

## **The Gospel and my claim that the Gospel has been subordinated at Bethlehem's downtown campus**

Tom Lutz, April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2021

### Definition of terms:

Subordinate: as an adjective – lower in rank or position; as a verb – treat or regard as of lesser importance than something else.

Abandon: as a verb – cease to support or look after; give up completely.

Subjugate: as a verb – make someone or something subordinate to.

The Gospel: The teaching or revelation of Christ.

Primacy: as a noun – the fact of being primary, preeminent, or more important.

### My intent when I said words to the effect, "The Gospel has been subordinated at Bethlehem's downtown campus":

That the Gospel (in my mind the whole counsel of God as revealed in scripture – both the old and new covenant as it points to Christ and His accomplishment) does not have the place of primacy, and that the Gospel is being treated as of lesser importance than something else.

### Observations and experiences I have had that lead to the belief that the Gospel has been subordinated:

1. That suffering, hardship, partiality, abuse, and the grip of sin on this world is repeatedly acknowledged and agonized over to a degree equal to or greater than the greatness of God, and his love, mercy, and justice towards us demonstrated in the incarnation, life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ and that He is the propitiation for us and that we are more than conquerors in Christ and that we can do all things through Him who gives us strength.
2. That lamentation is focused on issues pertaining to civil unrest, and those perceived to have suffered the particular sin of partiality.
3. That shepherding resources downtown are hyper-focused on a particular group of individuals, at the expense of other priorities of Bethlehem Baptist Church.
4. That sins of rebellion, robbery, civil disobedience, disrespect for authority, and disregard for the rule of law are not identified or spoken of directly.
5. That sin – and man's rebellion against God – is not clearly identified as the root of all evil, and, that we, in Adam, all chose rebellion against God rather than continual fellowship with God.
6. That the 'abuse lens' is emphasized more than the 'sin lens' when examining problems and suffering present within the church.
7. That identity is frequently portrayed along the dimensions of abuse victim, abuser, sufferer, victim, ethnicity, culture – all to a degree that diminishes the reality that our identity is in Christ first and foremost.

### Examples of these experiences at the downtown campus:

1. The tone and tenor and conclusion of Jason Meyer's sermon relating to the death of George Floyd. This would include his closing statement that many took as a call for those to leave who don't happen to agree with him.

2. Pastoral prayers – rather than the Prayer of praise – that focus on a dimension of the recent killings in Brooklyn Park and Atlanta. We are particularly calling out these where the death of a minority-culture victim was at the hands of a majority-culture perpetrator.
3. Lamenting the departing of EHTF members from our church, without lamenting the significant group of people who left because they believe the Gospel was being subordinated to social issues. And, further, this lament was coupled with release of the Elder’s affirmations and denials pertaining to the roles of men/women and ethnic harmony. Rather than being celebrated as good work done where the Holy Spirit met us at the north campus to be like-minded in the creation of these documents, it was secondary to the call to lament.
4. This past Sunday’s welcome by Ming-Jinn focusing on the broken reed and smoldering wick -where is the welcome for those that enter the worship service rejoicing in the Lord? We are called to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep – there is a joyful and sobering balance there that needs emphasis.
5. The affiliation with Kyle Howard – now remedied – that demonstrated a willingness to overlook gross character issues and personal conduct and a CRT-inspired perspective that saw and continues to see conflict as Black vs. White.
6. The subject of racism, the topic of race and culture, and personal pastoral experiences related to ethnicity and racism occur regularly and consistently in sermons.

My conduct and communication at the AEM of April 20<sup>th</sup>:

My goal was to call attention to what I see as the primary problem downtown that is leading to the issues that we are experiencing. It was not my intention to be disrespectful to Jason, or others who may hold a different view than I do. I have apologized to Jason and asked him to forgive me – it was not my intention to dishonor him, but I did. I may have dishonored others of you when I spoke last week – that was not my intention. Please let me know if you were dishonored by my conduct – I want to ask your forgiveness for that.