Romans 1:3-4 3This gospel is about his Son—who in the flesh was born a descendant of David, 4who in the spirit of holiness was declared to be God’s powerful Son by his resurrection from the dead—Jesus Christ, our Lord.

The gospel. We hear so much about the gospel. I don’t know of a church, a Christian church, that doesn’t claim to preach and teach the gospel. And yet at the same time I am aware of dozens of churches, Christian churches that in actuality don’t teach and preach the gospel. I say that because the sermons you hear are work righteous orientated. They preach about how you should live, what you should do, and what you can do to more fully obey the Lord. They teach all of this “in the name of Jesus” but it still isn’t the gospel. They are actually preaching law! They are giving you “do’s and don’ts” from the Bible but even though it is supposedly the morality of Jesus or what Jesus would do, please note that it is still not the gospel of Jesus.

The gospel is about “good news.” That is what the word gospel means. It means “good news.” So how is it “gospel” to preach do this and don’t do that? How is it gospel to preach a stringent form of obedience, and yes, I acknowledge that they do this “in the name of and because you love Jesus?” In truth, if we could have kept the law, if we could have been good enough to get to heaven because of our own piety and strength, then what was the point of Jesus? We already had the dos and don’ts of God. God had already shared with us exactly what His demands and commands were! So you teach and preach that Jesus came to give us more commands and more laws? How is that good news? Because the truth of the matter is that we cannot even come close to fully obeying, to fully carrying out a perfect and holy life. That is what God demands.

We find that demand in Leviticus 11:44 and 45c. **“For I am the Lord your God. Set yourself apart, therefore, so that you may be holy, for I am holy…You therefore shall be holy, for I am holy.”** We hear Jesus utter the very same truth in Matthew 5:48, **“So then, be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”** Any truly honest person is going to have to acknowledge that we just can’t be perfect. Remember God looks at everything. He looks at deeds, and thoughts and even all the attitudes behind our lives and ways. We are sinful. Sinful in thought, word and deed. God’s Word makes it clear that we cannot obey perfectly and save ourselves.

That’s why we have been given the Gospel of Jesus. The gospel of Jesus is about how God’s Son came to bring us life and salvation. He came to BE our life and salvation. We are not going to heaven because we are so faithful and pure but rather because Jesus is so faithful and pure. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins. He is the one who forgives and renews in His grace. Heaven is our eternal home of promise because of what Jesus has done and accomplished. That is the good news. It is good news because our hope and salvation rests in Jesus and not in us! It is not about what we do for Jesus but rather about what Jesus has done for us! That is the gospel! What a precious gift this gospel is for us!

Our text for today does a great job of pointing to the wonder of the gospel. It is a unique look at this salvation declared in Jesus. Our theme will be: **JESUS CHRIST, OUR LORD!**

I am sure you recognize that our words for today come from the opening verses of the book of Romans. Such a wonderful book. Such an important book. It has been said of Romans that should the rest of the Bible be lost and only Romans remain we would not lose a single truth of our faith. Our faith is about the gospel of Jesus and this book just lays out and emphasizes that Gospel truth found in Jesus.

Isn’t that what verse 3 already proclaims at its beginning? It says, **“This gospel is about his Son.”** I want you to know that we are not going to be left wondering about what we should know about God’s son. Even before we are pointed to Jesus it is pointed out that everything Jesus is and was going to is **“promised in advance through his prophets”** of the Old Testament Scriptures. Jesus is the fulfillment of those Scriptures. Every aspect of Jesus’ life is foreshadowed in God’s revelation through his prophets. Not one or two things, but hundreds of things, I would venture to say “thousands!” So much so that there is no way anyone with an honest mind could declare that Jesus only did these things by coincidence or clever manipulation. Jesus is not coincidence. He is the Son of God!

That’s what we learn of Jesus. He fulfills God’s word because his is a descendant of David, just like God had foretold he would be. Our text highlights that truth: **“who in the flesh was born a descendant of David.”** Simple and yet such an important truth. God’s Son was to be born into the family of David. By the way, David lived at around 1,000 B.C. In Jesus a 1,000 year old prophecy would come true. Just think of the logistics of that. We have trouble tracking 5 or 6 generations of the past. Jesus’ goes back 42 generations to David! Not a coincidence, but a promise of God fulfilled.

And then comes that most startling, most awesome revelation. Seriously, we sometimes don’t get the utter importance of what is said. Next we learn of Jesus’ Father. No, not Joseph, but rather the Lord God. You heard in Isaiah how it was foretold. In the days of Ahaz, around 720 B.C., the promise was given of a virgin giving birth, whose son would be **“God with us.”** That’s Jesus, born of the virgin Mary, born by the power and majesty of God, born because he was God’s Son who was coming into this world to be our Savior. But how do we know that? Because Mary said so? Mary would not be the first pregnant woman to tell a lie about her baby! We need to seriously wrestle with how we know Jesus is God’s Son!

Our problem is that we celebrate Christmas and hear the history and just go with it in an almost shallow, mindless kind of way. We hear all the history of Jesus, his presentation, his being at the Temple at 12, the beginning of his ministry, his miracles and wonders and on and on. Don’t get me wrong, I love those things, I marvel at those things. But why do we know of them? Why do we care about them? We need to more adamantly pay attention to what God’s Word says. Because in truth, all this history of Jesus is nothing without a full and awesome grasp of the absolutely one thing needed. Our text points it out.

