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(2 Corinthians 5:18-21)

Intro. Last week we took an anonymous survey, asking 2 questions: if you had invited someone to church in the last month and if you had shared the gospel with someone in the last month. Out of 96 responses, 39.6% indicated they had invited others (38) & 35.4% indicated they had shared their faith (34), which is about the national average of a LifeWay study done recently, where 39% indicated they had shared their faith in recent months—thus, it looks like we are an average church in that regard (not below average), but hopefully none of us wants to be average. It is a sin to be good since God has called us to be great. Today in our series on “Good to Great Church” we deal with the subject of “Evangelism” (sharing the good news) from 2 Corinthians 5.

Theme: Witnessing

Background: In 2 Corinthians 5, Paul talks about the wasting away of the former life as God makes all those in Christ a new creation.

A few main truths about Reconciliation:

- Reconciliation—the coming to agreement between two or more parties who are estranged
- In Scripture, God is the subject & man is the object (God isn’t in the wrong, man is); God takes the initiative in reconciliation—“all this is from God” (5:18)
- Moreover, for the believer reconciliation is not a process but a completed act (cf. Romans 5:11); we are involved in the process of calling unbelievers to be reconciled to God
- Finally, Christ’s atoning work on the cross is the agent or means of reconciliation

Illus: Think of it this way: God the Father is reaching down from heaven & He has joined hands with His Son Jesus Christ, who in turn touches the world to grab hold of sinners in drawing them to Himself through repentance & faith—those who were once estranged from God due to sin are now reconciled through faith in Christ’s atoning work! Furthermore, believers join hands with Christ in reaching others in the world

➤ Although God performs the work of reconciliation, He calls us to join Him in the ministry & message of reconciliation by sharing the gospel (good news)

1. God calls us to share the good news through our living & our telling (5:18-19)—what we do & what we say

- God has given us the ministry of reconciliation (5:18)—the service, the daily living out the good news
- If you have been reconciled to God (through faith in Christ), then God doesn’t count your trespasses (sins) against you (5:19)!
- And once you have been reconciled to God, God entrusts you with the message of reconciliation (5:19)—God gives you the charge as a steward to share the good news

Illus: Some of you have seen the wrongly attributed saying of St. Francis of Assisi—“Preach the gospel always. When necessary, use words.” He didn’t say that & whoever said that is wrong. Preaching the gospel is using words, because no one ever got saved apart from the message. But we can’t just preach words without living out the gospel (the ministry of reconciliation) or people won’t see its importance in our lives

Illus: So what do we tell them? Fanny Crosby told us some key things to do when she wrote, “Tell Me the Story of Jesus”—tell me the story of Jesus, write on my heart every word, tell me the story most precious, sweetest that ever was heard... tell of the cross where they nailed Him, writhing in anguish & pain, tell of the grave where they laid Him, tell how He liveth again!”

2. God calls us to share the good news He has given to us & not stray from it (5:20-21)—how we say it (faithfully, with integrity)

- There are a lot of different names for us in the Bible—disciples, Christians, followers of the Way, brothers & sisters, saints, righteous, the elect, but we are also called ambassadors of Christ—the highest of callings indeed!
- Ambassadors represent their leader—King, President, & in this case, Christ Jesus our Lord
- Ambassadors don’t get to carry their own message, but the message they have been entrusted to share—the King’s message. They must not say less or more than they have been commissioned to say

Illus: If you have been friends with someone or you have a neighbor or co-worker or classmate & all they've ever heard from you are stories about you—what you did when you were little, what you did last weekend—and they never hear the story of Jesus, then you are not being a faithful ambassador of Christ

- Now we come to 2 Corinthians 5:21, which is the John 3:16 of Paul's writings—it is a great summary of the gospel in a single verse
- “for our sake”—for our benefit
 - “He made Him who knew no sin”—God made Christ, the sinless One
 - “to be sin”—Christ took on our sin on the cross
 - “so that”—the purpose of Christ's substitutionary death
 - “in Him”—the effects of Christ's death only benefit those in Christ (believers)
 - “we might become the righteousness of God”—in Christ, we have a right standing with God (justified)
- **2 big actions to take this week with this message of reconciliation:**
- 1. Invite an un-churched person to Bible study/worship**—Sunday morning or Wednesday night—where they will hear the gospel
 - 2. Tell the gospel to an unbeliever**—lots of different methods (like fishing)
 - a. You can use your testimony**—life without Christ, how you knew you needed Christ, how you trusted Him, what your life has been like since—you are the world's expert on your testimony
 - b. You can use various tools**—Bibles, tracts (show pics of samples), apps (life on mission—3 circles), websites (mostimportantthing.org), canned outlines (hand-to-hand, CWT, EE, Roman Road, Faith, E-Cube, etc.)
 - c. You can simply share the gospel—4 Key Parts to the Gospel:**
 - 1) God's greatness**—He is Creator & He is holy & He has given us holy laws to live by
 - 2) Our problem**—we have sinned against God & broken His laws & are separated from Him
 - 3) God's gift**—God sent His Son Jesus into the world to live a sinless life, upholding God's holy laws. He died in the place of sinners & rose from the dead to prove He is Lord of all
 - 4) Our response**—to receive a right standing with God & have our sins forgiven, we must repent of those sins (turn away) & trust in Jesus as Lord. We then serve Him in obedience as a response to His salvation.
- Whatever method we use, we must share the good news
 - I challenge our ministerial staff to share the gospel and/or invite someone to church (where they will hear the gospel) each week & all of them do it—often times our attempts don't produce very much, but God has blessed our efforts by bringing others to saving faith in Christ & to get on board with our church's mission
 - We share the gospel because Christ told us to & He told us to, because people will die in their sins & go to hell for all eternity unless they hear the life-saving message of hope in Jesus & trust in Him.

Conc. I can't tell you how many times I saw my Dad witness to someone when I was growing up. Because there were times Mom worked an evening shift, Dad would go out on Monday night visitation & take my 2 brothers and me with him. Many times we sat in the truck, but sometimes we stood there beside him as he talked to people about Jesus and invited them to our church or to a revival service. So the first time I told someone about Jesus, I was a teenager talking to one of my friends. I was nervous & the devil kept telling me not to do it, claiming my friend wouldn't listen or that his science background in evolution was too great an obstacle for talk about God. But we got to talking and all I knew to do was tell him how great Jesus was & that He took care of my sins on the cross & that He's alive & can do the same thing for him. After a couple of weeks of conversations, he told me he confessed his sins & asked Jesus to save him! Now that certainly hasn't happened every time I've shared the gospel; as a matter of fact, it is rare that people get saved, but God didn't command me to save them—He does that. He commands me to tell them, to plant the seed of the gospel and leave the rest up to Him. So what about you? Will you share the gospel this week & strive to make it part of your lifestyle? Maybe you have never surrendered to the Lord for salvation & you are ready to respond to the gospel today?