

Sermon Series: “Sharing Good News—A Way of Life” – Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN – 3/1/09

Title: “Talking with Strangers”

Text: Acts 8:26-40

Intro.: *Illus.: video clip from “No Reservations” of little girl not talking to stranger*

Theme: We overcome our xenophobia (fear of strangers) when we begin to see them as fellow sinners for whom Jesus died and rose and see ourselves as brimming to overflowing containers of the Good News of grace in Jesus.

What gets in the way of my talking to others about Jesus?

- My apprehension of being led by the Spirit (**Acts 8:26-29**)
 1. Afraid of being out-of-control
 - a. Philip was not in control, the Holy Spirit was—directing his day’s agenda
 - b. Putting a Ethiopian foreigner (god-fearer) in his lap challenging any xenophobia which he might have
 - c. *Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone. Colossians 4:5-6*
 2. Afraid of supernatural things
 - a. Whenever God is at work within and through us, it is supernatural (faith, fruits, gifts, ministry)
 - b. “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him”—but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. 1 Corinthians 2:9-10
 - c. By its very nature witness opportunities challenge us to get out of our box
 3. But those who are God’s children are those who are being led by the Spirit
 - a. *Because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. Romans 8:14-15*
 - b. Surrendering our lives to Jesus mean’s letting go of the rights to be in charge of daily witness opportunities
 - My lack of understanding of what God says about Jesus (**Acts 8:30-35**)
 1. If you were Philip, in his place, would you have know what to answer the Ethiopian? Your friend at work?
 2. We are afraid to talk about the faith because we have not invested time in it to know what we believe
 - a. **Illus.: Do you read your owner’s manuals**
 3. Seeing Jesus as the center of the message of Scripture
 - a. Philip connected the dots between God’s plan foretold years prior to the Jesus recently crucified (vs. 32-35)
 - b. Make it about Jesus, and only about Jesus
 - c. *For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. 1 Corinthians 2:2*
 - My religious hang-ups (**Acts 8:36-38**)
 1. Philip was talking to a Gentile, man of color, who was learned enough to ask intelligent questions
 2. Christian Church was so new that believers had not yet had time to create bureaucracies – a lay deacon baptizing
 3. God pushes us outside of our comfort zones to go get people in the kingdom who would not step into church first
 4. What might that require of you? (Worship style/service attend, locale in which witness, questionable actions take)
- ### ***Getting into ‘Good Newsing’***
- Being a proclaimer rather than a preacher (**Acts 8:35**)
 1. It starts with “*opening your mouth*”
 2. A witness which is inside-out (Gods word to your witness story)
 - a. **Illus.: Experiencing the story of Jesus**
 - Don’t be afraid to get wet
 1. Surprise and spontaneity are the rule not the exception of leading another to Jesus
 2. Seeing yourself as “priests of God” carrying out the “priestly functions” of the kingdom
 3. *However, you are chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, people who belong to God. You were chosen to tell about the excellent qualities of God, who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. 1 Peter 2: 9*
 - Good-newsing wherever and whenever you go (**Acts 8:39-40**)
 1. When Philip was done with Ethiopian, Spirit was not done using him—
 - a. “spirited him off” to the next kingdom opportunity
 2. **Illus.: Put the saints into circulation**

Don't Talk to Strangers

video clip from "No Reservations" of little girl not talking to stranger

Experiencing the Story of Jesus

Imagine the mystery and delight of not just hearing, but seeing the story of Jesus for the first time, almost as an eyewitness. That's what happened to a tribe in the jungles of East Asia when missionaries showed them the Jesus film. Not only had these people never heard of Jesus, they had never seen a motion picture. Then, on one unforgettable evening, they saw it all—the gospel in their own language, visible and real. Imagine again how it felt to see this good man, Jesus, who healed the sick and was adored by children, held without trial and beaten by jeering soldiers. As they watched this, the people came unglued. They stood up and began to shout at the cruel men on the screen, demanding that this outrage stop. When nothing happened, they attacked the missionary running the projector. Perhaps he was responsible for this injustice! He was forced to stop the film and explain that the story wasn't over yet; there was more. So they settled back onto the ground, holding their emotions in tenuous check. Then came the crucifixion. Again, the people could not hold back. They began to weep and wail with such loud grief that, once again, the film had to be stopped. The missionary again tried to calm them, explaining that the story still wasn't over; there was more. So they composed themselves and sat down to see what happened next. Then came the resurrection. Pandemonium broke out this time, but for a different reason. The gathering had spontaneously erupted into a party. The noise now was of jubilation, and it was deafening. The people were dancing and slapping each other on the back. Christ is risen, indeed! Again the missionary had to shut off the projector; this time he didn't tell them to calm down and wait for what was next. All that was supposed to happen—in the story and in their lives—was happening. **Ben Patterson, "Resurrection and Pandemonium," LeadershipJournal.net 4-13-04**

Putting the Saints into Circulation

During the reign of Oliver Cromwell, there was a shortage of currency in the British Empire. Representatives carefully searched the nation in hopes of finding silver to meet the emergency. After one month, the committee returned with its report. "We have searched the Empire in vain seeking to find silver. To our dismay, we found none anywhere except in the cathedrals where the statues of the saints are made of choice silver." To this, Oliver Cromwell eloquently answered, "Let's melt down the saints and put them into circulation." **G. Sweeting, How to Witness Successfully.**

Acts 8:26-40

²⁶But an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip saying, "Get up and go south to the road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is a desert road.) ²⁷So he got up and went; and there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure; and he had come to Jerusalem to worship, ²⁸and he was returning and sitting in his chariot, and was reading the prophet Isaiah. ²⁹Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go up and join this chariot."

³⁰Philip ran up and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?" ³¹And he said, "Well, how could I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. ³²Now the passage of Scripture which he was reading was this:

"He was led as a sheep to slaughter;

And as a lamb before its shearer is silent,

So He does not open His mouth.

³³"In humiliation His judgment was taken away;

Who will relate His generation?

For His life is removed from the earth."

³⁴The eunuch answered Philip and said, "Please tell me, of whom does the prophet say this? Of himself or of someone else?" ³⁵Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him.

³⁶As they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch said, "Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?" ³⁷And Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." ³⁸And he ordered the chariot to stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch, and he baptized him.

³⁹When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; and the eunuch no longer saw him, but went on his way rejoicing. ⁴⁰But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he kept preaching the gospel to all the cities until he came to Caesarea..