

Evangelism and Witnessing Lesson 9 2Q 2012

Releasing Into Ministry

Read Memory Text – “And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!’” (Rom 10:15 NKJV)

Thoughts about the memory text?

Paul is referencing Isaiah 52:7

How beautiful on the mountains
are the feet of those who bring good news,
who proclaim peace,
who bring good tidings,
who proclaim salvation,
who say to Zion,
“Your God reigns!”

What do you think about Paul not quoting exactly the reference in Isaiah? Have you noticed NT writers frequently do this? Why? What are the possibilities?

- Don't have a text available and quoting from memory and make a mistake? How do you feel about that if this is being inspired by the Holy Spirit? Does it affect your understanding of inspiration if the Holy Spirit allows mistakes into the text?
- The writer purposely changes the quote to shape it for his current audience, leaving out sections deemed irrelevant. What if we were to do that?

What is the message of good news? What is the message of peace? What is the message of salvation?

In Isaiah it has a first reference to deliverance from Babylonian captivity, but it also is a prelude to Isaiah 53, the

prophecy of the Messiah.

So, what is the good news of peace and salvation that we have to take to the world?

I was reading in a book *Rediscovering the Scandal of the Cross* by Green and Baker, the following:

We must face the reality that, even when it is articulated by its most careful and sophisticated adherents, penal substitutionary atonement remains susceptible to misunderstanding and even bizarre caricature. Accordingly, the drama of the death of Jesus becomes a manifestation of God's anger – with God as the distant Father who punishes his own son in order to appease his own indignation. One of us has received a report from a friend leading a Sunday school class in which a boy observed, “Jesus I like, but the Father seems pretty mean!” “Why is God always so angry?” another friend asked. “A policeman with a billy club writing up a ticket for yet another of my transgressions; an official at a basketball game always blowing the whistle: ‘Foul! Foul! Technical foul! You’re out of here!’ – these are the images of God I knew,” our friend observed. p. 30

They also observe:

If, at least to a significant degree, penal substitutionary atonement has been a “culture product” of life in the West, is it any surprise that proclamation of the gospel grounded in this theory has tended to fall on deaf ears in other social worlds? Christian missionaries from the West, armed with this central affirmation of the gospel – namely, the good news that Jesus has come to take away your guilt, that Jesus has been punished for you so that God can declare you not guilty – have often reported their surprise upon discovering the huge populations of the world for who guilt is a nonissue. p. 29

Thoughts?

I have contended for some time that Christ hasn't returned because the gospel of the kingdom has not gone to the world as a witness to all nations. I found it reaffirming that these authors, find the doctrine of penal substitution to be the main construct and manifestation of Christianity that has gone to the world, yet they also find it is merely a product of western culture, not based in Scripture and not effective in reaching the world for Christ.

Do we have a message that resonates for all humans? What is that message? What is the good news you would take?

The world currently operates upon two antagonistic principles, love and selfishness, good and evil, light and dark, yin and yang. Eastern philosophies, and all humans recognize these two principles:

- Plants produce fruit, grains, nuts and beautiful flowers and scents – yet also poisons, thistles and thorns
- Animals are loving, loyal, yet also ferocious and dangerous
- Rain refreshes the land, yet storms destroy
- Despots can murder millions yet love their families
- Christianity teaches battle between carnal and spiritual man

Do we have a message that addresses this? It reminds me of one of the founders of our church who said:

The student should learn to view the word as a whole, and to see the relation of its parts. He should gain a knowledge of its grand central theme, of God's original purpose for the world, of the rise of the great controversy, and of the work of redemption. **He should understand the nature of the two principles that are contending for supremacy**, and should learn to trace their working through the records of history and prophecy, to the great

consummation. He should see how this controversy enters into every phase of human experience; how in every act of life he himself reveals the one or the other of the **two antagonistic motives**; and how, whether he will or not, he is even now deciding upon which side of the controversy he will be found. Ed 191

Do we understand the two antagonistic motives? Can we explain them? Can we express them in terms that connects with other cultures? Do we have any good news to address this problem?

In Eastern philosophy yin and yang is conceptualized not in moral tones, but as positive and negative in everything always balanced. They include things like male and female, back and front, light and dark, hot and cold, up and down, and that as the yin reaches its pinnacle it automatically leads to yang and vice versa.

