

Our First Priority

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Selected Scriptures . 6/12/2022

INTRODUCTION

1. What is the church doing?
2. Let me rephrase, “What is the church supposed to be doing?”
3. What is our purpose?
4. What is the reason for our existence as a church?
5. I think about this all the time which leads me to say this:
6. I believe the church has given up its first priority
7. Some years ago, I came across a modern day parable
8. I read it to you 7 years ago
9. I want to read it again this morning:

On a dangerous seacoast where shipwrecks often occur there was a once a crude little life-saving station. The building was just a hut, and there was only one boat, but the few devoted members kept a constant watch over the sea, and with no thought for themselves, they went out day or night tirelessly searching for the lost.

Many lives were saved by this wonderful little station, so that it became famous. Some of those who were saved, and various others in the surrounding areas, wanted to become associated with the station and give of their time and money and effort for the support of its work. New boats were bought and new crews were trained. The little life-saving station grew.

Some of the new members of the life-saving station were unhappy that the building was so crude and so poorly equipped. They felt that a more comfortable place should be provided as the first refuge of those saved from the sea.

So they replaced the emergency cots with beds and put better furniture in an enlarged building. Now the life-saving station became a popular gathering place for its members, and they re-decorated it beautifully and furnished it as a sort of club.

Less of the members were now interested in going to sea on life-saving missions, so they hired life boat crews to do this work.

The mission of life-saving was still given lip-service but most were too busy or lacked the necessary commitment to take part in the life-saving activities personally.

About this time a large ship was wrecked off the coast, and the hired crews brought in boat loads of cold, wet, and half-drowned people.

They were dirty and sick, and some of them had black skin, and some spoke a strange language, and the beautiful new club was considerably messed up. So the property committee immediately had a shower house built outside the club where victims of shipwreck could be cleaned up before coming inside.

At the next meeting, there was a split in the club membership. Most of the members wanted to stop the club's life-saving activities as being unpleasant and a hindrance to the normal life pattern of the club.

But some members insisted that life-saving was their primary purpose and pointed out that they were still called a life-saving station. But they were finally voted down and told that if they wanted to save the life of all the various kinds of people who were shipwrecked in those waters, they could begin their own life-saving station down the coast. They did.

As the years went by, the new station experienced the same changes that had occurred in the old. They evolved into a club and yet another life-saving station was founded.

If you visit the seacoast today you will find a number of exclusive clubs along that shore. Shipwrecks are still frequent in those waters, only now most of the people drown.

10. Doesn't that sound like the church today?

11. When the church began it was a life saving station

12. Acts chapter two tells us when the Holy Spirit came upon the Apostles, they preached the gospel to all the Jews in Jerusalem

13. According to verse 38, Peter called them to "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

14. On that day "three thousand souls" (v.41) were saved and added to the church

15. A few days later two thousand more were added (4:4)

16. The church grew

17. Why?

18. Several reasons but the foremost was because of the preaching of the gospel

19. Most churches have no evangelism

20. They have forgotten they are a life saving station

21. Their mission is to deliver lost souls from hell

22. As in the parable of the life saving station, the church used to go out "day or night searching for the lost" but now they no longer do this

23. They have become a club where its members gather
24. Charles Spurgeon said, “if you are saved, the work is only half done until you are employed to bring others to Christ. You are but half–formed in the image of your Lord. You have not attained the full development of Christ’s life in you unless you have begun in some feeble way to tell others of the grace of God. I trust that you will find no rest for your feet till you have been the means of leading many to that blessed Savior who is your confidence and hope.

His word is, “Follow Me, not merely that you may be saved, nor even that you may be sanctified;” but “*Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.*” Be following Christ with that intent and aim.” (The Soul Winner)
25. Wednesday night in our men’s Bible study we were talking about this
26. The mission of the church is to “make disciples”
27. It is to evangelize the lost
28. What does that mean?
29. Listen to how others defined evangelism:

Reproductive Evangelism Introduction

- * It is the sob of God.
 - * It is the anguished cry of Jesus as He weeps over a doomed city.
 - * It is the declaration of Paul, “I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.”
 - * It is the heart-wringing plea of Moses, “Oh, this people have sinned a great sin ... yet now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin ...; if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written.”
 - * It is the midnight prayer of John Knox, “Give me Scotland or I die.”
 - * It is the bold declaration of John Wesley, “The world is my parish.”
 - * It is the earnest prayer of Billy Sunday, “Make me a giant for God.”
 - * It is the broken-hearted sob of a parent in the night, weeping over a prodigal child.
 - * It is the SECRET of a great church, a great preacher, and of a great Christian.
30. The church must preach the gospela
 31. That is our call. That is our mission.

