

Intro:

This afternoon I want to return to the “Our Church” series. We have talked about:

1. Christ the head of our Church
2. Pastor-led congregational government of our church
3. Word of God focus of our church
4. Reverent atmosphere of our church

Now we want to discuss the topic:

Our Church and Evangelism

In our discussion with the men, I confessed that I think this area is the weakest of our ministry. We need to change our minds (that’s repentance!) about the way we do things. That will mean thinking about our ministry and changing some of our practical decisions in ministry.

I’d like to read, first of all the statement of Mount Calvary Baptist Church concerning this topic:

We believe in systematic community evangelism (Acts 20:20-21, 25-27).

While encouraging our people in spontaneous evangelism, we also accept a corporate responsibility for the community in which the Lord has placed our church. As Paul established the example of evangelizing from house to house in order to be free from the blood of men, so we endeavor to evangelize our neighborhood systematically and often. Our evangelism ministries repeatedly appeal to those in our community with personal visits, attractive literature, work projects, Bible clubs, Bible classes, Bible studies, and youth evangelism.

What do they mean by this statement?

1. They encourage ‘spontaneous’ evangelism
 - Being ‘always ready’ to give a word of witness
 - ‘Network’ evangelism – witnessing to friends, family, acquaintances
2. But, they engage in systematic community evangelism
 - Door to door distribution of literature, etc.
 - Repeated contacts on a systematic basis

We have done some of this kind of work, with generally discouraging results.

- Perhaps we need to **re-think** what we have done in the past in this kind of work, and modify our efforts in the future.
- The idea of systematic community evangelism does not have to be abandoned, but it seems wise to **adapt methods** to our current community culture.

Now, let's just go through some passages about the proclamation of the gospel:

And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.
(Mt 24.14)

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: (Mt 28.19)

And the gospel must first be published among all nations.
(Mk 13.10)

And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. (Mk 16.15)

And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. (Lk 24.47)

But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. (Ac 1.8)

I am going to use as our text, Mk 16.15

Proposition: The call to Christianity is not a call to a passive self-oriented spiritual life, it is a call to an active others-oriented ministry.

I. Going is assumed

A. "Go" is a participle as in Mt 28.19

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations" NAU
(Mt 28.19)

1. Exactly the same construction, an aorist passive participle

a. Lit.: "having gone"

b. Passive voice: past action with ongoing results

c. Aorist tense: views the action in its entirety – a life that has gone out into the world somewhere

2. The assumption is that Christians will go
 - a. Business reasons
 - b. Family reasons
 - c. Missionary reasons
 - d. ‘Accidental’ reasons – *i.e.*, you might not be quite sure how you got here

The reasons you are here in this place in the world define the ‘network’ in which you can minister immediately

This is the ‘spontaneous evangelism’ the Mount Calvary statement talks about

- B. The sphere of activity is ‘the world’ – Gk. *κοσμος* – “the ordered cosmos”

1. ‘World’ has several meanings in the NT
 - a. The whole universe
 - b. The physical earth, the planet
 - c. The inhabitants of the earth, people*
 - d. The world system, culture, generally antithetical to God

It is the third meaning that is in view here: the people of the world.

2. The scope of Christian ‘going’ is emphatically universal
 - a. The word for ‘all’ is an emphatic form of the word – “all, and I really mean all”
 - b. The emphasis is similar to that of Acts 1.8: Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, uttermost parts
 - c. Even Victoria, BC

For most believers, these are not new thoughts. We are quite aware of them if we have been in Bible preaching churches for any length of time.

So here we are. We have done and gone to Victoria, BC. Now what?

II. Preaching is the activity

A. The work of the herald (the κηρυξ, the preacher)

1. The herald in ancient Gk literature is the servant of the king with an important role to play
 - a. They act in behalf of the king
 - b. They have status as men of wisdom, men of the court; even considered ‘demiurges’, *i.e.* the voices of the gods
 - c. Yet performed menial tasks for their lords, as well as ‘heralding’
 - 1) Preparing meals
 - 2) Serving guests at dinners
 - 3) Harnessing horses
 - 4) Preparing baths

“One might call them adjutants of their princes; they are at their personal service.”¹

More could be said about the ‘herald’ in Gk literature, but I think this is sufficient to get the idea:

- He is in the service of the king
- He is employed in any matter the king might need
- He has a place of status in the kingdom
- His main function is the employment of his voice to communicate the king’s message (called ‘angel, deacon, elder’ in some places)

2. In the New Testament, the work of the herald is more important than the office of the herald
 - a. Noun very little used in the NT (though some interesting concepts in it)
 - b. The servants of Christ are sent out, not with status, but as sheep among wolves
 - c. NT emphasis is on the ‘heralding’ activity: Preaching

¹ Friedrich, “κηρυξ, etc.” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vols. 5-9 edited by Gerhard Friedrich. Vol. 10 compiled by Ronald Pitkin., ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey William Bromiley and Gerhard Friedrich, electronic ed., 3:684 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-c1976).

B. The work of the herald: Preaching

1. It is almost always used in the active voice: an activity (as here)
2. It involves preaching the gospel; *i.e.*, the good news about Jesus Christ who saves sinners from the condemnation and power of sin
3. It involves preaching to an audience: here ‘every creature’ [more in a minute]

Again, this is all familiar to us. There are many activities that can be part of the preaching, but there is always the preaching.

- Menial ‘non-preaching’ tasks are part of the work
- Preaching is the center of the work

III. Every creature is the opportunity

- A. The statistics tell us that almost everyone in our community does not even attend a religious service on Sunday

What does that mean?

1. Think of someone who you know doesn’t attend a church: this is one of the creatures to whom you should preach (almost everyone you know)
2. It may be that the creatures who *do* attend church also need the preaching

B. The preaching is to ‘all the creation’

1. God uses the word ‘creation’ to speak of every person (not the word ‘all people’)
2. This certainly underscores the fact that every person is a creative act of God and someone in whom God is particularly interested

This is the ‘evangelistic marketplace’ – thousands of souls, individually created and loved by God, yet dead in their sins.

Conclusion:

Proposition: The call to Christianity is not a call to a passive self-oriented spiritual life, it is a call to an active others-oriented ministry.

Key thoughts concerning *method*:

- The method is *preaching* and *discipling* (Mt 28.19)
- The means of creating opportunities for the method can vary.
- The work involved for preaching includes many things besides talking – remember the duties of the herald.

How to gain an audience (study the book of Acts):

- Go where the people are
- Get the people's attention (in good ways)

Apostles had signs

We have works: Sunday school ministries; children's clubs; in home Bible studies; community services [with careful priority setting]

I know of a church where some mechanically inclined men set up a service of changing oil in senior citizens cars once a month at the church.

I know of churches using drug and alcohol addiction ministries as a means of outreach.

Many ideas can be found – but be careful: it is easy to do things that make people think well of you and make you feel good about yourself and never preach the gospel.

- Give the gospel

Stephen the deacon preaching in the synagogues with such effectiveness that they stoned him to death

Any effort involves commitment and wise use of the resources we have.

Are you willing to be involved?

For now, be sure to be inviting folks out to the Silvestru meeting. We will talk of these matters again.