And the two must be joined together to have a whole like male and female, or light and dark.

What is your understanding of this philosophy? Any strengths? Any weaknesses? Any obvious errors?

- There are aspects of this that are true – male and female as God designed are required to make one whole human
- Front and back of the hand are required to make a whole hand, but so are the sides
- Wheat fully grown yang – goes back to seed, yin – the cycle of life
- So the yin and yang touch on the circle of love, the law of love as God designed the universe to operate
- But the concept that there is no good or evil is, in my mind, a state of denial – there is good and there is real evil in this world. The idea that there is no good or evil actually perpetuates Satan's goal, which is the eternal existence of good and evil.
- The Eastern philosophy suggests, like the wheat, that

death is part of the cycle of life and one must perpetually die and experience reincarnation.

How do you understand the humanity's problem and the good news God has provided to solve the problem and how might you share it with someone from the East?

What about affirming the circle of life, the law of love, the giving to live as seen in nature? What about exploring with them what happens when the circle is broken? So evil would be something that interferes with the seed falling to the ground and growing again.

But is there a difference between a plant and an intelligent sentient being? How do you present eternal life, the possibility of never dying, living forever without pain, suffering, death?

And that in Christ the two antagonistic forces met head to head and love overcame selfishness.

What would you say to those who see a recycling of energy, that when we die the energy that was in us returns to the universe and when someone is born the energy that was ours is being used by them?

Does Christianity have something to say to people who think like this?

Our bodies will return to the dust of the earth, and the breath of life will go back to God, who gave it to us. Ecc 12:7 GNB

Does this have anything to say about energy returning to God? And does God dispense the energy again?

What is the error in the idea that the return of energy in the form a new life, baby being born, is reincarnation as they teach in the East?

It undermines individuality – how many individuals are there?
 With the increase in population if everyone is reincarnated
 where are the new lives coming from?

Consider water used in the body – when we die the water goes
 back into the cycle of water reused throughout the earth,
 when a new baby is born some of the water in their body may
 have been used in many people before, but does that mean the
 baby is one of those previous people?

What good news do we have for people in this view?

What about the story of creation, of the introduction of sin,
 which caused the two antagonistic principles, and a future in
 which no recurring cycles of rebirth and suffering over and
 again, but free from suffering and elimination of pain?

Another aspect is shame versus guilt. In the book,
Rediscovering the Scandal of the Cross the authors point out
 that western cultures have guilt based philosophies while
 eastern cultures have shame based philosophies.

Here are some of the differences between guilt and shame:

| Shame | Guilt |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Focus on self | Focus on the act |
| Nature of fault | |
| Failure to meet self-expectations | Offense against legal exp. |
| Internal Reaction | |
| Embarrassment/Disgrace | Condemnation/Remorse |
| Self-depreciation | Self-accusation |
| Fear of abandonment | Fear of punishment |
| Resentment | Anger |
| Self-isolation | Self-justification |
| Alienation | Hostility |

Social Reaction

| | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Ridicule & exclusion | Blame & hold responsible |
| Disgrace & hold in contempt | Accuse & condemn |
| Disapprove & reproach | Punish & retaliate |

Remedy

| | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Identification & communication | propitiation through restitution or penalty |
| Love banishes shame | Justification banishes guilt |

Here is a story told in the book to illustrate this difference:

A tragic accident provided...[the] first clues as to why the common penal substitution explanation of atonement, so clear and logical to Western missionaries, had not satisfied this Japanese church leader. A young man from [the local] congregation was driving a company truck and accidentally hit and killed two women walking by the side of the road. The police and court demonstrated more concern for the relationships and people's responses than to written codes. They handled the case in a way markedly different from American legal processes. The young man immediately confessed that the accident was his fault because he had been going too fast. The judge put him in custody but released him to attend the funerals of the two women who had been killed. The judge attended the funerals also and carefully observed not only how the young man behaved but how the families responded to him. In the meantime the police carefully investigated and exonerated the young man. They said he could not have been going as fast as he reported, and they discovered that the company truck had a steering defect. The young man was let out of jail to do a work of public service for the rest of the year, and then he was fully released and rehabilitated. The case demonstrated...that the Japanese had a difference concept of how justice is achieved... (Green, J., Baker, M., *Rediscovering the Scandal of the Cross*, Intervarsity

Press, p. 154)

Thoughts? With this in mind do we have any Good News to take to people in Japan?

