

“Who? Me?”

1 Corinthians 9:19-23

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*I have good news... **God is with us.*** In the history of our faith this has been shared in various ways: the God who met Adam and Eve in the garden, the God who promised to care for the people of Israel, the God who led Israel through the dessert as a pillar of light, who dwelled in a tent, who resided in a tabernacle, who lived in a temple, the God who came in a gentle whisper to Elijah on the top of a mountain, the God who became flesh and bone in Jesus Christ, who gathered men and women and taught them about his Father, the God who was willing to die for us, the God who defeated death, and the God who provided us the Holy Spirit.

*I have good news... **There is nothing you can do, have done, have had done to you that can separate you from the love of God.*** Jesus taught us this as he healed the demon possessed man, stood up for the prostitute when people were about to stone her, invited the tax collector, Zacchaeus, to come down from the tree and to eat with him, even more this is shown as God allowed Peter to be the disciple to build the church despite the fact he denied his relationship with Jesus three times before the rooster crowed. It is demonstrated in the life of the apostle Paul, who went around killing Christians until God changed his heart.

I have good news... **God is for us and not against us.**

I have good news... **Death does not have the final word.**

I have good news... **Resurrection is a reality. Liberation is possible. Hope does not need to be differed. Grace abounds.**

There is a lot more good news, but this sermon isn't just about good news. This is a sermon about evangelism and today we are talking about how we can proclaim it.

Evangelism, put simply, is sharing the good news of what God has done and what God is doing. I believe at its best, evangelism is personal testimony, the stories of how God is working in your life and in the life of your community.

Lillian Daniels, in her book says: Testimony draws on our experience, what happens when God meets us, right smack in the middle of our lives. Testimony tells about a time when, by the sheer force of grace, God's story and our story collided. PG 146

What is God doing in your life? What is God doing in the life of your community?

Part of the struggle:

We don't talk about faith. Faith has been relegated to the personal experience.

As a result we use quotes like Francis of Assisi or James:

While Christians frequently cite St. Francis's dictum, "Preach the gospel, when necessary, use words," sometimes words are necessary to the gospel. Allusions only communicate to an inside crowd. PG 155

Protestants were taught that it was better to walk than talk, taking James's injunction that "faith without works is dead"...Reverence for God meant silence and service...Without words it became surprisingly easy to forget the stories...Without the words faith would be lost , the service rendered secular...Faith without words is dead. Xi forward

Learning to talk about faith:

-If we are going to begin sharing what God is doing in our lives and in the life of our community, then we must begin by learning to reinterpret life through the lens of faith.

Words and faith seem to go together. Christian who referred to their faith frequently, interpreted their lives in religious terms, or grasped their faith tradition's primary teaching also had a ready religious vocabulary at their disposal. PG 135

Without a story to tell, there is no faith; without a language to tell our story, Christianity remains on mute...The gospel is unambiguous: good news is meant to be shared. PG 156

Begin pointing out God's work, thanking God for the blessing of each day, asking God for strength.

-As we learn to reinterpret our life through the lens of faith, we must struggle honestly with what this reinterpreted life means for us and our community. In other words, how will we live as a result of this way of understanding the world?

-Once we learn to see what God is doing and attempt to live in a reality seen through the lens of faith, then our testimonies will follow naturally.

It is you In Telling Secrets, Fredrick Buechner asks himself: Who cares? What in the world could be less important than who I am and who my father and mother were, the mistakes I have made..., the occasional discoveries, the bad times and the good times, the moments of grace..." Then he answers his own question. "my story is important not because it is mine, God knows, but because if I tell it anything like right, the chances are that you will recognize that in any ways it is also yours." PG. 1 story...

After we tell God's story, it tells us, and then we have a new story to tell.

"If I have achieved anything in my life, it has been because I have not been embarrassed to talk about God." Dorothy Day PG 131

Cultures survive by giving voice to the values, images, and stories by which people tell themselves to the next generation. PG 139

Unless a language is reinforced by daily experience, we lose our vocabulary; language requires both direct teaching and opportunities to use it to be serviceable. PG 155

You have good news...Live it...Share it!