

Wesleyan Methodist Church Sunday 27th April 2014

Series on Evangelism # 1 The need for Salvation

Passages: Matthew 25:31-33, 46; Romans 3:9-12; 5:12, 15-17; 6:11-14

Intro: Why a series on evangelism?

- The Southern District have set this year as the 'Year of Evangelism'. Every year should be the year of evangelism just like every year should be the 'Year of the child'. Explain.
- Jesus made it very clear that the good news about the kingdom of God was to be told to everyone who was willing to hear. Lamp on a stand.
- I firmly believe that we are very un-motivated when it comes to evangelism. We don't see the need, we think it is someone else's job and we probably feel way too complacent to even try. I often feel this way.
- It is good for our church to focus on evangelism. It builds the KOG, it breeds life and excitement, it's creative and it blesses people.
- Let's take up this challenge. Discuss it at home groups, around the table, whenever you gather. Pray about it at home and wherever you meet. Let's take seriously what we explore in church over these next 8-10 weeks. Make it a point not to miss a Sunday and whenever you meet someone from church ask them what they are learning and what they are putting into practice, in this way we will be encouraging one another daily and even more as we note that our Lord will be arriving soon. The early church did this.

Let's get under way, so why not begin with...

1) What is evangelism?

Evangelism is literally sharing the good news, so for Christians it is sharing the good news about Jesus. Now this sounds like a wonderful thing to do so why is it that...

a. (Why) many are wary of evangelism.

Unfortunately evangelism has received some rather bad press over the years.

- We have all been embarrassed by some over-zealous Christian spruiking somewhere inappropriately. My experience: Walking across the road from a street preacher.
- Tele evangelists seeking money more than souls. Some have been found to be ethically and morally corrupt.
- Tent preachers who are here today and gone tomorrow where emotive decisions are made but there seems to be little effective follow up.
- Mass track distribution: KOM 1987

This bad press has caused many people to become wary of 'Bible bashing Christians' and many Christians have distanced themselves from any attempt to be involved in evangelism. Many have concluded that as a self-respecting Christian they will have nothing to do with this manipulative and invasive practice.

I don't blame people for this response but how sad is it that the sharing of the good news about Jesus has been pushed onto the back burner in many Christian's minds. How sad that something so beautiful has been dis-coloured.

One of our aims is to reignite a passion to be involved in evangelism through balanced instruction that is both theoretical and practical and which produces an outcome involving words and actions.

Let's explore...

b. What evangelism is not

- Evangelism is not about getting backsides on church seats or reshuffling people from one church to another.
- It is not a package like a course or a tract with four spiritual laws on in. These are useful but we can't assume that because someone has done a course or received this track they are 'evangelised'.
- It is not the exclusive role of the clergy or only delivered from a pulpit.
- It is not proclamation alone or presence alone. Words and action should be two sides of the one coin rather than opposed to one another.

We could keep going here but let me finish with the fact that evangelism is not an optional extra for us Christians.

I hope you can imagine this analogy: 'What sort of Christian model are you? Well I am a standard version, I have regular servicing though I don't mind missing one here and there, I read the instruction manual now and then and telephone my manufacturer occasionally. I support the car club when there is money left over however there are some things that are optional extras which don't come with my model. I don't travel on windy roads or gravel tracks or sacrifice anything important and I definitely don't advertise who my maker is. You see I'm a standard version.'

- My friends let's not see ourselves as standard Christians rather as deluxe models with all the blessings and abilities of the maker. Our maker, Jesus, instructed us to be Christ followers and as such we are to go into the world and make disciples of all peoples.

We have looked at what evangelism is not so how about...

c. What it is

Here are two phrases that sum up evangelism:

- The first is, 'overjoyed by something wonderful'. The motivation to tell others about the good news of Jesus does not come from the information we know about him, our head knowledge, rather it comes from what we have experienced about him. We tell others out of the overflow of abundant blessing that the Holy Spirit pours into our lives. Paul says, 'our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction.' (1 Thess 1:5)

- The gifted 19th C English preacher CH Spurgeon said evangelism, 'is one beggar telling another beggar where to get bread.' In Aussie terms, 'Hey mate you look like you are starving, well I was starving yesterday and I found a food source that doesn't run out. Come with me and I will show you.'
 - Note we are all beggars. We are no better than the person we are telling.
 - We are all starving outside of the nourishment of Jesus.
 - We need to taste the food first before we can tell others about it.

Now we obviously need a message to tell also but looking at these two definitions it really shouldn't be that hard to be involved in evangelism.

We have tried to define evangelism. That's great but why place such importance on telling others this news? Is there really...

2) The need for Salvation?

We must have a clear understanding of the 'lost state' of the people around us or we will never understand the need let alone the urgency of the mission Jesus called us to be involved in.