Would the message, “Jesus died to pay our legal penalty and take away guilt” reach people in this society? No! What about when Adam and Eve sinned they shamed themselves and humanity, and Jesus came to remove that shame, heal mankind and restore honor to humanity?

Here is one of many quotes that communicate such an idea, imagine sharing this with someone from a shame based society:

Christ came to give expression to the law of God, to represent the Father's character. He came to minister to man, **to restore in him the moral image of God.** Tho he was rich, **yet for our sake he became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich.** {ST, August 26, 1897 par. 3}

God did not create man sinful. Adam came forth from the hand of his Maker without the taint of evil. The holy pair might have retained their innocence, had they lived by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God, had they refused to listen to the strange voice declaring another story than that which God had told them. **But they abused their high and holy privileges.** They were left free to choose between good and evil, and they chose the evil. **And as they chose to believe the lie of Satan and disobey the express command of God, that which was pure and godlike in their nature became perverted and defiled...** {ST, August 26, 1897 par. 4}

In his humanity, Christ lived a perfect life, thus elevating humanity in the scale of moral worth with God. With his human arm Christ lays hold of man, while with his divine arm he grasps the throne of the Infinite. Thus he imbues man with his own spiritual nature, and

lifts him to his side, to be cherished and loved as the Father loves his Son. {ST, August 26, 1897 par. 6}

There are many such quotations – what is the purpose of Christ in this view? Restoration of humanity, taking away shame, restoring humanity back to God’s original ideal, including in moral worth and station.

SUNDAY

Read first sentence, “Many church leaders...” I want to go on record I am willing to share – if you would like to help out we have so many places and opportunities to share this message.

Here are the new pamphlets we have purchased, which describes the beauty of God’s character so share with all Christians. I have several boxes here today and if you want a box to take please feel free to do so. I am putting them in my waiting room at my office. Feel free to do likewise at your office if you would like.

If you have ideas about how to promote this message let us know.

Anyone interested in working as an organizer, planner, administrator helping with all the coordination etc. let us know.

MONDAY

In the first paragraph the lesson suggest that there is fear behind the professional only mindset that a non professional might do something wrong in evangelism and turn people away from Christ and His church.

Thoughts about this?

The lesson asks us to consider what Christ said in Mt 7:17,18:

Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit.

How does this help us in determining who is qualified for evangelism?

The lesson asks, “How do we determine between good and bad fruit, and how should the church leadership as a whole be involved in this process? Also, how do we do this without judging others?”

Thoughts about this?

When you go to the grocery store and pick out fruit, determining the good from the bad fruit, are you judging the fruit? Or can you do that without judging which is good and which is bad?

Or perhaps they are saying we could not judge good and bad fruit, but mature and immature fruit? In other words someone may be “good” but immature and therefore not ready to lead evangelism?

But, are there bad apples in the mix? How do we determine this? Do we judge people or do we judge the ideas they put forth, the picture of God they teach, and how it affects people?

Like a remedy a doctor puts forth – could a doctor have a good heart and put forth a purported remedy, intending to help, but it is actually ineffective?

Could a profit motivated doctor put out a remedy, not interested primarily in helping but in making money, but nonetheless the remedy works?

Should we concern ourselves with the motives or the message? And what if good people, with good motives are ignorantly, but passionately, putting forth messages that don’t heal, and even

perhaps harm? How should we respond?

What is our responsibility? Is it to silence them or to present a healing remedy clearly so people can choose for themselves?

The lesson points out a key – “If we give adequate attention to the leading of people into a meaningful and deepening relationship with Jesus, the Holy Spirit will ensure that they bear the right fruit.”

This is well said – how can we focus our efforts in helping this become a reality for our ministry?

TUESDAY

The lesson brings up a great point, namely that different people, from different backgrounds, cultures, generations, races will respond differently, so each of us can go places and be effective where others of us cannot. Some of you will be able to talk to and witness to people who would never listen to me. And I may be able to witness to some who wouldn't listen to you.

