

Share the Good News

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 22 September 2024

Preacher: Harish Patel

[0 : 00] I'm going to invite Liz to come and read God's word for us, and then I'll hand over to Harris straight after that. Romans chapter 15, verse 13. May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

I myself am convinced, my brothers and sisters, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with knowledge and competent to instruct one another. Yet I have written to you quite boldly on some points to remind you of them again, because of the grace God gave me to be a minister of Christ Jesus, the Gentiles.

He gave me the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering, acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, I glory in Christ Jesus in my service to God.

I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done, by the power of signs and wonders, through the power of the Spirit of God.

So from Jerusalem all the way around to Ilium, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ. It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation.

[1 : 31] Rather, as it is written, those who were not told about him will see, and those who have not heard will understand. This is why I have often been hindered from coming to you.

Yeah, it's great to be with you here and speak to you from this passage. So it's almost on the end of the book, and you might be thinking, why is he preaching from the end of the book and not the beginning of the book?

But the Lord impressed me with this passage quite a while back, and I've been developing it and just thinking about it for myself. So I'm just bringing this to you in terms of what the Lord has been teaching me and hopefully teaching us together.

So let's just pray a bit. Father, we thank you for your word, and as we've even sung, that God, you are great God, and Lord, in the greatness, you've given us your holy, inspired, infallible, without error, fully sufficient word of God for us today and forever.

So Father, we pray that this word, your living word, by your Holy Spirit, will instruct us this morning and build us up in our faith for worship and witness.

[2 : 53] Pray this in Christ's name. Amen. So, you know, this passage, I'll just start with this story. I often get a message, almost on a monthly basis, from what we call a diaspora network.

It's almost quite a big number, almost 60 to 100. I don't know exactly. But it comes every almost month, once or twice, I get a feed.

And this feed is showing some clergy of another faith standing outside a church, somewhere in remote England.

I don't know exactly the place. And it signs are that this church is closing and this guy is brandishing. This church is closing and demise of Christianity as irrelevant and the rise of this other faith.

And it's going quite at a vitriolic and almost passionate way that Christ is irrelevant, Christianity is irrelevant, is on decline, and this other faith or other faiths are the only ones that will fill the longing of the human hearts and souls in our post-Christian culture.

[4 : 13] And my response was, wow, this is discouraging. And suddenly God awakens me and says, no! Christ has ascended, Christ is reigning, Christ is sending His Spirit, and He is changing lives as you heard and saw.

And as we are here, even gathered in this small place, worshiping Jesus as Savior and Lord. And I said, no! So I respond to this person in a whole narrated text.

This is furthest. By the way, this news feed probably originated somewhere in India. They picked up this from some YouTube, downloaded it, and are spreading it.

And I said, this is the furthest. And we need to know the history of the faith of God's people, both Old and New Testament, and the current status.

Yes, we might be with our backs on certain things. But the Savior is the great God. And He has given us a great gospel to believe in and to be thrilled and to have lives changed and to be His ministers to see lives transformed of people in some of the darkest situations, even in our great city and in our neighborhoods.

[5 : 37] It is striking that this gospel is still the power of God unto salvation to those who would believe, those who would hear, those who would understand and believe.

So I was, in the midst of that, I was thrilled. And I shared this whole feed with some of my colleagues. and I said, don't let this news or any other forms discourage us.

On the whole, let it be a turning to Christ in a new, fresh way by His Spirit to transform us, as we heard, changing us now so that we become the worshipful community and the witnessing community.

So this morning, I have some, three quick points here. One is, first, that this gospel, Apostle Paul, is commanding the Roman believers in a very, as it were, a dark world, Roman oppressive, Roman tyrannical rule, Roman rule against the faith of God's people.

He's commanding them for their faith. Then he's, there is a consecration to worshipful service. And finally, how he's calling us, his church, to a continued expansion, be instruments, his instruments, in continued expansion of Christ's kingdom.

[7 : 16] So, you know, Paul starts there in the, in verse 14. I am myself convinced of you all, my brothers and sisters, that you all, all of you, all ourselves, yourselves, are full of goodness, complete, complete in the knowledge.

Another translation says, filled with all knowledge. And are competent or able to instruct or admonish one another.

So first, he's giving this commendation that these Roman believers in Rome, against all odds, are staying the ground. But not only, not only just standing still, but they're gaining momentum.

They're gaining ground. And this is exciting because it shows that the power of gospel was at work. And Paul is calling them people from a different religious heritage, his fellow brothers.

No, he's not saying, I'm apostle, look at me. And look at all that, my accolade, other places, he does that. But here, he's saying, you, folks, fellow brothers, whom God has called you from the whole vast world of whatever could have happened.

