



LENT “BECOMING A MISSION SHAPED CHURCH”
LENT 4 “Mission as Evangelism”

Sunday morning readings; John 4:4-30, Romans 10:14-18

Images of Evangelism

Look at the image below. Do you feel like this?



Evangelism as an explosion of Joy

The idea of evangelism has been tarnished or distorted. Perhaps we have negative images surrounding the idea. Sometimes as Anglicans we like to form committees to discuss what we should do rather than get on with the job at hand. The truth is evangelism should be a natural outworking of faith in Jesus Christ. It should be a natural response and it shouldn't be contrived or forced. Theologian and former Bishop in India Lesslie Newbigin says, 'the gospel is an 'explosion of joy'. So why does it feel so often like swimming in hot oil? Why are we paralysed by fear? Why do our mouths go dry and our hands get clammy?

In the New Testament Paul uses a number of images to help us think about evangelism

We are compelled

In 1 Corinthians 9:16 Paul speaks about being compelled to preach, compelled to share the good news not out of guilt or fear but out of joy. It should be a natural outpouring of who we are. So why does it often feel forced or uncomfortable?

It is a gift

The list in Ephesians 4:11 of gifts that Christ has given to the church (his body) includes evangelists. We see in Acts 21:8 that Philip was primarily known as an evangelist. Some people have a particular gifting as part of the five fold ministry that helps the church grow and mature. Others experience a 'situational' gifting from the spirit. Perhaps you have experienced a time when you have had an opportunity to witness to Christ and you found that the words flowed from your lips that you almost didn't know what you were going to say but the Lord gave you the right words.

Not just words but power

Paul speaks again in 1 Corinthians 4:20 that the Kingdom of God is not about words but about power. Sharing the truth about the resurrection power of Jesus, speaking honestly about acknowledging sin is becoming increasingly difficult in secularised society where people have all kinds of questions about what truth is and whose truth it is. It is not only our words that are evangelistic but our actions too. St Francis of Assisi made this expression famous, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel and, if you have to, use words'

Two illustrations

1. A story from a local woman

I'd noticed an older woman staring at us when we first sat down and it appeared she was homeless, but I tried not to stare. So, I was busy playing with my cell phone while munching down on my food when my husband whispered, "Did you see that?" I looked up quickly.

"No, what?"

"That woman just waited until those people left, and they left their cups on the table. So, she went over and took one of their cups and went up front and got a refill."

"Oh. How sad," I was slightly sickened at the idea of drinking from someone else's cup, but sad for her. She was obviously homeless and very dirty.

My husband and son went up to order a drink but I didn't want one. Then, when my son returned with the drink, I saw the inequity. I asked my son to let me out, and as he asked if I had changed my mind about a drink, I just told him to wait and I would explain later. Then, I went up front, and I ordered a R100 gift card. I went to the back of the restaurant and placed it quietly on the table in front of her. "This is for you," I said, and I left it there with the receipt.

"Thank you," she said.

I returned to my seat, and my husband said, "That was a good thing you did." I just smiled. It was the right thing to do. It revealed Jesus without using words.

2.

Steve had been sitting in the Library all morning trying to finish some work for his Varsity College studies. Out of the corner of his eye he saw a man at another table take a Bible from the shelf and begin to read. Steve wondered what the man was reading. He felt the Holy Spirit prompt him. In the story from Acts 8:30 Philip asks the Ethiopian "Do you understand what you are reading?" In the same way Steve walked up to the man and asked him a similar question.

The man although surprised was very open and invited him to explain the passage. This led to a great conversation about Jesus.

Discuss these two illustrations. Have you had similar experiences? If not, pray that God would open doors for you to be a witness to Christ.

BIBLE STUDY

John 4:4-30 (NIV)

⁴ Now he had to go through Samaria. ⁵ So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶ Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon.

⁷ When 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.)

⁹ The 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.^[a])

¹⁰ Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."

¹¹ "Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? ¹² Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?"

¹³ Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

¹⁵ The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water."

¹⁶ He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back."

¹⁷ "I have no husband," she replied.

Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. ¹⁸ The 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. ²⁰ Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem."

²¹ "Woman," Jesus replied, "believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. ²² You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³ Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. ²⁴ God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth."

²⁵ The woman said, “I know that Messiah” (called Christ) “is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.”

²⁶ Then Jesus declared, “I, the one speaking to you—I am he.”

BACKGROUND

Increasingly we live in a culture that is adverse to risk. We take risks with ourselves but not in our interactions with others for fear of offending. Jesus own ministry was characterised by risk taking by pushing the envelope. His interactions with people from the perspective of the Jewish establishment were unorthodox to say the least. He took risks with people but did it in an incredibly loving way. Remember the following points related to the reading.

- The Samaritans were considered only slightly better than the Gentiles. There was the double prejudice of race and sex. Jesus would have grown up in an environment where the Jews superiority over others was often expressed making his interaction with the woman even more staggering.
- In verses 16-25 we see a pivotal point in the conversation when Jesus breaks down her barriers. He doesn't condemn her or accuse her but invites her to see things in a new way.

In his ground breaking book *Transforming Mission* David Bosch speaks of what evangelism must be. These ideas relate well to the above reading.

The evangeliser is a witness **not** a judge

Evangelism is always an invitation

Authentic evangelism is contextual

QUESTIONS

1. How was Jesus prophetic in the conversation with the woman?
2. Considering the social taboo of speaking with a woman why was Jesus' interaction with her so astounding?
3. What does the story teach us about reaching out across social and cultural barriers?
4. Think about people in your community who need to hear the story of Jesus. Find 2 or 3 creative ways to share it.
5. Write out a 3 minute testimony of how you came to faith in Christ. Share with a friend who can help you make the story real and unreligious so it's acceptable to people.