32. But the gospel is rarely being preached today
33. Instead the preacher gives “talks”
34. Some in the church have adopted the unbiblical saying “Preach the gospel. Use words if necessary.”
35. Some have attributed that statement to Saint Francis of Assisi
36. But he didn’t say that
37. Ed Stetzer writes in TableTalk magazine, June 2012 edition that “there is no record of Francis, a member of a preaching order, uttering anything close to this. In fact, everything we know about the man suggests he would not have agreed with his supposed quote. He was well known for his preaching and often preached up to five times a day.”
38. Other would have dismissed it too like Spurgeon, who for 57 years, preached every week “four to ten times” times (<https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/blog-entries/how-spurgeon-scheduled-his-week/>)
39. John Calvin also would have dismissed that statement too because he preached “five times a week” (<https://zondervanacademic.com/blog/john-calvin>)
40. We definitely want our lives to match our words but the gospel is both
41. We preach AND we live what we preach
42. When the Scriptures talk about the growth of the church, it is attributed to preaching not entertaining
43. And true growth is not just having more people, it’s also becoming more Christ-like (matured in the faith) or as James says, “perfect and complete, lacking in nothing” (Jas.1:4)
44. On Amazon.com, there are “over 25,000 books listed under the category of church growth” (<https://www.biola.edu/blogs/good-book-blog/2013/top-factors-in-growing-churches>)
45. Why?
46. God has given us the One book we need to grow
47. So we want to look at it today and learn what it says about our responsibility as a church
48. It is sad that I must preach this first point because it is so clear in the Bible
49. This is foundational to the church

LESSON

I. The Church is to Verbally Proclaim the Gospel

· Yes live but speak...

a. This is commanded by Jesus

- i. [Matthew 28:19](#), “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,”
- ii. [Mark 16:15](#), “And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.”
- iii. [Luke 24:46-49](#), “46 and He said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, 47 and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. 48 “You are witnesses of these things. 49 “And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”

b. This is everyone’s responsibility

- i. The apostles - [Acts 10:42](#), “And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead.”
- ii. The preacher’s - [2 Timothy 4:2](#), “preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.”

iii. The people’s

1. The shepherds who witnessed the birth of the Messiah - [Luke 2:17](#), “When they had seen this, they made known the statement which had been told them about this Child.”
2. The man healed of demons - [Mark 5:18-19](#), “18 As He was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed was imploring Him that he might accompany Him. 19 And He did not let him, but He said to him, “Go home to your people and report to them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He had mercy on you.””
3. The woman from Samaria - [John 4:39-42](#), “39 From that city many of the Samaritans believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, “He told me all the things that I have done.” 40 So when the Samaritans came to Jesus, they were asking Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days. 41 Many more believed because of His word; 42 and they were saying to the woman, “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this One is indeed the Savior of the world.””
4. The church at Thessalonica - [1 Thessalonians 1:8](#), “For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything.”
 - a. “sounded forth” (exechetai) from which we get the English word “echo”

- b. “One’s Christians testimony should never be independent of God’s word. It should only be an echo of God’s truth. An echo always repeats what is originally spoken. God has put His voice in you—the Holy Spirit. He doesn’t want you creating your own words; He wants you to echo His truth” (John MacArthur, Shepherdology, 83).
- c. This is to be proclaimed to everyone not just a select few (target everyone not a few demographic groups) — The ultimate goal of all ministry is to reach others for Christ! The church exists for the sake of the world.
 - i. [Mark 16:15](#), “And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.”
 - ii. [Matthew 24:14](#), “This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.”
 - iii. [Acts 10:42](#), “And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead.”

II. The Church is to Demonstrate the Gospel

- a. By being holy as He is holy

Gems from Martyn Lloyd-Jones Personal Witness

We must always start with holiness, as the Scripture does; and therefore the preaching of holiness is an essential part of evangelism.