[8 : 45] And now you are in Christ. So the gospel of this Lord Jesus Christ, his person and work, was able to transform them from all the deep-seated brokenness and religious ideologies that they were pursuing to fulfill their lives.

and the class, caste, clan divisions that were so prevalent, God had broken through them and brought this good news.

And this good news, I forgot to get the date, but I don't know if the date of Romans' writings is around 55 or 58 AD. So you can say around 20 years the Roman church has been in existence. 20 to 25 years because possibly the first believers at Rome, they were obviously what they call proselytized to Jewish who had gone to Jerusalem and on the day of Pentecost, suddenly they heard in their own language the good news of the resurrection of Jesus and his spirit came on them and they became devout believers and they returned back.

So for over 25 years, combined with the old heritage, heritage of the Judaism plus the New Testament faith in Jesus and his spirit had combined and unleashed an amazing community of believers there.

[10 : 22] And that's what Paul is saying. You are all filled with this goodness of God. God, the great God, the true God who alone is good and he fills them with goodness.

And they were quite, you know, Paul is here even as he's saying, I'm satisfied or I'm convinced. He's saying, you know, you pass the ultimate test of a believer.

you have a sound MOT or a health check. You know, sometimes you go to MOT and they'll give you caution. Oh, your tire is just one millimeter down but within few.

There was no caution. He's commanding them. What a resolute thing that turns them to further, energizes them and encourages them to further live for this great God who has saved them. Secondly, he points out in that, I just want to say something about this goodness because it was quite evident in the unique life that the Roman or the early Christian community as his people lived out.

[11 : 37] Just listen. Their identity was in a ridicule way called resident aliens. They were not of this home.

They were not totally at home in present Rome or whatever government. And it was because of their lifestyle and their social reality that spread all over the Roman world and he transcended about the Roman culture and religious life.

They were known as citizens of another king. That was Jesus and not an earthly Roman Caesar.

The Christian congregations expressed their reality by corresponding with other churches.

So their vast Christian communities were known to provide hospitality for each other and especially strangers and travelers. And they would support their fellow Christians who may have been illegally imprisoned.

because of faith issues. The early Christian community were marked by economic sharing and social care for the poor. This is what one of the Caesars around 350 AD says.

[13 : 00] He cited these Jews and Christians that though they were being disgraced that no Jew would ever beg.

and these impious Galileans that is these Christians who were from the sect of Galilee of this Galilee preacher called Jesus they would not only support their own poor but they would support ours as well.

All men see that our people who are pagans lack aid from us. There was no state welfare. The Christians were the welfare community.

So these communities were known for their faithful work of gospel in displaying this goodness.

Secondly, they are saying they are filled with knowledge there.

He says that you are complete in knowledge or filled with all knowledge. Now we even sung a lot of things.

[14 : 09] And can it be that God should save a person like me? His immense and free grace. Why are you able to sing that?

Why are you able to hold even in your dark days that very dear? the person of Jesus Christ that has been made known to us, revealed us.

Really, you know, I haven't seen the face of Jesus, you know, but the person of Jesus and his work is so real by faith because I've heard and understood the gospel and his spirit has applied it to my heart.

So I really understand and know this true living God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The one unique God who says, I alone am God and there is none else, none besides me, none equal to me.

This uniqueness is a knowledge by the gospel and it's just not a head knowledge, it's a living faith, daily experience in my heart as I live it out and communicate with words and hands and feet into his of who he is.

[15 : 34] So we know, we know now God personally, we know he is gracious, he is compassionate, he is full of steadfast love, kindness, he is slow to anger because that's the reality that is dawned by his spirit in my heart.

It's just not a pie in the sky, it's a reality and this reality is so striking so that he commends them and you know friends, this is good news, this is good news that the world is looking for.

You know, part of our work is just retraining the church, retraining ourselves to understand the gospel for ourselves and articulating it, saying it, how this gospel is so real and indeed it is good news for the world, a world that has been, that is straying away, that is in an utter lost condition and that a good shepherd has come in the savior to seek and save the lost even in the utter conditions. And you know friends, people are looking to hear that. They are looking to hear that. They are looking for people who will understand them, empathize with them, journey with them and explain this good news.

as good news to me, but also for them. You know, we say in our saying, if God could save a Hindu man like me for over 40 years and keep me in his path through many highs, but many, many, many

lows and depths of valleys, he can do that for you and for others outside here.

[17 : 39] and this is the commendation we bring to our community. A Muslim lady comes and she's arguing, arguing, arguing, wrestling, who is this son of God?

