

Evangelism - Committed to Serve [Sermon Notes]

Acts 2: 41 Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. 42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. 44 All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. 46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Review of the series

1. Worship - Committed to God
2. Fellowship - Committed to one another
3. Discipleship - Committed to learn
4. Service - Committed to serve
5. Evangelism - Committed to share

There seems to be a process going on in Acts that is a characteristic of the growing Church

Conversion (41) - Growth (42-47) - Reproduction (47)

There was conversion, there was growth, there was reproduction - and all came together. We are converted, we are called into spiritual growth and spiritual growth is reproductive. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

However we like to put it, the function of the Church as the living body of Christ is to reproduce itself. Because we can't get from one generation to another without it. God has only one begotten Son - the rest are adopted! God has no grandchildren!!

What were the last recorded words of Jesus to His disciples.

Matt 28:18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Acts 1: 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

It wasn't an instruction to have nice comfy churches, it wasn't an instruction to have Bible Studies, house groups, church socials and all that. They have a role in the life of the Church - it was a command to reproduce - to make disciples - to be witnesses.

You may say to me - well that's all very well, but I'm not called to be an evangelist. Quite right too an evangelist is a specific gifting and function in a Church - there are specialist roles like this in churches. But the call to be witnesses was a much more general one. We are witnesses.

The trouble is that it is easy not to take the Great Commission seriously.

Yet if we are to be a healthy reproductive Church, then God is calling us to be His witnesses - in our case to the uttermost parts of the earth. God does not expect us to do anything that He would not have tried Himself.

God's example to us - The Son is a missionary. Look at John 1:1-14

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 4 In him was life, and that life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.

14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

We are a missionary people - God's appointed way that people know about Jesus is through us. Yes, really! Look at Romans 10:12-15

12 For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile--the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, 13 for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." 14 How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? 15 And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

How do people know about Jesus? How does God choose to spread the Good News. He doesn't send angels. He sends US! We, His Church are chosen to do it through the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit.. There is no other way!! There's no backup plan. If we as God's people do not spread the good news in Swaffham then there is no other way people are going to hear.

But, but, but....

👤 I can't. I tried and wasn't any good. People will laugh at me.

"One dominant reason underlying the increasing reluctance of Christians to share their faith with non-Christians pertains to the faith sharing experience itself. In asking Christians about their witnessing activities, we have found that nine out of ten individuals who attempt to explain their beliefs and theology to other people come away from those experiences feeling as if they have failed. Thus, despite the divine command to spread the Word, many Christians redirect their energies into areas of spiritual activity that are more satisfying and in which they are more likely to achieve success."

We've got to face it, the gospel isn't popular, but it is often that we are bad witnesses in the way we live, or really don't know how to explain the gospel in words they don't understand. I never believe in watering down the gospel - but I believe that it should be understandable!!

J.I. Packer warns evangelicals of 4 temptations in making salvation... :

1. Less urgent.
2. Less agonising.
3. Less central.
4. Less substantial.

"To withhold the gospel from any people is to ensure their spiritual death. There is no distinction, since all have sinned."

So often we have nothing that is appealing - or worse people have negative experiences of Church.

The lesson I've learnt over the past few years is that telling the truth is not enough but that truth must be accessible to whom we are trying to reach.

2

There will always be those who take offence - the gospel is offensive.

👤 The Pastor should do it

Pastor VA

So are we exempt?

WE are His witnesses - it's personal - it's for us. It's not my job - it's all our jobs. You want to see this Church grow - then it's YOUR responsibility as much as it's mine.

But how?

Did you know that most people become Christians because of the witness of friend or relative? Did you also know that more often than not, it is a Minister or evangelist. That has the pleasure of taking them through the "prayer of faith" even though it has been their friend or relative that has been the main witness.

In all surveys of new Christians, "friendship evangelism" is the most common source of new Christians - by a HUGE margin.

And what skills do you need to do it. The same ones that you needed for all the other things we considered in previous weeks - love, willingness to fellowship, willingness to share. The only difference is that you must be bold enough to witness.

But I - er - can't share the gospel - Sharing Jesus.

🟢 Witnessing is done through the power of the Spirit

The most important thing you need to know about how people can become Christians is that YOU CANNOT make anyone a Christian. You can't even open their minds by persuasion. This course isn't about your striving - but about the Holy Spirit!

🟢 Conversion is of the Holy Spirit

John 16:7 Unless I go away, the Counsellor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. 8 When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgement: 9 in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; 10 in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; 11 and in regard to judgement, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.

1 Cor 2:12 We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words.

Therefore ALL witnessing is based on the Holy Spirit, just as all our living should be. It doesn't start with doing a course, or going out in our own strength. It starts in God's presence - burden for the lost.

The truth is if we want to see this Church grow - then it starts with each one of us desiring to see our friends, our neighbours, our workmates, our families come to Christ. To weep over them, to plead before God for them, but most of all, to equip ourselves so that the Holy Spirit can use us to do His work.

Let's pray.