

——Sermon Series: “Operation Go!”—Lord of Life Lutheran—Westfield, IN—2/24/2008

Title: “Good News for Bad People”

Text: John 4 (*selected verses*)

Introduction: *Illus.: Urgent Message*

Theme: When each of us understands and believes that Jesus came to save me, “the worst of sinners,” sharing the good news about Jesus with our family, friends, and associates becomes the common sense thing to do since we have found something in Jesus which both they and we need.

Reaching out to others with Jesus’ unconditional good news

- In our out-reach, we can’t use “*goodness litmus test*”
 1. As God’s children and Jesus’ disciples engaging in friendships with the world
 - a. *I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people--not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. 1 Cor. 5:9-10*
 - b. Not shocked by what we find in another; no room for judgmental pietism which ruins our witness
 2. Jesus turned commonly held religious views up-side-down when talking with the Samaritan woman (**Print vss. 4-8**)
 - a. She was a woman (**Print vs. 27**)
 - b. She was a Samaritan (**Print vs. 9**)
 - c. She was a sinner (**Print vss. 17-19**)
- Thank God that Jesus came, died, and rose for all sinners – not the least of which is you and me
 1. *For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. 1 Peter 3:18*
 2. Such good news the woman couldn’t wait, drop everything and went to town telling everyone (**Print vs. 28-30**)
 3. **Ills.: Waiting for the invitation**

Keys to witnessing to the people who know you all-too-well

- Be **ENGAGING** in your witness (“*Come and see a man!*” vs. 29a)
 1. The woman had both an **urgency** (come!) and a **simplicity** (see)
 2. A passive witness: Not telling them “*what they should believe*” but telling them “*why you believe*”
- Be **HONEST** with your story (“*Come and see a man who told me everything I ever did!*” vs. 29a)
 1. Not only did Jesus know everything the woman did but so did all of her family and friends
 2. **Ills.: Even at our worst – Christ at his best**
 3. Witness = **HIS STORY** + **MY STORY** (*showing how I did and still do need Jesus’ forgiving grace*)
- Be **CONVINCING** by being convinced yourself (“*Could this be the Christ?*” vs. 29b . . . *many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony. vs. 39*)
 1. The woman asked a rhetorical question, “*Could this be the Christ?*”
 2. The people of the city believed in Jesus “*on account of the word of the woman*”
 - a. **ILLUS.: A LASTING LEGACY—THE WASHINGTON MONUMENT GRAFFITI**
 - b. “*For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing...for we are not like many, peddling the word of God. We speak God’s message with sincerity and with Christ’s authority.*” 2Cor.2: 15-17
 - c. My testimony is not the inspired Word of God; yet, the Spirit can inspire others to consider Jesus through it

Knowing how to succeed in your witness to family and friends

- Bring them to Jesus and then get out of the way
 1. “*And many more believed because of His Word. And they were saying to the woman, “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this One is indeed the Savior of the world.”* (41-42)
- Don’t take too personally the end result of your efforts
 1. Only Jesus can be their “Savior of the world”—you and I can’t be and should not take credit for it

2. When the “*home town prophet*” strikes out — realized that Jesus also experienced the same
 - a. ***After the two days he left for Galilee. Not Jesus himself had pointed out that a prophet has no honor in his own country. (vss. 43-44)***
 - b. *“Even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing in who case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving...but we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassing greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves. 2 Corinthians 4: 3-4, 7*

URGENT MESSAGE

George Sweeting, in his book *The No-Guilt Guide for Witnessing*, tells of a man by the name of **John Currier** who in 1949 was found guilty of murder and sentenced to life in prison. Later he was transferred and paroled to work on a farm near Nashville, Tennessee. In 1968, Currier's sentence was commuted, and a letter bearing the good news was sent to him. But John never saw the letter, nor was he told anything about it. Life on that farm was hard and without promise for the future. Yet John kept doing what he was told even after the farmer for whom he worked had died. Ten years went by. Then a state parole officer learned about Currier's plight, found him, and told him that his sentence had been terminated. He was a free man. Sweeting concluded that story by asking, ***“Would it matter to you if someone sent you an important message -- the most important in your life -- and year after year the urgent message was never delivered?”*** We who have heard the good news and experienced freedom through Christ are responsible to proclaim it to others still enslaved by sin. Are we doing all we can to make sure that people get the message?

