

2022.02.06 - The Way Of Jesus - Sharing Good News

Josh Siders – Mark 5:14-20, 6:6-13

So What? Jesus invites us to follow him by sharing his good news with others.

Feel What? Invited

Now What? Practice sharing good news with those in your life.

VISION CASTING

The purpose of Tallgrass at The Well is to create community together by inviting everyone into the Way of Jesus.

INTRODUCTION

Today, we're continuing our series through the Gospel of Mark on the Way of Jesus by talking about sharing good news. What does sharing Good News look like in our cynical culture? What is good news in our cultural moment? We're so skeptical of being sold on anything because of the glut of advertising we see on a daily basis. When I want to watch a video on Youtube, I impatiently wait for the 5-second clip to get over. And I'm used to scrolling right past an ad on my Instagram feed so I can see what someone trendy has for living room decor. So much so, that advertiser have to promise outlandish things to stop the scroll and capture the user's attention.

And all these ads are promising us something: There's a better future for you if you would just like, subscribe, and buy this product. But we're jaded by being overpromised

and underdelivered on hope. So we retreat further into our skepticism and our cynicism and it becomes more difficult to expect that anything will actually fulfill our desires.

Hope is exactly what we're being sold. Hope is powerful. It lifts our eyes off our current circumstances and promises that things will be different. Now, when we talk about what good news is to us--and the belief that Jesus has come to release to us the best of all news, we need to be really clear on what that news is. The earliest examples of that is in the Gospel of Mark where we see Jesus preaching this good news and providing miraculous confirmation that it's true.

Mark 5:1-19 (NIV): They went across the lake to the region of the Gerasenes. When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an impure spirit came from the tombs to meet him. This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain. For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him. Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones. When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of him. He shouted at the top of his voice, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? In God's name don't torture me!" For Jesus had said to him, "Come out of this man, you impure spirit!" Then Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" "My name is Legion," he replied, "for we are many." And he begged Jesus again and again not to send them out of the area. A large herd of pigs was feeding on the nearby hillside. The demons

begged Jesus, “Send us among the pigs; allow us to go into them.” He gave them permission, and the impure spirits came out and went into the pigs. The herd, about two thousand in number, rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned. **Those tending the pigs ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, and the people went out to see what had happened. When they came to Jesus, they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons, sitting there, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. Those who had seen it told the people what had happened to the demon-possessed man—and told about the pigs as well. Then the people began to plead with Jesus to leave their region. As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him. Jesus did not let him, but said, “Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.” So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed.**

A chapter later, in Mark 6, we see Jesus training his apprentices to continue this gospel work so that it spreads throughout the region.

Mark 6:6-13 (NIV): Then Jesus went around teaching from village to village. Calling the Twelve to him, he began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over impure spirits. These were his instructions: “Take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. Wear

sandals but not an extra shirt. Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town. And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, leave that place and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.” They went out and preached that people should repent. They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.

Some of the practical elements for Jesus' apprentices to know as they share the gospel is to trust that God will provide for their mission. Clothes, food, shelter are all needed, but they can trust that God will see to it that they're cared for. And Jesus also prepares them for times when the message isn't received. Shaking the dust off ones feet was something every Jew did when they returned from a journey through Gentile lands. Here it is a symbolic act that represents the consequences of that town for rejecting God's good news.

Transition: The message that Jesus prepares his followers to share is summarized by Luke as "repent." What does this mean--what are we to say as we share the good news?

SOLUTION

When I was 23, a campus minister at K-State led me to surrender my life to Jesus. He led me in a prayer where he had me repent for my sin and accept Jesus as my Lord and Savior. A few months later, being brand new to faith, I asked a friend where that prayer was in the Bible. I wanted to be equipped to share my faith and to be able to lead

others the right way in knowing Jesus. As probably all of you know, that specific prayer isn't in the Bible. Now, I'm grateful for it, and I've used it too, but we have to understand many of the way in which we understand and practice our faith is contextualized. Which is, to say, that we can sometimes superimpose additional things onto our expression of faith--for better or for worse.

Let's then talk for a moment about the gospels we tend to believe. When we believe these are the summation God's good news, we're setting ourselves and others up for a false hope and for future cynicism as they pull us away from the Gospel of the Kingdom.

1. **The Gospel of Self-Help**

- This is the permission given to each other when we say "Speak your truth," and "You do you"-- basically, if it feels right, it must be right.
- But this isn't just for granola-eating, chakra-focusing people. You hear it when people say, "I fell in love with my wife, and I feel out of love with her, so I'm leaving to look for a better match elsewhere."
- It's therapeutic moralistic deism where God exists to make me happy and make my dreams come true so I can be my best self and live my best life.

2. **The Gospel of Social Progress**

- The good news that's hoped for trusts in the advancement of knowledge, science, and technology to bring about a utopia on earth

where we all live in peace and harmony with one another and with the earth itself. Usually, it involved sipping soy lattes and munching on Beyond burgers because we've gone vegan.

