

Sermon by Pastor Bob Brown on 10-12-03 Sunday AM
Entitled: Blessing to All - Scripture Text: Phil. 2: 12-18

This morning I want to help us to better understand one of the purposes of the church that we have a hard time grasping, and many of us actually fear. It is the purpose of evangelism. We began this series on the purpose of the church looking at worship, then ministry, now we have this topic of evangelism.

Evangelism comes from the Greek word "euaggelion" and means "gospel" or "good news". It is the proclamation of the message of the good news, or telling others what Jesus, who is the good news, means to us. It is the calling of people to respond to the message of grace and commitment to Jesus Christ.

The problem is that even when we begin to understand what evangelism is, we are still afraid of it. We are afraid that we can't do it, or don't know how to do it, or we will be asked to do it!

Let's look at how to do it, or rather how to tell others what we already know to be true in our hearts. We know its true because we have a number of Scriptures that tell say we are to tell others: Mt. 28: 19-20; Mk. 16:15; Lk. 24: 47-49; John 20: 21; Acts 1:9.

Ways people tell others.

1. This can be done in a very sterile or academic way, but that comes across dull and boring to all but the intellectually stimulated.
2. It can be done in a very authoritative way, which tends to make people feel isolated from the truth (and the truth is supposed to set us free). When the gospel is presented as if it is a take it or leave it proposition, it makes people feel inferior and unable to meet its expectations. Keep in mind that we cannot compromise the message of the "good news" of Jesus Christ, but we must remember that it is "good news" and not to be presented to people as if it is our way or no way. This is about Jesus, who died on the cross for all of our sins, who shed His blood for us, and who rose from the dead, so that we could all have eternal life. Its not our message, its His.
3. Evangelism can be done casually, where we hope that others will be able to see that there is something different about us, and maybe ask about it. If that should happen, we always know who to direct them to that can explain what we feel.

Think about a silent witness like this; driving down the road with a traveling companion, with the radio on, but the mute button pushed. You can show them the call numbers, and they can even see them, but they know nothing of what it is really like until you turn on the sound!

4. Evangelism can be done in a verbal and even a non-verbal, intentional, lifestyle, that exposes those we come into contact with, to the life-changing, King of kings and Lord of lords.

I want to suggest to you that evangelism should be a combination of all of the above. Why? Because that was the way Jesus lived. This is the way He taught his disciples, and the lesson that they eventually got hold of.

Academically we need to be able to communicate what Jesus has done in our lives as believers. In other words, we have to be able to tell others what happened when Jesus transformed our hearts and minds.

It is where we begin to put into words, why we desire to be more like Him. As Rom. 8: 28, 29 puts it; "We have been called to a purpose; to be like Jesus. We now want others to be able to join us in that purpose.

We also understand that we really do have "authority" when we are living as Jesus commanded. At the end of the Sermon on the Mount, that beautiful teaching of Jesus, here's what we read:

"When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowd were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law."

Keep in mind, that as we become like Him, as we allow Jesus to live in us and through us, that authority, by the power of the Holy Spirit takes over in us and we become the living, authority of Christ in the world. If that sounds too spiritual for you to attain, then just do what we read in Mt. 28:19-20, at the command of Christ.

Evangelism can also be casual, if the above elements are in place. As Jesus, and then his disciples lived out everyday life, people often asked questions about them: "Who is this"? "By what power"? "In whose name"? If you understand whose you are, and you have the power of the Holy Spirit living in you, then you can get by with a casual witness.

But, people who see a difference in us, deserve to be told what that difference really is, they need to hear it from our mouths. Don't be afraid,

there will always be questions that we cant answer, and we will need to refer them elsewhere, but we also have the command in Scripture, found in 1 Peter 3:15:

“In your heart set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do it with gentleness and respect...”.

This encompasses both the verbal and non-verbal way of sharing your faith. It is verbal because you are telling them of your hope in Jesus. It is non-verbal in that our actions speak very loud as to who we are really following.

Are you noticeable as a Christian? Do you share the good news of Jesus Christ with others? Have you made living and telling others about Jesus a major purpose in your life? Will you?

Prayer. Father, Your Word is very definite about your will for our lives, your plan for our lives, and your purpose for our lives. I confess that I have been fearful of what others might think if I tried to tell them what I feel. I now ask You to give me the words, the power and the desire to tell others of your “good news” in my life, to the glory of the Father. Amen