WAITING FOR THE INVITATION

There's a story about 2 neighbors Joe and Sam. They lived next door to each other for quite a while. Every Sunday morning there was a drive-way ritual between the two of them. Joe would go out and start his car getting it ready for his family to go to church. At the same time, Sam was loading his golf clubs into the trunk of his car getting ready to go to the golf course. The two men would exchange the typical friendly greetings and then Sam would always say to Joe, "hey Joe. Why don't you grab your golf clubs and head to the course with me this morning?". And every Sunday Joe would say "thanks Sam but we're going to church today." Sam would say, "Ok, maybe some other time." This went on Sunday after Sunday. But one Sunday, Joe had about enough of this ritual. So, when Sam invited him to play golf, Joe walked across the yard to his neighbor's car and said, "Sam, every Sunday you see me getting ready to go to church yet you continue to invite me to play golf with you instead. Now why do you do that?" Sam shook his head and said, "You're right Joe. I do stop and invite you to play golf every Sunday - but I've been wondering when you were going to get around to inviting me to go to church with you." Joe had the opportunity week after week to invite Sam to church - but Joe let his fears, his perceptions, his own assessment of Sam get in the way. Joe probably feared that Sam the golfer would make fun of him, maybe afraid Sam would turn him down, or afraid that Sam would label him as a "Bible Thumper" or a "Jesus Freak".

EVEN AT OUR WORST—CHRIST IS AT HIS BEST

I remember hearing of a man at sea who was very sea-sick. He went to his cabin but succumbed to the motion and had to throw open the port hole and stick his head out the window as he lost his lunch and supper. However, while this man had his head out the window he heard that a man had fallen overboard. He was wondering if he could do anything to help to save him. He laid hold of a light, and held it up on the port-hole. The drowning man was saved. When this man got over his attack of sickness he was up on deck one day, and was talking to the man who was rescued. The saved man shared his story. He said he had gone down the second time, and was just going down again for the last time, when he put out his hand. Just then, he said, some one held a light at the port-hole, and the light fell on his hand. A man caught him by the hand and pulled him into the lifeboat. It seemed a small thing to do to hold up the light; yet it saved the man's life

WITNESSING Washington -- Graffiti from the 1800s discovered by workers renovating the Washington

Monument. The markings in the lobby of the monument were covered over when it was decorated at the turn of the century. They were found when workers removed marble wainscoting as part of a year-long \$500,000 renovation which was just completed. This graffiti has quite a different tone from that usually found today on the sides of buildings and subway cars. *"Whoever is the human instrument under God in the conversion of one soul, erects a monument to his own memory more lofty and enduring (sic) than this,"* reads the inscription which can now be viewed by visitors to the monument. It is signed BFB. No one knows who that is, or who left the small drawings and 19th century dates on other walls.

John 4:4-43

⁴Now Jesus had to go through Samaria. ⁵So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about the sixth hour. ⁷When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" ⁸(His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

²⁷Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asked, "What do you want?" or "Why are you talking with her?"

⁹The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)

¹⁷"I have no husband," she replied. Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. ¹⁸The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true." ¹⁹"Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet.

²⁸Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, ²⁹"Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" ³⁰They came out of the town and made their way toward him.

³⁹Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did."

⁴¹And because of his words many more became believers. ⁴²They said to the woman, "We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world."

⁴³After the two days he left for Galilee. ⁴⁴Not Jesus himself had pointed out that a prophet has no honor in his own country.