Why do you call him son? And she is fixated in her faith view that son means some prodigy of a human invention, male, female, God and some human.

And we say to her, that is furthest from what the Bible says, even Jesus himself says as son of God. He's a descendant of human, Adam, but he's totally divine. He's the eternal son of God, who is the, as we heard earlier, the atoning sacrifice for your sins and my sins.

And we proclaim that. In a Hindu view, a lady comes and says, oh, I'm seeing visions. I had this money. I took out some notes.

[18 : 49] They were all brand new notes. I went home. I put them in a bundle. And suddenly when I was opening them, I saw this picture of one of my gurus. And how do you explain that?

She's all into signs wonders and images and all that. And I said, look, this is okay. You might have some security or stability, but it won't answer your deep seated questions.

Why? vision means you need another vision to keep that vision above. You will need repeated. But if you hear the words of Jesus that I have come to seek and save the lost, that in me is eternal life, I have come to give you fullness of life.

He that comes to me, even though he die, yet shall he live. In the gospel of John, we read to her. I said, when you hear these words, the words of the Lord and the words of spirit, they can set you free so that you know God personally.

And she says, oh, I don't know, I don't think, you know. He said, just help us to help you to see and understand. And she's persevering with us for a while.

[20 : 12] So here we are filled, you see, we are filled with goodness. We are all with knowledge. And then just in a short, they are able to instruct each other.

Now, friends, you know, this is the hard bit. You know, hard bit. You know, I've got accent, yeah? So my accent, sometimes, I don't know my V and my W.

Okay? So, Volkswagen and window. Okay? Now, my wife particularly will come and say, oh, you didn't say that right.

Or I'm saying something, like I'm saying, Jesus is the true wine. I might have said it right, but I might have said Jesus is the true wine. So she's saying, what did you say that?

And I'm saying, man, it's okay, man. They got it. But she's trying to instruct me. She's trying to correct me. And I'm getting a bit jittery in the midst of that.

[21 : 11] And I'm saying, no, just leave it. But friends, this is a very important, if you can say, component or part of our life as Jesus.

You will make me a better follower of Jesus. And a servant of Jesus. I need the fellowship of the community, of the believers, to make me that.

And even in our teams, we have teams, I come across as something, and my colleagues will come across something. And I'm thinking, wow. And then I have to go back and have to start speaking the truth in love to address the situation.

So friends, brothers and sisters, be alert about that. You know, there is two cultures here, two or maybe more.

I was just thinking of our very British reservedness, English, right? So you will see something, but you might say, you already cross, the guy is jumped in between you in the queue in the bus, and he's now, friends, we need to find a framework.

[22 : 36] This is where a wider fellowship and cross-culture or intercultural plays it. How do you address that? You need to learn to, hey, brother, sister, can I just express something which I've noticed?

and you find a way. And you know what, they might just reject it, but you keep at it in the spirit of love and in patience persimacy.

And that makes a difference. Because that, let me tell you, this is very unique. This is absolutely unique, even in 11 o'clock London time.

people from all different parts, almost at least 6, 8, 10, 12 countries gather together to worship and to acknowledge each other as brothers and sisters.

This is unique, even in London, let me tell you, many congregations. And this is what we are trying to do, even in our work with churches. How can we incorporate outsiders?

[23 : 44] Because we are incorporating insiders. You see, incorporating insiders, meaning we incorporate outsiders. Because the aching void outside is the same aching void inside me.

They are looking for an acceptance. They are looking for a welcome. They are looking for a word or in season to help them understand life's complexity and things.

so they are looking for it. And we have it in here among us. So we can amplify that. Anyway, quickly, so this is just in Paul's teaching, how he is so commanding believers.

And through that commendation, literally, what he's doing is, he has created almost a mini explosion of the power of the gospel.

Boom! As they are hearing this. Quickly, I'll just finish in this, is that how Paul, it says that I glory in Christ in my service to God.

[24 : 54] The other translation, it says, I am proud of my work in Christ Jesus. Wow! What is it? Paul, you must be mad!

You are a man of grace, how can you be proud? But you can see he can boast. And he boasts first here of a gospel service, which he uses two words.

One is worshipful service, a worshipful offering of oneself. That's what he calls ministry, the gospel.

And then the second thing he calls is how he is priestly, in his priestly function.

He says, I am offering myself in my priestly duty to proclaim the gospel. And that is the priestly duty, the royal priesthood that is being bestowed.

So there is a form and a function. Form is doing the offerings of yourself, but the function, or that's the function, and the form is because you are priestly, you are royalty.

