

October 26, 2008

“The Reformed Witness”

At the beginning of this month, we began a sermon series based on the program titled, “The Way of the Master.” It’s a program that I’ve been sharing with the youth on Monday nights. It’s a series that’s designed to help us fulfill the great commission and become active evangelists. In our first sermon we saw that we are like firefighters. When we go to church, study the Bible and pray, we are in training just as a firefighter is trained to save peoples lives. Our training is designed to save peoples souls. In the second sermon we saw that God gave us a wonderful evangelistic tool. It’s called the Law. The Law or the Ten Commandments shows us that we are sinners and in need of a Savior. It also shows us that we have a record before the Heavenly Judge. And we need our record expunged, or in other words, our sins totally forgiven.

Last week we saw how Jesus did it. He used a four-step process with the woman at the well. First He related to her by asking her a simple question. “Would you give me a drink?” Then He created a bridge to talk about the things of God, He followed this with conviction, using the Law to expose her adultery. Once she felt that conviction, He revealed the Gospel to her. I ended with a challenge to go follow the way of our Master. Right after church, I had someone approach me and ask, “Pastor Matt, what do I say? I just don’t have the words and I don’t know where to start.” I was so happy to hear that. Not that this person didn’t know what to say, but I was happy to hear that they were thinking about evangelizing. This person obviously had someone in mind; someone that they know who is in eternal trouble. This person was going through a reformation. They were being changed and they wanted to be a witness. I told her just wait till next week. Well next week is here. I thought what I would do is walk through the basics of how to witness.

Again, it starts with relate. Relate to a person, perhaps it is a co-worker, maybe it is a family member. Regardless, relate to them on an earthly level. Just simply ask them a question, “How are you doing today? What did you think of the latest baseball game? Boy, the weathers great outside isn’t it?” All you want to do is relate and get them to talking. And the second thing is, to create that bridge to talk about the things of God.

This can take many forms, but again most likely in the form of a question. You can preface it by saying something like this. "You know we were talking about something interesting at church the other day and I was wondering, are you a Christian? *or* have you been raised in the church? *or* do you have any experience with the church?" Just something to find out where they are at. Once you find out where they're at, you then can begin the conviction part. If they say, yea, you know I used to go to church when I was a kid, but, now I just really don't go any more, ask them a simple question. "Well, do you mind if I ask you a question? Do you think you are a good person?" If they say yes, which almost everybody will say, because the proverbs tell us that man will say he's good in his heart. So I should say, when they say yes, then look at them and say, "you know, if you don't mind, can I ask you a couple more questions?" And ask them, "Have you ever lied?" Undoubtedly, they'll have to say yes and if so, you then respond by saying, "when someone lies what does that make them?" Of course it makes them a liar. Then ask them if they've ever taken something does not belong to them, if they've stolen anything. Once they've admitted that, ask them, "what does that make you?" A Thief. And by the way, if they deny that they've ever stolen anything, you might want to take them back to your first question and say "now be careful here you already told me that your a liar," and then ask them, "when you were in school, did you ever cheat and take someone else's answer?" You'll find that everybody has always stolen. After that, maybe go to another fun one, ask them, "have you ever looked at someone with lust?" And when they say yes, you let them know well, Jesus in redefining the ten commandments said that if we even look with lust, we've committed adultery. You might want to even ask them, "have you ever used God's name in a way that's different than praying, maybe you've gotten angry and you've dropped the big GD or just flipped out and said, Jesus Christ or something?" If they have, remind them that the Bible tells us that were to keep God's name Holy, when we use it like that were blaspheming. When it's finished or when you finish these questions, then state to the person what they've said. "You know it's interesting, you told me that your a good person, yet you've also told me that you are a lying, thieving, adulterous, blaspheming individual. Now I have to ask you, do you think your going to go to Heaven?" Most people will say yes. Ask them why. And their response will almost always be, well because overall I'm a good person. Now it's time to really convict them. Play a little scene out for them. Say something like, "Now remember what you said, you have lied, you have stolen, you have committed adultery, you have blasphemed, now granted not all that often, you say you are overall a

