

What Should Evangelism Look Like? Acts 3:11-26; 2:47; 1:8

Last week we explored the first half of Acts 3, the healing miracle of the crippled man at the Temple entrance. We resume the story in Acts 3:11.

Acts 3:11) While he was holding on to Peter and John, all the people, utterly astonished, ran toward them in what is called Solomon's Colonnade. 12) When Peter saw this, he addressed the people: *Fellow Israelites, why are you amazed at this? Why do you stare at us, as though we had made him walk by our own power or godliness?* 13) *The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our ancestors, has glorified his servant Jesus, whom you handed over and denied before Pilate, though he had decided to release him.* 14) *You denied the Holy and Righteous One and asked to have a murderer released to you.* 15) *You killed the source of life, whom God raised from the dead; we are witnesses of this.* 16) *By faith in his name, his name has made this man strong, whom you see and know. So the faith that comes through Jesus has given him this perfect health in front of all of you.* 17) *And now, brothers and sisters, I know that you acted in ignorance, just as your leaders also did.* 18) *In this way God fulfilled what he had predicted through all the prophets – that his Messiah would suffer.* 19) *Therefore repent and turn back, so that your sins may be wiped out,* 20) *that seasons of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send Jesus, who has been appointed for you as the Messiah.* 21) *Heaven must receive him until the time of the restoration of all things, which God spoke about through his holy prophets from the beginning.* 22) *Moses said: 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your brothers and sisters. You must listen to everything he tells you.* 23) *And everyone who does not listen to that prophet will be completely cut off from the people.'* 24) *In addition, all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those after him, have also foretold these days.* 25) *You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your ancestors, saying to Abraham, 'And all the families of the earth will be blessed through your offspring.'* 26) *God raised up his servant and sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your evil ways.*

Acts 2:47) Every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved. Acts 1:8) *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*

Continuing our journey through the *Book of Acts*, and *What Matters in the Church*, we consider this morning “*What Should Evangelism Look Like?*” This focused question arises from our sermon two weeks ago regarding *What Should Unity Look*

Like? A Healthy Church is a Unified Church, and a Unified Church will be a Growing Church.

Previously in the Book of Acts, the events marking the birth of the church unfold in dramatic sequence. Jesus appeared numerous times in His resurrected body. At His last appearance, Jesus commissioned His followers as witnesses from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. He immediately and suddenly ascended up into heaven, leaving them behind to complete His mission. A congregation of 120 gather for a 10-day prayer meeting, and the Holy Spirit arrived to indwell and empower them. During the Festival of Pentecost, Peter preached his Pentecost sermon, and 3000 people respond to the invitation to “*Repent and be baptized.*” A screen shot of the church at the end of Acts 2 pictured a unified church, a devoted church, a supernatural church, a generous church, and a growing church – a devoted church where doctrine, fellowship, worship, and prayer matter; a generous church where needs are met and ministry matters; a supernatural church where the unbelievable and the undeniable matter, and a growing church where evangelism matters. So, this morning, we explore the question: What should evangelism look like? Evangelism Matters for two reasons: Faith and Forgiveness.

1. Evangelism Matters because it activates Faith. The healing of the crippled man at the Temple entrance caused a reaction of utter astonishment and extreme awe. As the crowd rushed to Solomon’s Colonnade, a common gathering place for believers, Peter used the occasion to preach his second sermon. A strong pattern of personal witnessing is now developing, where the Apostles embraced their duty and responsibility to share Jesus with the spiritually lost, at every opportunity, without fear or hesitation, because they understood that **Personal witnessing leads to faith in Jesus Christ.** As the healed cripple stood right in front of them – Peter interpreted the evidence: *By faith in his name, his name has made this man strong, whom you see and know. So the faith that comes through Jesus has given him this perfect health in front of all of you.* (3:16) Faith in Jesus Christ is the greater miracle.

The Apostle Paul raised the question regarding the connection of witnessing and faith in Romans 10: *How can they* (spiritually lost people) *call on him in whom they have not believed in? And how can they* (spiritually lost people) *believe without hearing about Jesus?* The answer to the questions (Romans 10:17): *So faith comes from what is heard* (a witness) *and what is heard comes through the message about Christ* (a testimony). To quote again our Baptist Faith and Message, Article 11: Evangelism is “*the duty and privilege of every follower of Christ and of every church of the Lord Jesus Christ to endeavor to make disciples of all nations... It is the duty of every child of God to seek constantly to win the lost to Christ by verbal witness undergirded by a Christian lifestyle, and by other*

methods in harmony with the gospel of Christ.”

Evangelism is every Christian’s duty and responsibility. Here’s how it works – we give our witness, the Holy Spirit convicts, and Jesus saves. God cannot add to the church daily those who are being saved unless every Christian practices personal witnessing and until every church prioritizes personal witnessing. If not many are being saved, it can only mean one thing – too many of us are derelict in duty or failing in responsibility.