Firstly there is...

a. The problem of inherited sin

- Read Romans 5:12 and expand.
 - We have all inherited a sin nature from Adam. Just like we inherit the likeness of Adam we inherit his nature.
 - Sin is not external that can be washed off but internal. My leg infection.
 - Seems unfair that we should inherit someone else's sin.
 - What about children? It seems from scripture that children are not guilty of this inherited sin despite having inherited Adam's sinful nature. They are therefore innocent until they begin to make choices based on their freedom to choose to accept God or reject him. Expand

Regardless of whether we are actually liable for punishment because of our sin nature that we inherit from Adam we are all personally responsible for...

b. The problem of our own sin and guilt.

Romans tells us there are none who are righteous, we have all turned away from God's plans. We are therefore all under the power of sin and the results of sin is death. Let's call sin: rebellion against God and his laws. The problem with sin is that it is not static, it doesn't occur in isolation from other forces or temptations.

At the root of all sin is satan who works in direct opposition to God. Satan will do all he can to take our attention away from focusing on God and his ways. When we sin by rebelling against God's laws that opens up an opportunity for satan to muscle his way in and begin to mess with our minds.

In smooth subtle speech just like he spoke to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, he says to us, 'It won't matter if you disobey God, it will feel good and God won't make you pay.' Then we rationalise away the seriousness of our sin and soon we are doing it regularly. Then with a sin here and sin there before we know it there is a sin everywhere. If we do wake up and try to come back to God, Satan who has become much more insidious, starts to heap guilt upon us. 'You're no good, look how hopeless you are. What a mess you have made of your life. God won't accept you now. Just give up trying to follow him.'

Our sin and our guilt is real and it does separate us from God, however it was 'while we were still sinners that Christ died for us'. God knows the mess we can get ourselves into and has paved the way for us to be saved and set free from our sin. It is no good trying to climb out of the pit of sin so we can be saved because we can't do that ourselves, rather we are saved while in the pit of sin totally by Jesus.

So...

c. Do people need saving?

You bet we do!

There are those who have walked with Jesus but have slid back into sin's ugly claws. If that is what has happened to you then confess your sin and repent, turn around, stop rebelling against God and allow him to take control of your life again.

Then there are those who have never known God personally. How will they ever know about God's saving grace unless someone tells them? Someone like you or I.

I don't think we really need convincing that people need Jesus so they can be saved from their sins. I think we all agree that the people we know need Jesus sometime.

But here is the thing that gets me and I dare say you also.

- We can live with, we can live beside and work with people each day holding this treasure inside of us but never telling them how to find this great news themselves.

Why do we do that?

- Either we are too scared to open our mouths
- Not sure what to say
- Embarrassed about what you believe
- Think that they won't be interested after all they look happy and content, they probably don't need it.
- You convince yourself you will have time to tell them some time in the future

Somehow we need to move past these excuses and it is my prayer that this series will help you to find ways to engage others in words and actions that will reveal the grace of the Lord Jesus.

We can conclude the following:

- All people are lost in their sin and will one day reap the rewards of this: Eternal punishment and eternal separation from God.
- In the parable of the sheep and the goats Jesus made it very clear that there will be a judgment time when all mankind will stand before Jesus and he will separate the righteous from the unrighteous.
- We need to be convinced of the urgency of the hour. Either the opportunity to tell somebody the good news will pass or Jesus will come sooner than we expect. Maybe the best time is now time.

The exciting thing is God is alive and active in our world and he is on a rescue mission...

3) God to the rescue

God has not abandoned us. He has provided all that is needed for people to be saved. He has given us the mechanism...

a. Through the gift of his Son

The way of salvation is there for us to receive. We simply need to take it, receive it and it works!

The means of salvation is there...

b. Through the work of his Spirit

The bible says, 'He (God) saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out for us generously through Jesus Christ our savior,' (Titus 3:5-6)

Even though God has given us the mechanism and the means for people to be saved and enter his kingdom his rescue plan is not complete without you and I. God rescues people...

c. Through you and me

We are the carrier the conduit of the message to others. Ex. Stephen Lungu... One day after he became a Christian God spoke to him. "I will send you to the nations you do not know." He was young, had no schooling and felt very inadequate for the task. But he started that day on the bus telling people about Jesus.

Does that scare you? Do you feel inadequate? Well why not simply...

Conclusion: Ask for an opportunity!

Make it your mission to pray for an opportunity, expect it to come and look for it. Praise God in advance for that opportunity. Why not start today, this week.

Earlier in the week I intentionally asked the Lord for an opportunity and he gave me several. Why not simply ask God to give you an opportunity to talk to someone and why not tell me about it! Send me an email and let me know!

Message by Pastor David Lloyd