pretty good person and I like you. Overall you are a very good person. But yet, if an individual is overall a very good person, yet they break the law, if they go to court, can they use their "good person" defense with the judge? It doesn't matter how good of a person they are, if they broke the law, they broke the law and there is a penalty. It's prison time or maybe it's just a speeding ticket. But you got the ticket, you've got to pay the fine. You may be a very good person, but you've got to pay the fine. And so it is in the spiritual realm. If an earthly judge knows how to do things right, so does the Heavenly Judge, God Almighty. You see when we sin, we break His law and there is a penalty for it. That penalty is death, both eternal and mortal. So in light of that, you have broken God's Law and He is a righteous and just God, do you think you are still going to heaven?" Unless if the person comes back and says, Yes I am because I know that God sent His Son to die for me, and I know that Jesus paid the price for my sin, their really left with no other opportunity other than to say, well based on that yes I'm going to hell. And that's when you ask them, "does that concern you?" And undoubtedly, it will, and that is then when you reveal the Gospel. That is when you say, "I have good news for you. There is a way, a way to have that sin removed, a way to have your record expunged. Jesus loves you; He died on the cross for you, that's what were talking about as Christians. When He died, He was the perfect Son of God, He did not deserve death, yet He died. So He is willing to go into that courtroom before God Almighty and say, Bob, Dave, Sally, Whoever, they believe in me, Father let my death cover the cost of their sin. That is what you need to do, you need to turn to God and His son Jesus and give your life to Him as a way of saying thank you for what He has done in giving you forgiveness."

That's how you do evangelism. It needs to be followed up because it's not that they just bow their head one time and say, Oh Lord forgive me, they need to take that next step now and live it. And you may want to talk about if someone gives you a great present, don't you want to give back? That's how we are as Christians, we want to give back to God. Now you may run into some problems as you do evangelize, there's those things that people love to do to try to put you off, just as the woman at the well tried to put Jesus off. David Letterman has his top ten on his show, its one of the favorite parts of his show I guess. Well here are the top five comments that people make, they throw at Christians to try to stop them, Number five or the first thing is very self centered, they'll say, "Live and let live. You live your life and I'll live my life, I don't agree with what you believe." And your answer to them is very simple, I'm sorry that you don't

believe, but I'm doing what you told me to do. You told me to live my life and this is my life. My life is connected to God and His commands, which are to share His word with those who don't believe. To be honest, I've done my job, what you do with what I've shared is up to you. If you choose not to believe and I'm right, you get to explain your unbelief to God. You no longer can say, I didn't know, no one told me. You've now put on their shoulders; let that conviction work on their hearts.

Number four is, "you Christians are so narrow minded, I believe that there are many ways pathways to God." Answer: We believe that Jesus Christ is the savior. He is the one who said, "No one comes to the Father except through me." Is there a reason I should believe His words? Yes, He rose from the dead, no one else has done that, only God could do that. Christ backs His words up with the impeccable credential of His resurrection. That's why I believe He is the Son of God and He is the Only Way.

Number three on the list, "I don't believe in God." Answer: Just because we don't believe in something doesn't mean that it doesn't exist. It doesn't make it disappear. A person can deny the existence of gravity but if they walk off a cliff, they will believe in it, it just will be too late.

Number two, "If God is a God of love why is there suffering? How could He condemn someone to hell?" That's actually two questions but the base answer is the same and it's summed up in one word, sin. Romans five, verse twelve makes it clear that when sin entered the world, it brought with it death and suffering. It's our fault that there is suffering. Whenever we sin or turn from God, we also choose to live with the affects of sin. Likewise it is our sin that condemns us. We don't feel too sorry for the murderer who was sent to jail, the drunk driver who loses his driving privilege or the speeder who gets a ticket. They knew the law, they chose to break it and they got to live with their consequences. God gave us the Law, He wrote it on our hearts, we chose to break it and in so doing we also chose the consequences. It's not that God condemns us, it's that we chose to be condemned.

And, number one, and this has got to be the number one. "But what about all those that never heard about Jesus?" The answer to this is two-fold in nature. First of all, not hearing about Jesus is not what condemns. It is sin. As I said before, God has put His Law on the hearts of all men.

When we break the Law we have chosen to sin and we are guilty. This should spur us as Christians to evangelize. One Hundred fifty thousand people die every day. The majority die in their sin. But secondly, every one can be traced back to Noah and his family. Noah and his family certainly knew about God. Certainly Noah and his family shared their faith, their knowledge of God with their children and grandchildren. Unfortunately, down the road parents chose to turn from God and not pass that knowledge of God on. They made a poor choice for themselves and their family. We have to realize that within any family line or within any country or within any church, we are always one generation away from being pagan and denying God. All it takes is an individual to say I don't believe and then they don't pass it on to their offspring to their children. And from there, it continues on, well as the Bible says to the third and fourth generation. It just continues on it's a terrible choice.

It is my hope and I know it is God's command that we go and we evangelize. Every person here knows someone, that in their mind, doesn't know if they are saved or not. Remember just because someone's good does not mean they're saved. Just because they say they're a Christian, doesn't mean that they are saved. If they say they are a Christian, are they really living it? We need to go to these people, people we love, people we care about, and we need to follow the way of the Master. Make sure they have heard the truth. Make sure they've heard the Law and the gospel. And then put it in their hands to decide. They have an eternal question to answer, heaven or hell? It is my hope and my prayer that we can lead many to heaven.

In our Savior's name, Amen.