Both Jeremiah and Jesus issued haunting challenges. Jesus challenged us to open our eyes and see that “*the fields are ready for harvest.*” (John 4:35) The pressing issue is not the absence of evangelistic opportunity or the lack of evangelistic prospects. Just the opposite. The harvest is ripe and ready – time is SHORT– the opportunity is NOW. Jeremiah’s challenge is even more haunting: “*The harvest has past, summer has ended, and we have not been saved.*” (Jeremiah 8:20)

What a visual picture! When summer ends, the harvest is past. In a spiritual sense, opportunity exists for spiritual harvest, but when harvest time is past, the opportunity disappears. The prophet Jeremiah lamented the spiritual consequence – WE HAVE NOT BEEN SAVED! Visualize the harvest field – laborers leaving the field as the sun is setting. All of a sudden, shouts ring out from the field – “Stop – Wait – Come Back – Don’t Leave Us – You Missed Us!” **The Church’s greatest concern ought to be for those we are leaving behind.** Evangelism matters because it activates faith.

2. Evangelism Matters because it leads to Forgiveness. As in the Pentecost sermon, Peter thundered the call to repentance: *Therefore repent and turn back – metanoeo and epistrepho* (3:19) *Repent* means a change of mind that leads to a change of direction – *turn back* indicates returning to God. Placing faith in Jesus involves an intentional action of returning to God. Peter now expanded his call to repentance to nail down the result: *Therefore repent and turn back, so that your sins may be wiped out, that seasons of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send Jesus, who has been appointed for you as the Messiah.* **Repentance leads to sins being forgiven** – *so that your sins may be wiped out – removed – erased.* **Forgiveness leads to life being made whole again** – *so that seasons of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.* **Life being made whole again leads to Christ’s presence** – *that (God) may send Jesus, who has been appointed for you as the Messiah.*

What can wash away my sin? NOTHING but the blood of Jesus! What can make me whole again? NOTHING but the blood of Jesus!

David’s cry in Psalm 51 is the cry of every lost soul – *Completely wash away my guilt and cleanse me from my sin. For I am conscious of my rebellion, and my sin is always before me.... Turn your face away from my sins and blot out all my guilt.*

God, create a clean heart for me and renew a steadfast spirit within me. And so as to remove all doubt, David confirmed in Psalm 103:12 that as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. Casting Crowns reminds us how far the east is from the west – one scarred hand to the other. Evangelism matters because those who are spiritually lost will remain spiritually lost without our witness. It's not right that become too busy and preoccupied to share Jesus with those who are spiritually lost and personally unchurched. It's unacceptable that we rationalize our derelict of duty as fear or lack of training. It's deplorable that we neglect our responsibility because of racial prejudice or economic disparity, or generation gap. We must hurry before sundown. We must embrace a sense of urgency. We must grip the reality that Jesus is coming soon.

We Cannot Afford to Sit Around. Larry Walters was a truck driver in Los Angeles, CA. From the age of 13 he had dreamed of flying, but was unable to become an Air Force pilot because of poor eyesight. On July 2, 1982, Larry Walters purchased 45 weather balloons from an army surplus store and rented a helium tank to fill the balloons. Tethering his lawn chair to the bumper of his jeep, he tied all 45 helium-filled balloons to the tethered lawn chair, put on a parachute, and strapped himself into the chair. Armed with his pellet gun, a CB radio, sandwiches, cold beer, and a camera, he was hoping to float a few hundred feet in the air, with the strategy of popping a few balloons with the pellet gun if he got too high. However, when his friends cut the tether, Larry, the lawn-chair pilot, shot up 16,000 feet and quickly drifted into the airspace of the Los Angeles International Airport. The pilot of a jet on approach to the airport radioed the air traffic control tower: *"You won't believe this, but we've just passed a guy in a lawn chair at 16,000 feet with a gun in his lap."* Larry tried to pop a few of the balloons with his pellet gun, but the pellets would not pop the helium-filled balloons. He descended slowly until the dangling balloons became tangled in a power line, causing a blackout for 20 minutes in a Long Beach, CA neighborhood. Larry was able to climb out and lower himself to the ground, where the Long Beach police were waiting for him. They arrested him and charged him with violating U.S. Federal Aviations Regulations of illegally operating an unauthorized aircraft within an airport traffic area. When asked by a reporter why he had done it, Larry Walters responded, *"A man can't just sit around."*

As the church of the Lord Jesus Christ – HIS church, we cannot afford to just sit around. People need the Lord! First Baptist Lafayette is positioned and empowered to evangelize the towns and cities and neighborhoods, to reach the families and people who need to have an encounter with Jesus. Surrounding us are people who are spiritually lost and personally unchurched. Evangelism matters

because it leads to faith and forgiveness. If we will not evangelize the spiritually lost, unchurched, and dechurched surrounding us, then what church will?