God’s Ultimate Purpose, 102

- i. [Isaiah 6:3](#), “3 And one called out to another and said, “Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory.””
- ii. [1 Peter 1:14-16](#), “14 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, 15 but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; 16 because it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.””
- b. By being kind and sincere - [2 Timothy 2:24-26](#), “24 The Lord’s bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, 25 with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, 26 and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.”
- c. By not being ashamed
 - i. [Romans 1:16](#), “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.”
 - ii. [2 Timothy 1:7-8](#), “7 For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline. 8 Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me

His prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God,”

d. By being thorough

i. That means we are to preach “the whole counsel of God” ([Acts 20:27](#))

ii. That includes the bad AND the good news

iii. In preaching the bad news we have to talk about sin and law

1. [Romans 3:23](#), “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,”

2. [Romans 6:23](#), “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

3. [Galatians 3:22](#), “But the Scripture has shut up everyone under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.”

4. [Galatians 3:24](#), “Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith.”

5. The 10 Commandments reveal the sin and the sinner ([Ex.20:1-17](#))

Gems from Martyn Lloyd-Jones Doctrine

Evangelism does not consist in telling stories and playing on people’s emotions, and then pressing them to a decision at the end without any true knowledge on their part of what they are doing. No, but it is the outlining of this ‘form of doctrine’, this message, this truth. Then you go on to tell them that from this complete hopelessness and helplessness and despair God has provided a way of escape.
The New Man, 214

Gems from Martyn Lloyd-Jones Personal Witness

Our first duty towards an unbeliever is to make him face himself.
The Final Perseverance of the Saints, 199

[Romans 7:12](#), “So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.”

[1 Timothy 1:8-11](#), “8 But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully, 9 realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous person, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers 10 and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching, 11 according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted.”

a. It confronts idolatry (vv.1-6)

b. It confronts blasphemy (v.7)

c. It confronts morality (vv.12-17)

i. Honoring your parents (v.12)

1. [Exodus 21:15](#), “He who strikes his father or his mother shall surely be put to death.”
2. [Exodus 21:17](#), “He who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death.”
3. [Matthew 15:3-9](#), “3 And He answered and said to them, “Why do you yourselves transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? 4 “For God said, ‘Honor your father and mother,’ and, ‘He who speaks evil of father or mother is to be put to death.’ 5 “But you say, ‘Whoever says to his father or mother, ‘Whatever I have that would help you has been given to God,’ 6 he is not to honor his father or his mother.” And by this you invalidated the word of God for the sake of your tradition. 7 “You hypocrites, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you: 8 ‘This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far away from Me. 9 ‘But in vain do they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.’ ””
4. [1 Timothy 5:8](#), “But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.”

ii. Not murdering (v.13; [Matthew 5:21-22](#))

iii. Not committing adultery (v.14; [Matthew 5:27-28](#))

iv. Not stealing (v.15; [Exodus 21:16](#))

v. Not lying (v.16; [Matthew 5:33-37](#))

vi. Not coveting (v.17; [Romans 7:7](#))

e. By preaching daily - [Matthew 28:19](#), “Go (As you are going) therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,”

f. By making this our first priority

Our church bylaws says “the specific purpose of this church is the advancement of the kingdom of God. This purpose will be carried out by means of spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ by the preaching, sharing and distributing of the Bible and related materials.”

CONCLUSION

1. Are you personally sharing the Gospel with others?

2. Are you living it?

Gems from Martyn Lloyd-Jones Personal Witness

If you and I and all the other Christians walked through this world as men and women who are experiencing the 'abundance of grace' and this 'much more', we should find that people would stop us at work, and in the business or the profession, and on the street, and they would say, 'Tell me, what is this? I want to know about it, I want it for myself'.

Assurance, 239

3. It starts with the leadership

4. They are to be examples

5. But it also is your responsibility

6. If you want to see additions then reproduce yourself in someone else by first giving them the gospel and then obeying what Jesus said in [Matthew 28:20](#), "teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

7. Before we conclude we must understand that all this cannot happen without a commitment to prayer

8. So before I close, I want to invite you to come and kneel with me in prayer as we pray for our responsibility as a church

9. Pray (after others come and kneel in prayer)