

**Sermon Series: Intentional Disciples—Purposeful Mission—Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN—5/14/06**

**Title: “Witness to your Samaria”**

**Text: Matthew 8: 28-34**

**Theme:** God often sends us to reach those who might not be our first choice; yet, they are those who are dear to God because He sent His Son, Jesus, to give up his life as a ransom for them.

**Intro.:** *Ills.: Confessed favoritism*

*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.” Acts 1: 8*

**When Jesus’ command to reach out rubs up against our prejudices and fears (Print Matt. 8: 28-34)**

- Called to go to people whom we don’t think deserve it (vs. 28)
  1. The saga of the Samaritans and the Jews
    - a. **Ills.: Jesus’ story of the good Samaritan**
    - b. Prejudice blinds us to our own sinful pride and need
  2. Those of different cultures and religions
    - a. Gadarenians were Roman transplants—secular, pluralistic in religious practices, offensive
    - b. The demon-possessed men “hung out among the dead”— “creepy dudes”
    - c. **Ills.: a gracious reply**
    - d. Often we refrain from reaching to those under Satan’s influence, the misfits, the homeless, different race
  3. When we understand the “fellowship principle” (fellows in the same ship), we are apt to have more mercy
    - a. *As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. Eph 2: 1-3*
- Called to witness/service opportunities that threaten our security (v28)
  1. The demon possessed men had proven their danger — but Jesus saw their need above their threat
  2. Sometimes our sensibilities or the words of others keep us from reaching the one right in front of us
    - a. The pig herds and asking Jesus to participate in sending demons into them (not wanting to be guilty by association)
  3. **Ills.: Outreach ministries (P&B sandwiches to the homeless)**
  4. *You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. 1 John 4: 4*
- Called to a witness that may be abuse and accused (vs. 29)
  1. Demon-possessed fellows were downright rude to Jesus (*what business do you have with us*)
  2. They accused Jesus of evil intent (*torturing us before your appointed time*) as if Jesus needed their permission
  3. Intimidation may be direct or subtle but it is never missed by us and Satan plays of with guilt and fear
    - a. **Ills.: Consequences of Witnessing**
  4. Remembering that as forgiven children of God we do not need to traffic with the guilt-trips Satan may use to stop us
  5. *Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night. Rev. 12: 10*

**Making sure our witness is filled with the “good news”**

- The herders’ witness had the effect of causing people to fear Jesus
  1. Self interest and personal agenda caused herders to only tell of the “downside” of Jesus’ presence
  2. Being careful that our conversation about church doesn’t color our witness about the kingdom
  3. Our witness can actually drive people away from Jesus if it does not point to him
- The healed men became a living and talking witness to Jesus (**Print and read Mark 15: 19-20 and Matt 14: 34-36**)
  1. They wanted to go with Jesus but Jesus left them behind to tell of how he had delivered them from Satan’s control
  2. The fact that they went back into their community and spoke “good news” about Jesus led to his future reception
  3. Jesus has left us behind in our neighborhoods, community, and world to proclaim the wonderful truths of God in Him
    - a. **Ills.: Preach everywhere you walk**
    - b. *But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. 1 Peter 2:9*

### Confessed favoritism

The late Max Cadenhead, when he was pastor of First Baptist Church in Naples, Florida, riveted his congregation one day with a bold confession. "My message today is on the parable of the Good Samaritan," Max announced. "Let me start with an illustration. "Remember last year when the Browns came forward to join the church?" he asked. Everyone nodded; the Browns were a very influential family. "Well, the same day a young man came forward and gave his life to Christ. I could tell he needed help—and we counseled him." No one nodded; no one remembered. "We worked with the Browns, got them onto committees. They've been wonderful folks," Cadenhead said to muffled amens. "The young man...well, we lost track. "Until yesterday, that is, as I was preparing today's message on the Good Samaritan. I picked up the paper, and there was that young man's picture. He had shot and killed an elderly woman." Chins dropped throughout the congregation, mine included, as the pastor continued. "I never followed up on that young man, so I'm the priest who saw the man in trouble and crossed to the other side of the road. I am a hypocrite." More of that kind of sober honesty in the church would be very healthy. For God's kingdom is just the opposite of ours. We go after the rich or the influential, thinking if we can just bag this one or that one, we'll have a real catch for the kingdom. Like the folks profiled by the apostle James, we offer our head tables to the wealthy and well-dressed and reserve the back seats for those we consider unimportant.