[26 : 09] Another place, the same word that is used of priestly duty is used of officials, government, and rulers. So here we are offering ourselves, and he's commanding them, or as he commands them, he says, consecrate yourself to a fresh service and worship of this God.

and finally there is his commanding, as he commands them, he's also calling them to join with him, or join literally with Christ, with God, in his continued expansion of the kingdom of God.

You see, as I said, the Roman believers were not standing there still. There was no stand still moment. The gospel was continually advancing, claiming frontiers.

So, you know, one of the things in our partnership we monitor or help churches engage with is crossing frontiers. What new frontier are we crossing?

And, you know, even this area, there could be a frontier. For example, there might be certain children that are being missed out, or certain groups of people or certain areas where there is evidence of a good, what we call social act, social work, but there is no presence of word.

[27 : 42] And we say, could you have a team just go there and while they are serving, can they pray with somebody on the side? Now, that is you are crossing a frontier.

Here, right in the midst of all these things, we are crossing frontiers as we engage. Or you might say, hey, it was great meeting you. I would like to hear more about you.

Is there any time we have in the week? Or I could come, we could have coffee in Costa, wherever, you can charge it to pastor. And, you know, over a cup of coffee, you will explain.

I want to just understand you and I want to help you understand love of God in Christ that can change you. And, you know, friends, let me tell you something.

By more, I'm more to admit each day that there is more opportunities for gospel than meets the daily presence of Christians.

[28 : 49] So many, so every. And you are just being used. So that is the final call. Paul is saying, look, you have seen how I have preached the gospel all the way from Jerusalem to Illichram.

Illichram is the present day, if you can say, the Soviet, former Soviet states of Czech Republic and all that, including Greece and Albania. So even he didn't include there Rome.

But he had preached there everywhere and there was no soul, he thinks, that was left unpreached. Why was that? Do you know that? Because he had established worshipful witnessing communities that were able to carry on and sustain the work.

So that is another part of our mission's goal, that as we work with churches, there will be a sustainable witnessing work to those who are least likely to hear about Jesus Christ because they have no single friend or family member to tell them about this love, this great God who loves them and who is there to wonderfully change them.

And he, we are there. We will be there with you and then you will be there along with the church for an ending season, a new season.

[30 : 15] So friends, I'll just leave you with this. We had a great Thanksgiving service on Thursday. This is our annual celebration of God's goodness.

189th year of LCM. It happened in Westminster. Vanessa and Pastor Stephen were there. There were a thousand registrations.

Some were had to go online. But for the first time, that church, Westminster Chapel, probably in probably a few decades, even 50 years, it was almost full.

And we need to have that vision. God, expand our vision for you and your kingdom here and regions beyond. I'll leave you with that.

And there are a few questions that you can ask yourself. I had two questions. In closing is this, as you think, and I'll just pray a bit. How is God using you and I today or this week to further strengthen each other as our body of Christ?

[31 : 23] Christ. So this is internal dynamics, IA. And then how is God or how am I seeking to be a minister of the gospel to further King Jesus' kingdom here in Kilburn, West Kilburn, and beyond?

I pray those questions will help you understand this passage by his spirit to live out and serve him.

So I'll just close in a short prayer and then hand to a pastor. Father, we thank you for this morning.

We thank you for the eternal Son of God, even a descendant of David, who came amongst us, the living Lord Jesus Christ, and that he is the good news for us and for our needy world around us.

We pray that you will further strengthen us and make us able as your servants and able to teach each other about your greatness and goodness, about all the things that who our God is, about all the ways that you've loved this world and us, and that will further strengthen us for a lively witness in this needy community around us.

We pray this for Jesus' sake. Amen. Thank you. Thanks so much, Harish. Let me tell you one reason why I love Harish and I love the work of LCM is because you can't but catch that excitement for telling other people about Jesus.

[33 : 04] I think one of the easiest things for us as a church, and even just for us as individuals, is to become really inward looking and really insular and think, oh well, yeah, I believe in Jesus and it's kind of good news for me, but I don't think anyone else wants to know.

And I hope you're impressed from what Harish has said to us this morning and from the ministry of LCM more generally, that actually the good news of the Lord Jesus, which in our hearts we love and we trust for ourselves, is good news not just for us, but is good news for every single person in London, and we want them to hear that actually the ache that they have inside will only be met and can only be met by the good news of the Lord Jesus Christ.

There is no one out there who does not need to hear this brilliant news as there, and if it's good news for Harish, and good news for someone like me, and for you, it's good news for others that you meet.

So let's pray that the Lord would continue to help and encourage the ministry of LCM and our church.