

October 19, 2008

### “The Weakest Man”

Over the last several weeks we have been looking at our responsibility to share the Word of God with those who do not believe. We are to be forever firefighters. Our first sermon focused on Hebrews 12, verse 2 where the writer tells us to set our eyes on Jesus who, for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame. What was this joy? It was the joy of seeing lost souls come to the faith and salvation. Why the cross? The reality is that there is a price for our sin and that price is mortal and eternal death. Very simply, Christ died in our place so that we may live. He paid the price of our sin.

Last week we saw that the tool of evangelism God has given us is a tool that speaks to the conscience of all mankind. A tool that is called the Law, or the Ten Commandments. It is also a tool that humbles us and shows us our sin; a tool that shows us the need for a Savior. I ended last week's sermon by saying, “you're probably thinking I can't do it, I'm just too weak or unqualified.” To which I responded. “Good! I'll see you next week because you are in the absolutely perfect position.” Now the question that comes up from that might be something like this. How can I be in the perfect position if I'm too weak to stand for my faith or I feel unqualified? The answer to this question lies in our New Testament reading this morning. Paul; probably the greatest of all evangelists says; “When I am weak, then I am strong.” On the face of it, this makes no sense until we look at the context of Paul's statement. Two verses earlier Paul quoted Jesus who said to him, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” That's an interesting statement or concept, but think about it. Everybody expects Billy Graham to do a great job of evangelizing. He has a powerful faith and is a gifted speaker. But, and I mean no disrespect here to Billy Graham, but how much glory is given to God when he speaks? Not much because people just expect it of him. Now Billy Graham himself, don't get me wrong, he gives all the glory to God. But people expect him to do that, they expect him to speak well, they expect him to give the glory to God. Billy Graham's great. On the other hand if a young person or maybe even better yet, a new convert who was converted while in prison gives a bold testimony to faith; people will right away realize that God is working in that person. They are doing what isn't expected of them. This was when Paul was at his greatest, when people

knew him and his past. He was an outspoken hater and persecutor of Christians. His radical change and impassioned sermons could only have come from God and Paul acknowledges this. I truly understand this. And I know I've said it before but I'll say it again. I personally never feel qualified to stand in this pulpit and be a spokesperson for God. Likewise, I know an elder or two or maybe six here at Zion who don't really feel qualified to hold such a high position. I know we have a number of deacons who feel the same way. Yet it is at these moments when we feel totally unqualified, that we fall on our knees and pray, turning over our weakness and shortcomings to God. And it is then that God through His Holy Spirit moves in. This is when His power is made perfect in weakness. This is when the weak become strong.

So, back to the end of last weeks sermon, you don't feel qualified to evangelize, you feel weak in faith? Good! Fall on your knees and take on the power of God. Become strong through Him and for Him. His promises are sure and we have the words of Jesus Christ Himself in our Gospel this morning telling us that He will give us the Holy Spirit who will; now listen carefully; "convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment." That sounds a lot like last weeks sermon doesn't it? The Holy Spirit uses the Law to convict us of our sin. The Law makes our sin very clear to us. That being the case, it also convicts us of righteousness. We know we are to live righteous lives yet we fall very short and so we are convicted of our righteousness or lack thereof which in turn convicts us of judgment. We know what we deserve, eternal death. It is this conviction of sin, righteousness and judgment that then drives us into the arms of our loving savior.

In the Way of the Master they call it: Relate, Create, Convict and Reveal. We see Jesus following this pattern in John chapter four with the woman at the well. He begins by relating to her at a natural every day level. Notice His powerful, well-crafted introduction in John four verse seven. Jesus says, "Will you give me a drink?" Jesus simply begins to relate with a simple question. All He wants to do is get her talking and He's successful at it. She begins to talk and she says, "you are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman, how can you ask me for a drink?" By relating to the woman and getting her to talk, Christ creates a bridge to the things of God. He goes from natural to supernatural. He responds and says, "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." This now creates

this bridge; they begin talking about the things of God. But He doesn't allow himself to be distracted by the woman's opposition to Him and the temptation that He must have had to engage in and win a trivial argument. Instead Jesus goes to the third phase, to conviction. He says to her, "Go call your husband and come back." Well the woman looks at Him and says, "I have no husband." Jesus responds, "You are right when you say you have no husband, the fact is you've had five husbands and the man you know have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true." In other words Jesus is saying you're committing adultery, you know it and I know it and we see that the woman is convicted in verse 19, "Sir, I can see that you are a prophet." However, she wants to hold on to her anger toward the Jews. She doesn't want to quite go in this total level of talking about the things of God. But Jesus grasps both her conviction and her anger and begins to reveal the good news. He says to her, "believe me woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem, you Samaritans worship what you do not know, we worship what we do know for salvation is from the Jews, yet a time is coming and has now come, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is Spirit and His worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth." Notice in verse 25, He's turned her. He's turned her back to the things of God and the need for the savior. She says, "I know that Messiah called Christ is coming, when He comes He will explain everything to us." And Christ finishes the revelation. He says, "I who speak to you am He." Jesus related to the woman, he created a bridge to talk about the things of God. Using the Law, He convicted her that she needed a savior. And then, and only then, when she realized the need, did He reveal to her that He is the Christ.

What was the woman's reaction? She ran into town and what did she say? "Come; see a man who told me everything I ever did, could this be the Christ?" John continues to record they came out of the town and made their way toward Him and many of the Samaritans from that town believed in Him because of the woman's testimony, He told me everything I did. So when the Samaritans came to Him, they urged Him to stay with them and He stayed two days and because of His words, many more became believers. Jesus must have been extremely joyful at that time. The lost had been found. They were saved.

We all feel weak and unqualified, but when we turn to God, He gives us the Holy Spirit who more than qualifies us. We then need to be Christians, that is, Christ like and we need to begin to relate, to create a bridge to talk about the things of God, to use the Ten Commandments and to convict, and then when conviction is achieved, to reveal our loving Savior.

Next week, we will celebrate Reformation Sunday, a very important celebration within this church. Next week we will see the Reformed Witness.

In the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, Amen.