**Chuck Colson and Ellen Vaughn, *Being the Body* (Word, 2003); submitted by David Neff**

### A gracious reply

Jerry Bridges illustrated how gracious a person can be when his words are controlled by Christ. In his book *The Pursuit of Holiness*, Bridges wrote, "Henry Clay Trumbull was, among other things, a great personal evangelist. One day he found himself seated on a train next to a young man who was drinking quite heavily. Each time the young man opened his bottle, he offered a drink to Mr. Trumbull, who declined with thanks. Finally the young man said to Mr. Trumbull, 'You must think I'm a pretty rough fellow.' Mr. Trumbull's gracious reply, 'I think you're a very generous-hearted fellow,' opened the way for an earnest conversation with the young man about his need to commit himself to Christ." - **Our**

**Daily Bread, October 17**

### Consequences of Witnessing

Feeling a concern for witnessing can mean that you will have to stand up and be counted, and this can bring some degree of abuse. Years ago I was praying with one of my children at bedtime, and I asked him if he had any problems we should pray about. He couldn't think of any, even though I could think of a number! Rather unwisely, I pressed the point and asked, "Don't you have any problems at school?" "No," he replied quite firmly. "Don't the kids give you a hard time because you're a Christian?" Again the answer was "No." Thinking back to my own traumatic school days, I said, "But kids always give you a hard time if you let them know you're a Christian." His reply was frank beyond belief: "All the more reason you don't let them know!" And quite happily he turned over to sleep. With the refreshing candor of the very young, he had put into words the practical reasons why many Christians don't witness. They don't want to take the consequences. **S. Briscoe, *Getting Into God*, p. 88**

### Preach Everywhere you walk

According to the book *Life of Francis d'Assisi*, Francis once invited a young monk to join him on a trip to town to preach. Honored to be given the invitation, the monk readily accepted. All day long he and Francis walked through the streets, byways, and alleys, and even into the suburbs. They rubbed shoulders with hundreds of people. At day's end, the two headed back home. Not even once had Francis addressed a crowd, nor had he talked to anyone about the gospel. Greatly disappointed, his young companion said, "I thought we were going into town to preach." Francis responded, "My son, we have preached. We were preaching while we were walking. We were seen by many and our behavior was closely watched. It is of no use to walk anywhere to preach unless we preach everywhere as we walk! **Daily Bread, December 15, 1991**

### **Matthew 8:28-34**

<sup>28</sup>When He came to the other side into the country of the Gadarenes, two men who were demon-possessed met Him as they were coming out of the tombs. They were so extremely violent that no one could pass by that way. <sup>29</sup>And they cried out, saying, "What business do we have with each other, Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?" <sup>30</sup>Now there was a herd of many swine feeding at a distance from them. <sup>31</sup>The demons began to entreat Him, saying, "If You are going to cast us out, send us into the herd of swine." <sup>32</sup>And He said to them, "Go!" And they came out and went into the swine, and the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea and perished in the waters. <sup>33</sup>The herdsmen ran away, and went to the city and reported everything, including what had happened to the demoniacs. <sup>34</sup>And behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus; and when they saw Him, they implored Him to leave their region. [NASB]

### **Mark 5:19-20**

<sup>19</sup>And He did not let him come with them, but He said to him, "Go home to your people and report to them what great

things the Lord has done for you, and how He had mercy on you." <sup>20</sup>And he went away and began to proclaim in Decapolis what great things Jesus had done for him; and everyone was amazed.

**Matthew 14:34-36**

<sup>34</sup>When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret. <sup>35</sup>And when the men of that place recognized Him, they sent word into all that surrounding district and brought to Him all who were sick; <sup>36</sup>and they implored Him that they might just touch the fringe of His cloak; and as many as touched *it* were cured.