

community of



October 31, 2011

Next Steps

Grace Leads to Justice

[Luke 4.14-21](#) :: [Listen to Sermon](#)

The other day Addie looked at me and asked, "Daddy, what does your pelvis do?" We had recently received a couple of glow-in-the-dark skeletons from family members and have spent the last few weeks identifying specific bones. Hayden has been content with the fact that his skeleton glows. Addie, on the other hand, has been fascinated that her skeleton's parts actually have names. To this point she has been content with the names. Now she wanted to know more than a name. She wanted to know meaning and purpose as well. At first her question took me back a bit. Why does a five year old care about the pelvis? Then a feeling of regret for not paying more attention in my college anatomy classes hit me, followed by a sense of dismay at how I was going to explain the pelvis to a five year old. I don't remember exactly what I said. I think I was still in shock from her question. However, I do remember mumbling something about the pelvis being what holds our bottom up. I know. That's terribly reduced, partially accurate, but reduced. OK. So I may not have passed Parenting 101, but that is all I could think of in the moment. Plus, it satisfied her. In fact, later that day she asked me, "Daddy, isn't the pelvis what holds our bottom up?" I asserted she was correct and she skipped off happy with her reduced version of pelvic function. I suppose for a five year old she's in good shape. The only thing I worry about is her never getting the bigger picture. I can just imagine Addie trying to write an essay on her high school biology test explaining how the pelvis holds our bottom up.

As I have thought about Addie holding onto her reduced version of pelvic function, I have wondered how many reduced versions of reality I have held to, knowingly and unknowingly. The big one that comes to mind concerns the gospel. For a great number of years I unknowingly held to a reduced version of the gospel. If you had asked me to define the gospel, I would have told you it was about Jesus dying for our Sin so that we could go to Heaven when we die. I was quite content with holding to and proclaiming that version of the gospel. The only problem was it wasn't the whole gospel. Reduced? Yes. Complete? No. When I finally considered the way Jesus defined the gospel, I discovered it was much bigger than anything I had ever imagined. It wasn't that Jesus didn't talk about forgiveness of sins. He did. He just didn't start there when talking about the gospel.

When Jesus talked about the gospel he started by talking about the complete reorientation and redemption of this world and the people that live in it. He talked about a reorientation and redemption that was real, tangible, and present. He talked about the gospel changing both social and spiritual dimensions. Somehow I had locked onto the spiritual dimension,

and in that only a part of it. How had that happened and how had I gone so long in not knowing the full picture?

I think I first heard the gospel in its reduced form from the people who led me to Christ. It wasn't that they didn't know the full gospel. They just gave me what I could understand as an eleven year old boy. Along the way, no one fleshed it out for me. The churches I attended proclaimed the same reduced gospel I had learned. Thus, I became a person who walked around telling people they needed to turn to Jesus. I addressed the spiritual dimension but did nothing to address the social dimension. The result was that I talked like Jesus but didn't act like him. Then I started reading passages like Jesus' sermon in Luke 4 and I realized that living out the gospel was as much about acting like Jesus as it was talking like Jesus. Living out the gospel was about caring for the poor, feeding the hungry, seeking justice and pointing people to a relationship with God. I actually discovered that a real relationship with God led one to care for the poor, feed the hungry and seek justice. I am discovering that living this full gospel is much more rewarding and satisfying. Plus, I don't have to worry about one day standing before God taking my final exam trying to explain how my gospel was like my explanation of pelvic function. Reduced.

A fellow traveler,
Blake
Spiritual Formation Pastor

My Next Step

We encourage you to consider doing the following as a way of handing off faith to your family. . .

- **Teach your children the full gospel:** Children have a surprising ability to learn. They learn by watching as much as hearing. In the coming weeks, look for ways to teach the gospel in both word and deed. Look for opportunities to tell them about God's love and how this love is moving to restore the world. Look also for opportunities to demonstrate this love in action. Participate as a family in one of the services projects promoted as part of this series. As you participate, explain that you are engaging in actions that are the outworking of the gospel, God's redemptive movement in the world.

We encourage you to consider taking the following next step on your faith journey. . .

- **Develop a gospel centered heart:** Living the gospel begins in our hearts, in the part that is most truly us. We cannot live out the gospel if it has not first touched and transformed us as individuals. This week, consider opening your heart to God's transforming touch by memorizing Isaiah 58.5-10. This passage was part of Jesus' message in Luke 4, and it speaks to God's intentions for the gospel in action. Simply memorize these verses and allow them to begin changing the way you think and act about what it means to live out the gospel.