This is a powerful truth that I want us all to embrace, don't think you are not qualified to tell others about God as Jesus revealed. You may be the only person that a particular individual will ever listen to.

What if each one of us were constantly alert for opportunities to share the truth about God's kingdom, methods, principles and what Christ accomplished for us? Do you think we would reach more people collectively than if only a few speak publicly?

WEDNESDAY

Read first paragraph, “Spiritual growth...” thoughts?

What have you found has helped in your spiritual growth?

- Quiet time with God – prayer
 - How many minutes a day do you get with silence, no radio, TV, computer, ipad, iphone, just silence to think?
 - How often to you seek to quiet your mind?
- Meditation on creation
- Study God’s word
- Sharing with others and study with others
- Helping other people
- Others?

Read second paragraph, “A valid question...” thoughts?

How can you tell truth from error? What methods do you use?
What tools are helpful?

- Opinions of others? (Bible commentaries for instance?)
- It feels right?

What are the sources of information from which we can draw?

- Scripture
- God’s laws in nature
- Experience (including experience with God, revelation from God, experience with others, observation, etc)

How do we use these?

- Use all of Scripture requiring all the inspired writings to harmonize
- Require all three sources of information to harmonize – God who inspired Scripture is also the God who created nature and thus the laws of nature
- Reject interpretations that violate the laws of nature
- What is the difference between a natural law and evidence from nature?
 - Natural law – gravity, thermodynamics, law of

- liberty, law of love
- Evidence in nature – fossils, complexity of life
- Laws are constants and can be used as boundaries for our ideas. Evidence of nature is open to interpretation, when, how, why are there dinosaur fossils?
- What are some principles for interpreting Scripture correctly?
 - Pray for wisdom and don't seek to understand God on your own.
 - Have a humble heart willing to learn
 - But don't be gullible, require answers to be evidence based and sensible
 - Important to understand the context
 - But equally important not to be tied to tightly to the context – much of Scripture has meaning outside the local setting in which it was originally written. Plus, primary purpose of Scripture is God revealing himself to us. So, we must use the entire scripture to draw the fullest picture of God
 - Old Testament best understood through the lens of Jesus – not the other way around
 - Evidence texts enlighten or inform the claims texts (i.e. Christ's life inform us to the meaning of the text, "God is love.")
 - Let Scripture define itself, don't bring local, or recent definitions to the subject
- Others?

THURSDAY

The lesson discusses harmony and differences amongst those who are witnessing for the Lord.

If differences arise between people witnessing for the Lord, even publicly, and heatedly, does that necessarily mean either person is not working for the Lord? What about Peter and

Paul? Was there a heated public disagreement? But weren't both still working for the Lord?

But, was one of them in error? Does being wrong on an idea, point, interpretation, presentation, mean one is not working for the Lord?

What would move one outside the Lord's team? Would refusal to follow truth, refusal to grow, refusal to give up error and instead hold to error take one away from God's team? If Peter would have rejected Paul's redirection, and insisted on going down the path of the Judiazers, would he have remained on God's team?

We all have errors, misunderstandings, incomplete perspectives, constructs that are in some way distorted – yet this doesn't remove us from God's team. As long as our hearts remain open to truth, willing to grow, humbly willing to investigate ideas that are different, and allowing evidence to lead us and change our beliefs as new truth unfolds.

If we however, close our minds to truth what happens?

God never urges any one on in wickedness. He never leads man to become desperate in his rebellion. He will not that any should perish, but that all should be saved. **But he forces no one to accept the light.** If, after bearing long with man, God sees that he will not submit, **he leaves him to work out his natural hatred. He gives him up to the worst of all tyrants,--self.** {YI, May 25, 1899 par. 9}

From those **who will not see the light**, who are determined to go on in the hardness of their hearts, **God gradually withdraws the restraining power of his grace.** {YI, May 25, 1899 par. 10}

Today, as in the days when Christ worked his wonderful miracles, **the truth of God is made known.** Men have within themselves **the evidence of its divinity.** The Holy Spirit impresses their minds by the

manifestation of divine power. **If received, the light sent from God leads to freedom, life, and salvation. But if by resistance, preconceived opinions are strengthened, if the God-given blessing is not received, the light becomes darkness.** {YI, May 25, 1899 par. 11}

Thoughts? Does this give any insights?