

What is the gospel? 1: exposing half-truths

discussion guide

based on **Luke 18.18-30** (Linked to sermon of 26/3/23)
which can be accessed at www.stjamesbythepark.org/talks

Intro: can you remember how the gospel was described to you when you first became a Christian?

Read Luke 18.18-30

Jesus is presented with what seems like a golden opportunity to explain the gospel (v18). How would you respond to that question?

Why do you think Jesus responded as he did (v19-20)?

The 'certain ruler' is obviously devout (v21). Why do you think Jesus made the bar even higher for him (v22)?

Riches were obviously this man's idol (v23). What would make you sad if Jesus asked you to give it up?

Dan outlined 4 popular presentations of the gospel, which all have real strengths, but leave real gaps as well:

1. Jesus as the gateway to heaven. "You are a sinner going to hell. God loves you. Jesus died on the cross for your sins. If you believe in him you will go to heaven when you die." See John 3.16

2. Jesus as our personal saviour. "God is a perfect, holy and just God of both love and wrath. You are morally guilty before him. God's demands must be kept. You cannot possibly do it, but Jesus did it for you on the cross." See Romans 3.23-25

3. Jesus as the ultimate life-coach. "God loves you, he's for you, you're his child, you're made in the image of God. Through his death and resurrection he won the victory for you, over sickness, poverty and failure. Follow Jesus and you'll be emotionally happy and psychologically balanced and physically healed and financially rewarded." See John 14.12-13

4. Jesus as the liberator. "Jesus was a political revolutionary who came to liberate the poor and marginalised from hierarchy and oppression. He came to inaugurate a kingdom of peace, justice and equality, and was killed because he was a threat to the status quo." See Luke 4.18-19

Look at each one briefly – or just choose one or two to go into more detail.

Can you think of a song or hymn which epitomises this presentation of the gospel?

What do you think are the strengths and weaknesses of this gospel presentation – ie which bits does it get right and which bits does it get wrong or miss out?

Dan talked about how the gospel we respond to impacts on our discipleship over the coming years. What might be the strengths and weaknesses of the kind of discipleship that naturally follows from each of these gospel presentations?

What other gospel presentations can you think of – and what are the strengths and weaknesses of those presentations?

However exactly we phrase the gospel, it is good news! Take time to pray for opportunities to share the good news of Jesus with friends, family and colleagues – especially over Easter.