. When we act against his will, we sin. The Bible reveals to us that we are sinners. In the Bible, God has put down his will in the form of commandments. When we read his commandments and realize that we do not live according to them as we should, then the Bible shows us that we are sinners.

God saves us from our sin

Throughout the Bible, we learn that we are sinners. But we also read the glorious message of salvation

from sin. We read that “. . . God so loved the world that He gave his only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life” (*John 3:16*). God gave Jesus Christ in order to save us from sin. He alone can save us “. . . for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (*Acts 4:12*).

A new creation

The good news of the Bible is that Jesus Christ saves us from our sins and holds out to us the assurance of a wonderful future. That wonderful future is that we will live with Him on the new creation in perfection forever. However, the Bible also says that only those who believe in Christ will enjoy this wonderful gift. All unbelievers will perish everlastingly.

Our invitation to you

We invite you to become better acquainted with the message of the Bible. In order to help you, we are offering to you free of charge and without any obligation to you a correspondence course on the Bible called ***A Gift from Heaven: The Bible***, produced by the Reformed Evangelism Taskforce. If you are interested, please write to us at the address below.

George van Popta

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