



Courageous Evangelism: A Prayer for Boldness

May 22, 2022

Holy Text: Acts 4:23-31

Acts 4:23-31 (KJV) And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them. ²⁴ And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is: ²⁵ Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? ²⁶ The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. ²⁷ For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, ²⁸ For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done. ²⁹ And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, ³⁰ By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus. ³¹ And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

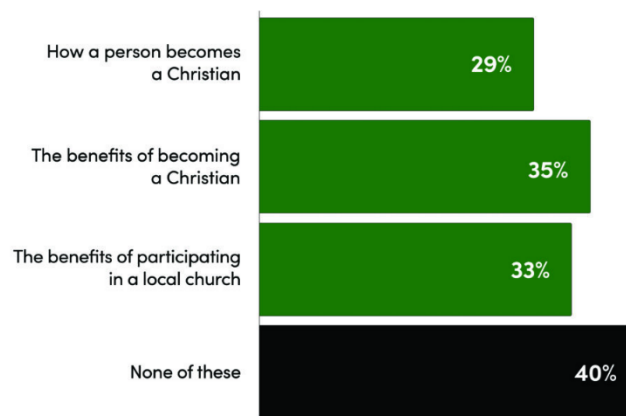
This week we continue our "Courageous" Sermon Series. In the first message of the series, Bishop McLeod stated, "Over the next few weeks (through Father's Day), we will "go back to the wall," attempting to encourage one another in the Scriptures in good and godly, but very foundational things!" With the help of the LORD, the members of CRC will leave encouraged and strengthened in the area of evangelism.

I will start by restating a statistic that should be alarming to followers of Jesus. According to a [Lifeway Research Study](#) in 2016, only 29% of 'unchurched' individuals have ever had a Christian tell them how a person becomes a Christian.

Few unchurched have heard a Christian share about their faith

Among Americans who have not attended a religious service in the past six months

"Has a Christian ever shared with you one-on-one any of the following?"



Note: 11% said not sure

Lifewayresearch

Source: Lifeway Research study of 2,000 unchurched Americans conducted May 23-June 1, 2016

While this message is meant to encourage and strengthen, I won't fall into the trap of modern thinking that states that encouragement cannot contain chastisement or strong exhortation to go

and do what our Lord commanded us to do. After His resurrection, Jesus' command to the Apostles was given shortly before ascending to Heaven and is found in Matthew 28:19-20.

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

The KJV translates the Greek 'mathēteuō' as 'teach.' However, I believe we get a fuller understanding of the command when we follow other translations like the ESV, CSB, or NLT that translate it as 'make disciples.'

This command given to the Apostles is:

- Cross-Cultural: The 'who do we make disciples of' question is answered
 - The Apostles were commanded to go to ALL nations. Not just the folks next door.
- Descriptive: The 'how to make a disciple' question is answered
 - Baptize
 - Instruct
- Dated: The 'how long should you do this' question is answered
 - This work should continue until the end of the world.

If we faithfully interpret this text, can we honestly walk away from it thinking that Jesus was giving a simple suggestion and not a command? If we are honest with ourselves, I don't see this as a possibility. Secondly, does a faithful interpretation of this text conclude that this command was only for the eleven Apostles? Again, I don't see this as a possibility.

Why might we lack the courage to evangelize the lost?

1. We fear the consequences of offending the lost
 - Possible lost relationships
 - Possible loss of income
 - Possible ostracism
2. We fear not being fully equipped
 - Worried about not being able to answer a question and convince someone to repent and put their faith in Jesus
3. We fear rejection
 - Afraid of not being liked
 - Afraid of being abandoned

We will attempt to address these three particular fears later in the message, but I think we can glean some encouragement and strength from today's text.

