

4-7-24

Sermon- Start Spreading the News

Scripture- Acts 5:27-32 CTW- Ps 150

Hymns- 153, 696, 714

Theme- Jesus enabled Israel to change its heart and life, and he will do the same for us. There is a big difference between just calling yourself a Christian and really being a disciple for Christ.

What's the difference? The difference is found in living a committed, sold-out life for Christ and discovering that it requires one scary four-letter word: risk! You see, the way of Christ is the way of risk. To be a Christian is to risk. Lots of people don't like that word!

I. Suppose someone threatened to kill you if you didn't stop talking about God? On Easter morning one year in Pakistan, 65 Christians were killed...You might be tempted to keep quiet.

In our passage today, after being threatened by powerful leaders, arrested, jailed, and miraculously released, the apostles went back to preaching.

This was nothing less than God's power working through them!

The high priest and his associates gave Peter and the other apostles strict orders not to "teach" in Christ's name...
...but "Peter and the other apostles replied: 'We must obey God rather than men!'"

In a lot of situations we are able to obey human rules and God at the same time; at least there is no conflict in our loyalty.

When we pay our bills, for example, we are obeying human laws, and at the same time we are obeying the moral laws of God.

A. The trouble comes when humans tell us to do one thing and God tells us to do the opposite.

Then what?

That's what happened to Peter and the other apostles'.

The authorities said: "Be quiet."

God said: "Speak out."

They couldn't do both; they had to choose one or the other. And they chose to do what God said, regardless of the consequences.

This kind of conflict in loyalties is one of the most testing and straining experiences that can come to an individual.

It goes right to the heart of what is the most important thing in a person's life.

Is it more important to go along with the crowd...to just fit in...or stand out for the sake of Christ?

Do we stand up for what we believe in or do we sit down?

Is it more important to us to be seen by the world as successful or seen by God as faithful?

Do we care enough about the souls of men and women to tell them about the saving grace offered them by the Resurrected Christ—even if it means that we might be ridiculed by them or others for the sake of the Gospel?

B. As Christians, we live in this world community, but we never completely belong here. We have a loyalty that is above and beyond every other loyalty. We are **in** this world, but we are not **of** this world. The apostles knew their priorities.

While we should try to live at peace with everyone, conflict with the world and its authorities is sometimes inevitable for a Christian.

There will be situations where we cannot obey both God and people.

And when these situations come, **we must obey God and trust His Word.**

Let Jesus' Words in Luke chapter 6 encourage us: "Blessed are you when **men hate you**, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man."

C. In our Scripture Lesson for this morning we find Peter and the other apostles taking a courageous stand for Christ.

They were told repeatedly by the Sadducees to stop preaching the Good News, or they would suffer.

But the apostles were not intimidated.

They were so compelled and consumed by the power and purpose of the Gospel that they considered it a privilege to suffer for the sake of Jesus.

II. Do we consider it a privilege to suffer for the sake of Jesus?

In our Scripture Lesson for today, we find Peter and the apostles boldly living out the adventurous call of Christ which had captured them.

A. Are we living out the adventurous call of Christ on our lives?

Jesus walks on the shores of our lives today and calls us to experience His amazing grace.

He calls us just like He called the first apostles:

“You want adventure? Follow Me.”

“You want challenge? Follow Me.”

“You want excitement? Follow Me.”

“You want to fulfill your destiny? Follow Me.”

“You want to experience transformation in yourself and in others? Follow Me.”

Sounds pretty good, doesn't it?

B. Then why don't more of us follow this call?

There is a big difference between just calling yourself a Christian and really being a disciple for Christ.

What's the difference?

The difference is found in living a committed, sold-out life for Christ and discovering that it requires one dirty, scary four-letter word: risk!

You see, the way of Christ is the way of risk.

To be a Christian is to risk.

III. One of the things we must understand is that Christ is not calling us to play it safe.

A. When we are totally sold out for Christ, we are going against the grain of the world we live in.

The world is going to hell.

Those who are sold-out for Christ are going to heaven and have their eyes set on that one prize—no matter what everyone else is

doing.

Let's face it, we have a risen Savior Who says: "Sell all that you have and follow me. Drop your nets and follow me. Deny thy self, take up the Cross, and follow me."

One of the risks we have to take in order to follow Christ is to do what Simon, Andrew, James and John did: change priorities!!! We have to come to the moment of truth where we confront those sins that keep us from living for God and leave our old lives behind.

B. We have to look deeply within ourselves and be honest about what we love more than God.

Then we must take that idol off of our shrine, give it over to Christ, and pray, "Lord, do with it what You will. For Your love, ministry, plan and purpose for my life must come first!"

This kind of surrender is very difficult for us. Therefore we must completely rely on God's grace to be able to carry us through. How many of us have the attitude of: "Yes, Lord, I want You to save me from my sins, but I don't want to give them over to You?"

"Yes, Lord, I want to be with You one day in the everlasting Kingdom, but I don't want to help build Your Kingdom here on earth."

"Yes, Lord, I want to receive Your unconditional love, but I don't want to share it with others."

During the Revolutionary War, George Washington had lots of soldiers volunteer to fight during the summer months. But when winter approached, with rations in short supply and

blankets scarce, they began to slip silently away from camp and return to the warmth of their homes.

After experiencing this, General Washington publicly declared that he could not win a war with "summer soldiers."

C. If we are just sitting around being "summer Christians," nothing gets accomplished.

When we choose comfort over the Cross, barriers don't get removed, people go unloved, the Gospel doesn't get proclaimed, and lives aren't changed.

God desires for us to move out and beyond our comfort zones.....take a risk.....and move to the heartbeat of the Gospel.

In short, we need to let go of our fears and live dangerously in the hands of God.

No, it won't always be easy.

Because as we open ourselves and love others, we risk getting hurt.

When we take a stand for Christ, we risk not being popular.

When we step out in faith with our gifts, we risk failure.

But the greater the risk, the greater the reward.

The bigger the challenge, the more exciting the adventure.

The more we lose ourselves for the Gospel, the more we find ourselves.

This is precisely what Jesus meant when He said: "Those who lose their life for my sake will find it."

When we lose ourselves, risk ourselves, give freely of ourselves for the Gospel, we connect with the life for which we were created.

We come face to face with our destiny.

We discover a life of meaning for which we have been so desperately searching.

So instead of praying, "Lord, make things easier, safer, more comfortable," we should pray, "Lord, give me the biggest, toughest, riskiest task ever. I believe that with Your help, I can make a difference!"

This is the attitude of a determined sold-out disciple for Jesus Christ!

IV. Hard questions to ask ourselves:

A. Are our fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers, husbands, wives better and different because we are Christians?

Are our co-workers, neighbors, friends, and even enemies better and different because we are Christian?

Are the people with whom we spend a significant amount of our time better and different because of our witness to them?

Have we made a difference in people's lives by sharing with them the unfathomable love that has been lavished upon us?

B. The essence of risking and surrendering, the essence of all this adventure and challenge for Christ is to witness change: change in ourselves, change in others, and change in the world through the saving love and power of Jesus Christ! Consider what Christ has done in your life.

Reflect on what Christ has blessed you with.
Recall the gifts Christ has given you.

Does that not inspire you to do your best?

It should!

So let's go back to our homes, workplaces, and communities and pray, "Lord, You can count on me! Put me to work. I promise to give You my best."

Amen? Let us pray...