

The Gospel

Scripture Reading — Galatians 1:6-9

Even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a [different] gospel ... let him be ... condemned.
Galatians 1:8 —

Words are pretty flexible. You can take an old word and pump a new meaning into it. Sometimes that can be a good thing, sometimes bad.

It seems that during the Middle Ages the first missionaries to Germany were at a loss to find a word in German to refer to the one, divine being of whom the Bible speaks. Missionaries were used to the Latin word *Domine* and the Greek word *Theos*. But these words would not mean anything to the local people, who were hunters and warriors, not language scholars. So, with trembling, they chose the word the Germans used for their gods, *gott*, and began to give a new, biblical meaning to it. As the Germans accepted the gospel, the old meaning from their mythology faded from memory, and their faith in the one God grew.

The opposite can also happen. Paul had trouble with people who used a great word, *euangelion* (“good news, gospel”), but drained it of all goodness. They pumped in a new meaning emptied of grace.

How tragic it would be if we gave our lives and treasure to evangelize (“bring the good news”) to our neighbors around the globe, but the truth of the saving death of Christ gradually faded from our message and some other message took its place. To avoid false teaching, we must know the truth of the Word of God.

Prayer

Thank you, Lord, that the good news of your salvation changes lives and even changes whole cultures. Help us to teach the truth of your Word faithfully. In Jesus’s name, Amen.

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