What about those who’ve never heard about Jesus?

#1 question asked, “What about those who’ve never heard about Jesus?”
- One of the primary stumbling blocks to faith in Christ for many in our world today... what about the guy in the jungle or the tribe on a remote island... Will God really judge someone who’s never heard about Jesus?

- How would you respond to this young man?

Back in week 1 we looked at 3 foundational questions:
Is there a God? Has He spoken? And if so, will we trust Him & obey?

So, what has God revealed to us as it relates to our question for today?

To answer this question we need to look at some of the basic truths God’s revealed about His nature, the nature of humanity, and the nature of His plan of salvation... When dealing w/ this question I find it most helpful to highlight 5 key truths that we find in Scripture:

1) God will treat all people with perfect fairness, justice, and love (Deut. 32:4; 1 Tim. 2:3-4; 2 Pt. 3:9)
- God’s heart is for people & He doesn’t want anyone to miss out on a relationship with Him!
- If these passages are true, if this is who God really is, do we need to worry about anyone being unjustly judged by God? Do we have to worry that God won’t be fair to the person who by no fault of their own never heard the name of Jesus?

2) The guy in the jungle is as guilty as Billy Graham (Ecc. 7:20)
- There are no innocent natives or evangelists, friends!
- All humans are infected with a spiritual disease called sin. We reek of it… (We stink physically, but more significantly we stink spiritually!)
- Romans 3:23; Romans 6:23
- We’re all guilty in the eyes of a holy God & our sin separates us from Him & there’s nothing we can do on our own to make this right (Is. 64:6 “filthy rags”)
- So, when it comes to the guy in the jungle who’s never heard of Jesus, understand this friends, no one will face God’s judgment because they haven’t heard of Jesus.
- Hell isn’t the penalty for ignorance; it’s the penalty for sin.
- There’s not one person on this planet that hasn’t been tainted by sin; and because of that, we all need to be saved from this condition. We need salvation.

3) God’s plan of salvation is “one-way” (Jn. 3:16-18, 36; Jn. 14:6; Acts 4:12; Acts 16:31)
- God hasn’t given us a bunch of options! He’s told us clearly that there is only 1 way to be saved… We all need Jesus.
- Now, we may not like this fact... we may wish this wasn’t the case... but the reality is, our wishes and preferences on this matter are irrelevant! What matters is what is true! The way things really are!
- If Jesus is God… then his word alone on this subject is all that counts!

4) We remain under the mandate of the Great Commission (Mt. 28:18-20)
- Now, this is an odd command if people don’t really need Jesus. Why bother going to all nations if people are ok as they are, ok in their native beliefs?
- But the fact is, as we saw earlier, they’re not ok! They need Jesus! And God has commissioned us as His ambassadors to the world…
- We can either sit around complaining & critiquing God’s plan of salvation, or we can follow His command and go out and do something about it! We can go & share the Gospel!
Billy- By the way, he got it! Now serving as a missionary in Poland
- Friends, people need Jesus… and Jesus has never rescinded the Great Commission!

“What about those who’ve never heard about Jesus?”

Friends, these first 4 truths answer some of our question, but not all of it… There’s one more critical piece to this puzzle and that’s the reality of God’s general revelation…

5) God has made Himself known to all people (Rom. 1:18-20; Ps. 19:1-3; Ecc. 3:11; Rom. 2:15)
- All people instinctively know there is a God through His creation & through our consciences. We see the evidence of this throughout history & around the world.
Ex. There has never been a purely atheistic society… We were made to worship.
Ex. The universal recognition of basic moral truths (killing, stealing, adultery, etc.)
- No one will be able to stand before God on the Day of Judgment and say, “But I didn’t know!”
- Acts 14:17- “God has not left himself w/o a testimony”- He’s revealed Himself in creation & written His truth on our hearts & consciences.
- People aren’t condemned for what they don’t know or haven’t done, but for what they do know & for what they have done- willfully rejecting God & His revelation to us.

- The Good News = Those who want to find God can!
- And for those that do, God will reveal even more of Himself to them. In other words, to those who respond to the light of God’s general revelation more light will be given. How do I know this? (Hebrews 11:6).

- If someone is earnestly seeking after God, God will make sure they receive the revelation necessary for salvation…

Ex. Acts 8 (Phillip & the Ethiopian) & Acts 10 (Peter & Cornelius)

- But does God still work like this today? Absolutely!

But, we’re still left with a question, what about the person who would receive the light of the gospel but never hears? What if they never get the message? What about the God-
seeker who died the day after the crucifixion? Or the one who died just days before the missionaries arrived? What happens to them?

- I believe the answer to this question is found in Genesis 15:6, “Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.”
- The word “believed” here connotes more than just an intellectual recognition; it implies a coming alongside of God, a commitment, and repentance. This kind of belief requires a change of heart; and Abram had a heart for God.

- We see this same kind of belief in the OT heroes of faith mentioned in Hebrews 11 (Hebrews 11:1-2).
- None of these people knew God’s “one-way” plan of salvation (ex. Rahab), but they believed God by responding to the light they had received and their hearts were turned towards Him and God commended them for their faith.

- Friends, does God still credit belief like this today as righteousness? I can’t say with certainty, but I hope so; it would certainly be consistent with his character that we considered earlier.

- However, before we get too carried away with this possibility, let me remind you of something that should give us pause for thought… (Jay Carty book)

Biblical scholars generally agree there were at least several million people alive during the days of Noah. And of all those millions of people, how many believed God properly? We know for sure. The Bible tells us. Just one! (Genesis 6:6-9)

- Now, this is tremendously significant, because consider this… How many people do you think are out in our world today that haven’t heard the good news of Jesus, but believe God like Abram or Noah?

- I don’t know either, but if the hearts of people in our world today bear any resemblance to those in Noah’s day, the odds aren’t very good! In that day there was only Noah! There may not be any today!
- Can you never hear the name of Jesus and still be saved? Maybe. I hope so, but I don’t think there will be very many, if any at all.
- Remember how many there weren’t in the days of Noah!

Friends, let me wrap up this message with the most important truth I can tell you this morning…

At the end of the day we have to entrust those who’ve never heard about Jesus into the hands of our Heavenly Father… But please understand something, what happens to them won’t make any difference to you! You have heard! You’ve been given the truth…
And for those of us who have heard about Jesus, who’ve received God’s “one-way” plan of salvation, we’re left with 2 essential questions:

1) Have I put my trust in Jesus Christ as my Savior & Lord?
- Every day 150K-250K people die/ 1 every second… When will your time be up?
- Tomorrow is not guaranteed for any of us (3 yr. anniversary of my Dad’s passing).
- What are you going to say when you stand before the Lord at the moment of your death? (Heb. 9:27).
- The good news… Rom. 10:9-10

2) How will I contribute to the Great Commission? What role can I play in making sure the good news of Jesus, the only hope of the world, is heard by all people? (Rom. 10:13-15)

Friends, we have heard. We know the truth. How will you respond?

Let’s pray.

Revelation 19:1-2