

11. Let the Church Know (2Q 2012—Evangelism and Witnessing)

Biblical material: Acts 4:1–31, 21:19–25, 1 Cor. 9:19–23, Num. 13:17–33, Acts 11:1–18, Mark 6:30.

Quotes

- People seem to think that the masses are outside the Christian church because our evangelistic methods are not what they ought to be. That is not the answer. People are outside the church because looking at us they say, "What is the point of being Christians? - look at them!" They are judging Christ by you and me. And you cannot stop them and you cannot blame them. *Martyn Lloyd-Jones*
- Most people are brought to faith in Christ not by argument for it but by exposure to it. *Samuel M. Shoemaker*
- People's lives are beaten down enough. They don't need more of it from the pulpit. *Richard Ganz*
- I don't preach a social gospel; I preach the Gospel, period. The gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is concerned for the whole person. When people were hungry, Jesus didn't say, "Now is that political or social?" He said, "I feed you." Because the good news to a hungry person is bread. *Bishop Desmond Tutu*
- We are distressed because our churches are half empty; and many of them would be emptier if the Gospel were preached in them. *W.R. Inge*

Questions

Why is it important to “let the church know”? How do news reports help or hinder us? How can we report on evangelism without making it self-centered? What does the Bible tell us about communication? How can we best encourage one another? Is it true that “if it’s not reported, it didn’t happen”?

Bible summary

Acts 4:1-31 recounts the story of Peter and John before the Sanhedrin. Their position was that they had to obey God rather than man. As a result their witness was very significant. When Paul arrived in Jerusalem, he gave a report on what he had been doing as he witnessed to the Gentiles (Acts 21:19-25). In 1 Cor. 9:19-23 he also says that he became all things to all people to try and win some of them. In other words he used different communication strategies to share the good news—as for example on Mars Hill.

In the Old Testament story of the spies sent into Canaan (Num. 13:17-33) it was the different reports that generated so much interest—and conflict! Similarly Peter had to give an explanation of why he had acted in specific ways (Acts 11:1-18).

On their return to Jesus, “The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught.” (Mark 6:30 NIV).

Comment

“Communication is the process by which people intentionally misunderstand each other.” While this may sometimes be true, the real purpose of communication is to gain understanding—to get to know what has happened and why.

Without this process we would forever be misunderstanding, repeating the same mistakes, and never learning. When it comes to evangelism, we do need to know what is happening, what is working, and learn.

Added to this is the whole aspect of encouragement. It is exciting to know what God is doing through his people around the world. Not to make ourselves proud, but to be encouraged that the good news of God is being shared.

On January 14, 1997 the French Navy sent out their last message in Morse code. It went something like this:

“Calling all, calling all.
This is our last message--
before eternal silence.”

Only ninety-six years earlier, Marconi had received the very first Morse code message sent across the Atlantic, from Cornwall, England to St Johns, Newfoundland. That message had read, “What has God achieved!”

So great is the speed of modern communications that Morse code is now superseded by fax and mobile phone and e-mail. But what of that last message? The last message before eternal silence?

We have that message!

“It is the darkness of misapprehension of God that is enshrouding the world. Men are losing their knowledge of His character. It has been misunderstood and misinterpreted. At this time a message from God is to be proclaimed, a message illuminating in its influence and saving in its power. His character is to be made known. Into the darkness of the world is to be shed the light of His glory, the light of His goodness, mercy, and truth.... The last rays of merciful light, the last message of mercy to be given to the world, is a revelation of His character of love.” Christ's Object Lessons, 415.

Our role is to communicate this message to world.

Ellen White Comments

The followers of Christ should not praise and flatter one another; for Satan will do a plenty of this work, and if persons have a high opinion of their own ability, it will prevent them from learning in the school of Christ. Let none censure and condemn others; for in doing this they are co-laborers with him who is the accuser of the brethren, who would steal from their hearts every particle of love for one another. Christians will not seek to tear one another down in order to build up self, but all will endeavor to strengthen and encourage one another. {GW92 459-60}

We are to give the last warning of God to men, and what should be our earnestness in studying the Bible, and our zeal in spreading the light! Let every soul who has received the divine illumination seek to impart it. Let the workers go from house to house, opening the Bible to the people, circulating the publications, telling others of the light that has blessed their own souls. Let literature be distributed judiciously, on the trains, in the street, on the great ships that ply the sea, and through the mails. . . . {GW 353}

A report is borne to heaven of every successful effort on our part to dispel the darkness and to spread abroad the knowledge of Christ. As the deed is recounted before the Father, joy thrills through all the heavenly host {AA. 154}

Prepared February 11, 2012 © Jonathan Gallagher 2012