Our text tells us: **“who in the spirit of holiness was declared to be God’s powerful Son by his resurrection from the dead—Jesus Christ our Lord.”** Listen again to those words…. Dear people, without the resurrection of Jesus, without his dying and rising from the dead we have nothing. We have a dead Jewish man, crucified by Romans, might I tell you one of thousands of Jewish men crucified by Romans. If Jesus does not rise from the dead we have nothing. That was the one pivotal promise of God that had to be. Because anyone can claim a virgin pregnancy. Anyone can claim miracles and wonders (false teachers and preacher are still doing it!). You can make up anything you want about this or that but when God tells you the one sure and certain sign is that His Son would die and then come back to life, surely and certainly die and yet come back to life, pay attention. Even Jesus made it clear (think of him saying to Mary, **“Because I live, you also will live.”**) that the resurrection was necessary for the complete revelation of what He is.

If there is no resurrection there is no Savior, no truth of God, no Word of God to rely on, no nothing but guess work and people declaring: “I feel it in my soul that this is true!” The only reason we can care about this birth of Jesus is because of the resurrection. The only reason we have God’s record of his Son’s history, wonder, and marvel is because of the resurrection! As our text clearly proclaims **“He was declared to be God’s powerful Son by his resurrection from the dead.”** There would be no Christmas without the resurrection. There would be no grace, no forgiveness, no hope of eternal life without the resurrection! Everything pivots, is founded upon, rests on, is certain and sure because of the resurrection.

It is a fact. Jesus Christ is our God and Lord! Why? Because He has risen! Oh, the marvel of this, because it shows what is absolutely unique. He is true man and true God. He is true man, born of a woman so that He could be under the full weight of God’s Law. He is God’s Son, true God, born that He might keep the fullness of the Law in every way. Born to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins, yes, the sins of the whole world. Born for the cross and grave. Born to suffer hell and damnation that we might be saved and heirs of eternal life. God’s powerful Son! God’s saving Son. And there is no doubt about this at all because Jesus lives and rules eternally, because Jesus rose from the dead, truly, physically, powerfully lives and rules.

And what does this mean for us. Look at the next words. **“Through him we received grace.”** God’s gift of grace comes in Jesus. Now you grasp why we speak of and get all giddy about this awesome gift of God in Jesus at Christmas! Because this baby represents the grace of God that is coming our way. It begins the fulfillment of the history of God’s promise of forgiveness and life, of deliverance from sin and death. Grace is poured upon us in Christ Jesus, the risen, living God. Let that sink in. Jesus is God! Not just some nice guy who showed us a few things. Not just some great dynamic and colorful preacher who gave some great insights. He is God. Immanuel means “God with us!” The resurrection shows that Jesus was and is just that, God with us. And that God Jesus tells us, shares with us, declares to us his grace and love!

And the next line. I will amend this line because in these words Paul speaks to his “apostleship” but that does not eliminate what God’s grace does for us. Here is what you should hear: **“Through him we receive God’s grace and the call….on behalf of his name, to bring about the obedience of faith.”**

There are two very important things in this verse. First we are called. God’s Holy Spirit comes into our life, lays out for us the total awe of Jesus and basically pours into our hearts the faith that God’s grace and only God’s grace can give. We are believers, we are children of God and heirs of eternal life because God’s Holy Spirit has made us alive in Christ Jesus. God has done this for everyone in Jesus.

Now, and I want to touch only briefly on this right now, You can know about Jesus and you can reject and ignore this gift of faith. For that matter, you can, of your sinful nature, effectively kill off the life, the true life that Jesus has given you. It is called unbelief. More a bit later.

God has given us his grace, his call to eternal life and salvation through Jesus. Later on in Romans, after speaking of this awesome salvation, the question will be asked: **“What shall we say? Shall we keep on sinning so that grace may increase?”** The answer is given, **“Absolutely not! We died to sin.”** The importance of what is taught there is actually found in the words before us.

In the words before us we have just been taught that Jesus is true man and true God and that Jesus is without any doubt, because of His resurrection, our God and Lord! Got that? Now, let’s just soak in our verse that says that we **“have been called to bring about the obedience of faith.”** That’s going to take some explanation.

The word obey here is so interesting. My favorite lexicon of the Greek says: *”to obey on the basis of having paid attention to.”* What is most interesting is that there is a footnote and in the footnote it mentions that this word we are looking at expresses more the idea of “submission.” I am not sure there is great English word to convey the sense of this word. Perhaps we could say, the “compliance of faith,” or “the acquiescence of faith,” or even, “the submission of faith.” What I am trying to get you to grasp is that the emphasis of this word is more on the submission part than on the “I did it part.” It is easy to say that Jesus is my Lord and Savior but it is quite another thing to yield your life to His Divinity because He is God. My life is lived with an eye always on Jesus asking, “Is this what He wants, is this pleasing, good and right to Him?” Don’t be fooled.

If I were to try and convey to you all the more the power of this word let try this. “The believing child of God struggles and wrestles against sin because of Jesus’ love. The unbeliever has the idea that “This is what I am going to do and you will just have to accept that Jesus!” So is the active drug dealer who goes to church “obedient” to Jesus? If I am Don Corleone (remember the Godfather movies?) who kills, murders and does all sorts of evil as a job but who as a family man goes to church, contributes heavily and seems to be a champion of the faith actually a saved child of God? All of you know the answer to that question is a resounding, “He is an unbeliever!”

Remember this section was highlighting that Jesus is our God and Lord! This word “obedience” here is causing you to ask, “Do I believe in Him, hear Him, follow Him, submit to Him, acquiesce to Him?” Don’t tell me you believe and then live like you don’t. That is hypocrisy. That is not submitting to Jesus. This word is so important to grasp.

We have been called to have Jesus be our God and Lord. And why not? He has given his life for us and then was raised from the dead so there is no doubt that He is God and Lord. May his grace truly be a part of your life! May his wonder and marvel abound in your heart. May you be counted as one who gets the whole point of this child who is born in Bethlehem! That He is Jesus Christ—Our Lord. Amen.