We did not read Acts 3 and the beginning half of Acts 4; however, these texts are essential to understanding our primary text. Here are some highlights:

- Peter & John go to the Temple for afternoon prayer (3 pm) – (Acts 3:1)
- A disabled beggar asks Peter & John for money at one of the Temple gates (called Beautiful.) Peter responded that he would not give him money, but he had something better. He told the man to get up and walk. (Acts 3:2 – 6)
- The man was healed instantly (fulfillment of the prophecy in Isaiah 35:6.) He responded by jumping up and giving praise to God in the Temple. (Acts 3:7 – 11)
- Peter preaches the gospel after a crowd gathers because of the excitement after the healing. (Acts 3:12 – 26)

- Peter's preaching was interrupted by a group of Priests and Sadducees. They did not like the message (the resurrection of Jesus), so they arrested Peter & John and threw them in jail overnight. (Acts 4:1-4)
- The Sanhedrin brings Peter & John before them and asks them "by what power or name they have healed the cripple man" (Acts 4:7). Peter responds by preaching Jesus once again and even links Jesus as the fulfillment of Psalms 118:22. (Acts 4:10-12)
- The Sanhedrin realized they were getting nowhere fast with Peter & John. They noted their boldness and skill (although they weren't classically trained.) (Acts 4:13). They also had the problem of the healed man hanging around (Acts 4:14.)
- In an attempt to contain the message being preached, they decided to threaten Peter & John with further repercussions if they spoke or taught in the name of Jesus any further. (Acts 4:17-18)
- Peter & John responded that they would obey God, not the Sanhedrin (Acts 4:19-20)
- This response brings more threats from the Sanhedrin (they couldn't do anything to them because the people were praising God for the healing.) (Acts 4:21-22)

Today's Text

Acts 4:23 (KJV) And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them.

- Here, the Greek is literally translated as "they went to their own people."
- The people of God are ALWAYS better off when we are together.
 - Hebrews 10:25 (KJV) Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.
 - Acts 2:42 (KJV) They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.
 - Hebrews 3:13 (KJV) But exhort one another daily, as long as it is called today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.

Acts 4:24-28 (KJV) And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is: Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.

- The Church's response to the report was to immediately go to God in prayer in one accord (one in heart and mind.)
 - Being in one accord requires us to magnify what we have in common instead of what we don't.
 - Ephesians 4:4-6 (KJV) There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.
 - The Greek word for Lord at the beginning of the prayer expresses absolute authority. Their God created all things, and because of this, all things are subject to Him.
 - Their prayer is based on Psalm 2:1-2
 - They realized the threats of the Sanhedrin were actually against God, not the Church.

- The threats against the Church were seen as the fulfillment of prophecy.
- The enemies of God who murdered Jesus did not act outside of God's will. He is Sovereign. Matheson stated, "Our God does not beat down the storms that rise against Him; He rides upon them; He works through them."

Acts 4:29-31 (KJV) And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus. And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

- The Church asked God to see the obstacle in front of them.
- The Church asked for more boldness to tell others the good news and create opportunities to share the good news by healing and signs and wonders.
 - They didn't ask for protection. Courage to share the good news to make disciples was the priority.
- The shaking of the home where they gathered was no coincidence. On the contrary, it reassured the Church of the power and presence of God being with them.
 - Acts 16:25-26 (KJV) And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed.
 - Acts 2:1-2 (KJV) And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.
 - Isaiah 29:6 (KJV) Thou shalt be visited of the Lord of hosts with thunder, and with earthquake, and great noise, with storm and tempest, and the flame of devouring fire.
 - Psalm 68:8 (KJV) The earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God: even Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel.
- They were all filled with the Holy Ghost with the boldness of speech as the evidence.

Let us look again at the three fears mentioned when we began today's message.

Fear #1: We fear the consequences of offending the lost:

Ask yourself this question: What are the consequences if I don't share the gospel and make disciples?

- Luke 16:23-24 (KJV) And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.
- Revelation 20:10 (KJV) And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.
- Revelation 20:14-15 (KJV) And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

How do these consequences compare to those we fear if we offend the lost?

Fear #2: We fear not being fully equipped:

Ask yourself this question. Are the results of your evangelism up to you?

- Ephesians 2:1-10 (KJV) And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the Spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.
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- Ezekiel 36:22-28 (KJV) Therefore say unto the house of Israel, thus saith the Lord God; I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went. And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am the Lord, saith the Lord God, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.

Fear #3: We fear rejection

Ask yourself this question. If I had to choose one of the following, which is more critical: Pleasing God or pleasing my fellow man?

- Galatians 1:10 (KJV) For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.
- John 14:15 (KJV) If ye love me, keep my commandments.
- 1 John 2:3 (KJV) And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.

Practical tips:

- Use gospel tracts
 - We have various gospel tracts available for you to use.
- Don't allow fear to lead you to disobedience. Fear should drive us to prayer (like the early Church we read about today)
- Practice in a mirror and/or with other Christians.