

Sermon Series: “Sharing the Good News—A Way of Life”—Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN 3/15/09
Title: “Balanced Expectations”
Text: Mark 4: 1-20
Intro.: *Illus.: Congregation of One Makes Big Decision*
Theme: When we share the good news of Jesus with another, we begin by getting ourselves and our success out of the way, and allow God to accomplish with the casting of his Word the saving purpose which he designs.

What God says about the sharing of His saving Word with others

- God accomplishes his plan whenever His Word is shared
 1. *As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it. Isaiah 55:10-11*
- God’s will in sharing the Good News is to bring about saving/living faith in the heart of the hearer
 1. *Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ. Romans 10:17*
 2. *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:16-17*
- Why, sometimes our sharing of Good News seems to be ineffective?
 1. In part of a judgment upon a stubborn and spiritually reckless heart
 - a. *The days are going to come, declares the Almighty LORD, when I will send a famine throughout the land. It won't be an ordinary famine or drought. Instead, there will be a famine of hearing the words of the LORD. Amos 8:11*
 2. From mercy God reaches others through and despite sinful stubbornness
 - a. *So receiving God's promise is not up to us. We can't get it by choosing it or working hard for it. God will show mercy to anyone he chooses. . . God has every right to exercise his judgment and his power, but he also has the right to be very patient with those who are the objects of his judgment and are fit only for destruction. He also has the right to pour out the riches of his glory upon those he prepared to be the objects of his mercy—even upon us, whom he selected, both from the Jews and from the Gentiles. Romans 9:16, 22-24*
 - b. **Ills.: Wonders versus Want of Wonder**

Jesus' advocates a balanced expectation in sowing the Good News (Mark 4:13-20)

- Reasons why the saving word doesn't take
 1. **A hard heart** – Satan controls and run interference of the Word every taking root (**vs. 14-15**)
 2. **A shallow heart** – looking for emotional band-aid to a hurt but not looking for commitment or its cost (**vs. 16, 17**)
 3. **A preoccupied heart** – everything else is more important than eternal life and it gets chocked out by clutter (**18, 19**)
 - a. **Illus.: my strawberry garden — when weeds took over two summers ago**
- Adapting your approach to your hearer
 1. Runner slower so that they can catch up
 - a. *Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Hebrews 12:1*
 2. To those new to the Gospel give milk not meat
 - a. *I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. 1 Corinthians 3:2*
 3. Help the other to change wineskins
 - a. *“And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the new wine will burst the skins and it will be spilled out, and the skins will be ruined.” Luke 5:37*
 - b. Sometimes, you have to help your friend or sibling change the environment to be free from pernicious influence
- Letting God determine the harvest of faith in those with whom you share the Good News
 1. Sometimes, we ruin the harvest because we try to rush it
 2. Other times we discount the results because it isn't as good as we expected
 3. When God casts the seed of His Word through our mouths, he will bring on the appropriate response (**vs. 20**)
 - a. Learn to celebrate the mustard seed of faith
 - b. Remember you may be the first in a series of baton passes
 - c. **Illus.: Pass the Baton**

Congregation of One Makes Big Decision

After his ordination in 1969, author and pastor Phillip Johnson received a call to serve one large church and ten smaller churches on the northern coast of Newfoundland, Canada. On the first day of his new circuit ministry, Johnson learned that in order to get to the smallest of the churches, he would have to travel 40 miles by snowmobile to a tiny village. When Johnson arrived, only one person had shown up for worship—a fisherman who had traveled about 20 miles to get there. Johnson initially thought about just saying a prayer and calling it a day. But then he realized that together, he and the fisherman had already logged 60 miles of travel and had 60 more miles to return home. With that in mind, Johnson decided to conduct the whole service as if there were a few hundred worshipers. They did it all: the hymns, the readings, the prayers, the sermon, the Lord's Supper, and the benediction. It was during the sermon that Johnson wondered why he had bothered. The fisherman never looked up. But when Johnson greeted the fisherman at the door and thanked him for coming, Johnson received a pleasant surprise. The fisherman said, "Reverend, I've been thinking about becoming a Christian for about 30-odd years. And today's the day!" **Lee A. Dean, Plainwell, Michigan**

Wonders versus Want of Wonder

The world will never starve for wonders; but only for want of wonder. **G.K. Chesterton in an inscription on the General Motors Building. *Century of Progress International Exposition (1933-1934: Chicago, Ill.)***

Pass the Baton

In the 2004 Summer Olympic Games in Athens, Greece, the American women's 4 x 100 relay race was favored to win the gold medal. The team featured Marion Jones, a sprinter who had won four gold medals at the previous games in Sydney. The American team was already off to a strong start when Jones took the baton for the second leg of the race. She gained ground as she ran her 100 meters and approached Lauryn Williams, a young speedster who would run the third leg. Williams began running as Jones drew near, but when she reached back to receive the baton, they couldn't complete the handoff. Once, twice, three times Jones thrust the baton forward, but each time it missed William's hand—she couldn't seem to wrap her fingers around it. Finally, on the fourth try, they made the connection. But by that time, they had crossed out of the 20-yard exchange zone and were disqualified. Everyone knew they were the fastest team on the track. The night before, they'd had the fastest qualifying time. But when they couldn't complete the handoff, their race was over. As important as it is for the previous generation to set the pace by living authentically, at a certain point, a handoff must be made in which the next generation receives the baton of faith and begins to run with it. That handoff isn't as easy as it looks. It isn't automatic. It's the result of thousands and thousands of practice runs. **Bryan Wilkerson, "From Generation to Generation," *PreachingToday.com***

Mark 4:1-20

¹He began to teach again by the sea. And such a very large crowd gathered to Him that He got into a boat in the sea and sat down; and the whole crowd was by the sea on the land. ²And He was teaching them many things in parables, and was saying to them in His teaching, ³"Listen to this! Behold, the sower went out to sow; ⁴as he was sowing, some seed fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate it up. ⁵Other seed fell on the rocky ground where it did not have much soil; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of soil. ⁶And after the sun had risen, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away. ⁷Other seed fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked it, and it yielded no crop. ⁸Other seeds fell into the good soil, and as they grew up and increased, they yielded a crop and produced thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold." ⁹And He was saying, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

¹⁰As soon as He was alone, His followers, along with the twelve, began asking Him about the parables. ¹¹And He was saying to them, "To you has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God, but those who are outside get everything in parables, ¹²so that while seeing, they may see and not perceive, and while hearing, they may hear and not understand, otherwise they might return and be forgiven."

¹³And He said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? How will you understand all the parables? ¹⁴"The sower sows the word. ¹⁵"These are the ones who are beside the road where the word is sown; and when they hear, immediately Satan comes and takes away the word which has been sown in them. ¹⁶"In a similar way these are the ones on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy; ¹⁷and they have no firm root in themselves, but are only temporary; then, when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately they fall away. ¹⁸"And others are the ones on whom seed was sown among the thorns; these are the ones who have heard the word, ¹⁹but the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. ²⁰"And those are the ones on whom seed was sown on the good soil; and they hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold."