



UNWRAPPING THE GOSPEL

Advent sermon series 2023

At its briefest, the gospel is the message about Christ, that he is the Son of God and became man for us, that he died and was raised, and that he has been established as Lord over all things.

- Martin Luther, "Basic Theological Writings"

Mild he lays his Glory by,
Born that Men no more may die;
Born to raise the sons of Earth,
Born to give them second Birth.

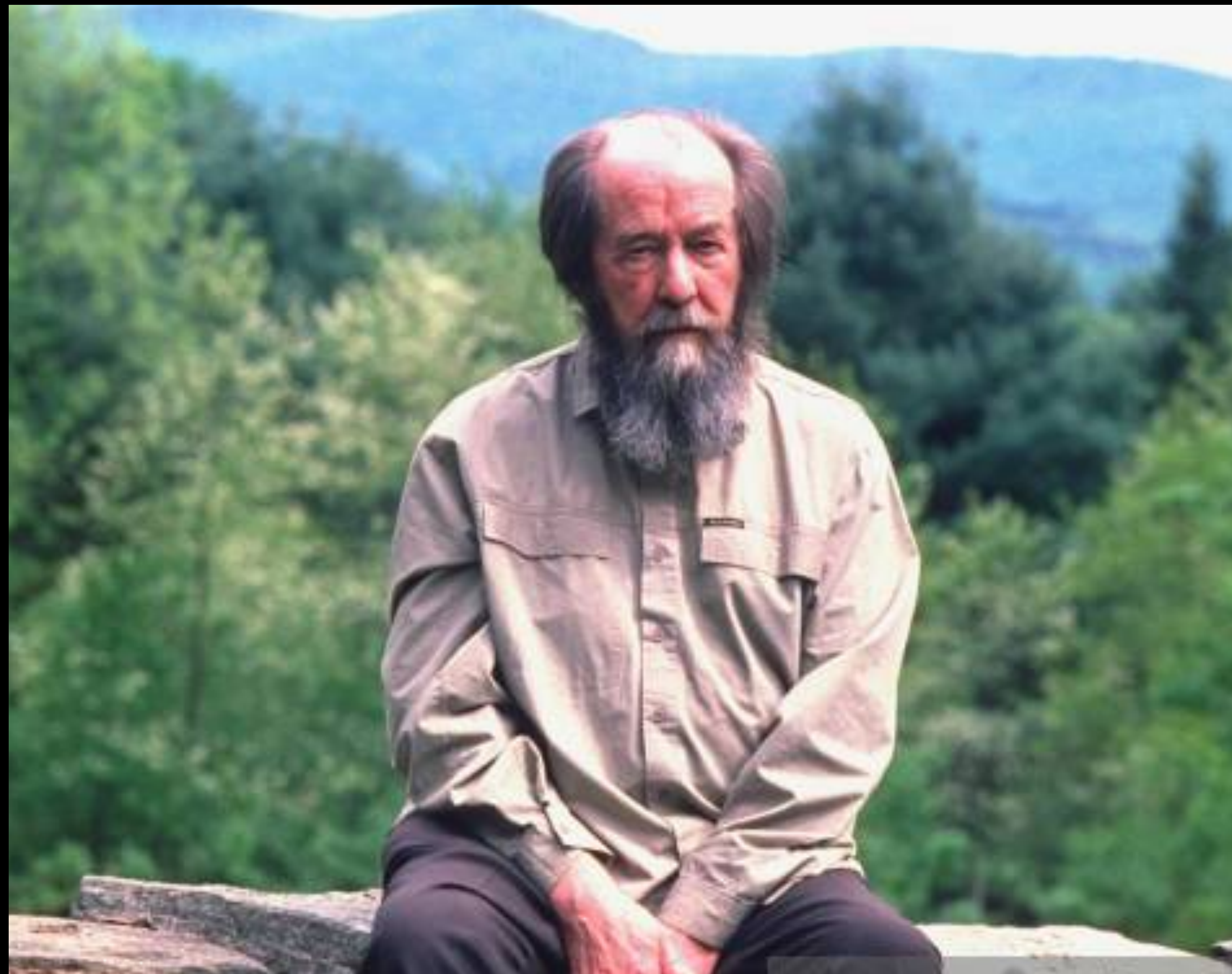
—Hark the Herald Angels Sing

Main Point:

This is love: God Himself gave Himself to save us from Himself.

7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. 8 Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. 9 In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. 10 In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

- 1 John 4:7-11



Alexander Solschenizyn

It was granted me to carry away from my prison years on my bent back, which nearly broke beneath its load, this essential experience: how a human being becomes evil and how good. In the intoxication of youthful successes I had felt myself to be infallible, and I was therefore cruel. In the surfeit of power I was a murderer, and an oppressor. In my most evil moments I was convinced that I was doing good, and I was well supplied with systematic arguments. And it was only when I lay there on rotting prison straw that I sensed within myself the first stirrings of good. Gradually it was disclosed to me that the line separating good and evil passes not through states, nor between classes, nor between political parties either—but right through every human heart—and through all human hearts.

That is why I turn back to the years of my imprisonment and say, sometimes to the astonishment of those about me: “Bless you, prison!” I have served enough time there. I nourished my soul there, and I say without hesitation: “Bless you, prison, for having been in my life!”

-Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago*

“the events of the Russian Revolution can only be understood now, at the end of the century, against the background of what has since occurred in the rest of the world. What emerges here is a process of universal significance. And if I were called upon to identify briefly the principal trait of the entire twentieth century, here too, I would be unable to find anything more precise and pithy than to repeat once again: Men have forgotten God.”

- Alexandre Solzhenitsyn, The Templeton Lecture

The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

— Genesis 6:10

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?

- Jeremiah 17:9

21 For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, 22 coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. 23 All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.”

- Mark 7:21-23

If God had perceived that our greatest need was economic, He would have sent an economist. If he had perceived that our greatest need was entertainment, he would have sent us a comedian or an artist. If God had perceived that our greatest need was political stability, he would have sent us a politician. If he had perceived that our greatest need was health, he would have sent us a doctor. But he perceived that our greatest need involved our sin, our alienation from him, our profound rebellion, our death, and he sent us a Savior

—D.A. Carson, *A Call to Spiritual Reformation: Priorities from Paul and His Prayers* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 109.

In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. 10 In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

— 1 John 4:9-10

“to propitiate” -verb

To appease an offended person.

Propitiation is when an offensive or upsetting matter is dealt with in a way that satisfies the offended person. The goal is to restore the relationship broken by the offense.

23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.

- Romans 3:23-25

Four essential elements in any propitiation:

1. An offence to be taken away.
2. A person offended who needs to be pacified.
3. An offending person; one guilty of the offence.
4. A sacrifice or some other means of making atonement for the offence.

God's own great love propitiated His own holy wrath through the gift of His own dear Son, who took our place, bore our sin and died our death. Thus God Himself gave Himself to save us from Himself.

- John Stott



22 There I will meet with you, and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim that are on the ark of the testimony, I will speak with you about all that I will give you in commandment for the people of Israel.—Exodus 25:22

And when Moses went into the tent of meeting to speak with the LORD, he heard the voice speaking to him from above the mercy seat that was on the ark of the testimony, from between the two cherubim; and it spoke to him.—Numbers 7:8-9



11 But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb. 12 And she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet.

- John 20:11-12

In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

- 1 John 4:10

16 “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

- John 3:16

The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

- 2 Cor.4:4