- Highest fidelity to this gospel is to make sure everything is equitable for all, no matter the cost, and we blame everyone who questions said progress as backwards and neandertholic.
- Often the the state's coercive power is invoked and the expense of some personal rights are demanded to ensure underprivileged groups are empowered and preferred.
- But the result of this is what pastor and author Mark Sayers calls, "Wanting the Kingdom without the King"--we want the benefits of a utopia without having to submit to the leadership of God.

Here in the Midwest, we are mostly aware of these first two gospels and the letdown they entail. I think we're less likely to be aware of the next two because, for many of us, it's been the culture we're grown up in in church. With that, know that I want to be as gentle and as charitable as I can be.

3. **The Gospel of Americanism**

- Despite her problems, which are usually glossed over, America is the world's best hope
- Because America is the best, we can't allow it do be diluted by foreigners or strangers

- There is a committed culture war for the soul of America
- Christianity is wed to the conservative moment that promises a return to the golden moment of the past where respect and family values were embraced

4. **The Gospel of Sin-Management**

- Philosopher and professor Dallas Willard coined this term and wrote about its pervasiveness in Evangelicalism where all that's required is to pray a prayer so you go to heaven when you die.
- There are subsets of this, such as revivalisms that whips up emotional frenzy for a conversion experience or hyper-reformed stream that receives God's grace, but doesn't seem to require that it's extended out to anyone else.
- The result of the Gospel of Sin-Management is that there lacks serious spiritual formation, allowing converts to remain immature throughout their lifetime.
- There is also a lack of motivation to be involved in works of biblical justice, beyond efforts that would improve our personal comfort. It's what Dietrich Bonhoeffer called "cheap grace"--an easy-believism gospel that requires nothing from the hearer in response and dulls us to God's Spirit while in our comfort.

I imagine as you hear these, there are some who feel relief because you grew up in some believing some form of this

and you've realized it's inadequate to following the Way of Jesus. And there could be some who are angry because you hear me saying it's all deplorable and I'm personally attacking your beliefs. But we don't point out these flaws with any elitism and condescension, nor do we ignore the good that these beliefs can bring. The problem for each of these gospels is that they highlight some aspect of the true good news Jesus and his followers preached, while not going far enough in other areas. When we make this mistake, we tend to moralize our false beliefs as being the gospel and then dismiss everyone else as sinners because they don't believe the same good news we do.

The message of Jesus as true and applicable for us as it is for anyone just hearing it for the first time: It's an invitation to repent--to leave behind our false beliefs and turn fully to Jesus as we follow him.

So, what is the good news of Jesus? Let's look at how the early followers of Jesus shared about him and his glorious news. In the early chapters of the Book of Acts, we find Peter sharing good news with the crowds that had gathered. What did he say the good news was?

Acts 2:22-38 (NIV): “Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God’s deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him

from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. ... God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it. Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. ... Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.” When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

This gifts of the Holy Spirit is a downpayment of a future reality that

Acts 3:19-21 (NIV): "Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus. Heaven must receive him until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets."

So, for Peter and the other disciples, the good news is the story of Jesus: Who he is as the Son of God, his death and resurrection, and his bodily return to restore God's Kingdom on the earth. This isn't a gospel of self-fulfillment or progress--it's his Kingdom and repentance is the doorway we enter to get into it. And there must be a

response by everyone who enters--specifically baptism that connects us to the community of God where we work together to see his Kingdom advance in all the nations of the earth.

Transition: Now, you may be thinking, *I haven't been given the gift of evangelism. And I'm scared to death of public speaking. How am I to share the good news of Jesus?*

APPLICATION & OBJECTIONS

And one important point is that sharing good news is, yes, something apprentices of Jesus are invited into. The early church shared good news as they shared life together as they practiced hospitality.

Acts 2:46-47 (NIV): Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Tim Chester elaborates on the ministry of Jesus that the early church emulated.

Tim Chester, *A Meal With Jesus*: "How would you complete the sentence: "The Son of Man came . . ."? The Son of Man came . . . preaching the Word . . . to establish the kingdom of God . . . to die on the cross. Perhaps the question is more revealing if we make it, "We should go . . ."? We should go . . . campaign for political change . . . preach on street corners . . . make

the most of new media . . . adapt to the culture we want to reach. There are three ways the New Testament completes the sentence, “The Son of Man came . . .” “The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45); “The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost” (Luke 19:10); “The Son of Man has come eating and drinking . . .” (Luke 7:34). The first two are statements of purpose. Why did Jesus come? He came to serve, to give his life as a ransom, to seek and save the lost. The third is a statement of method. How did Jesus come? He came eating and drinking. ...The Jews of Jesus’s day would have said the Son of Man will come to vindicate the righteous and defeat God’s enemies. They didn’t expect him to come to seek and save the lost. And they would have said the Son of Man will come in glory and power. They would never have said he would come eating and drinking. ... [But] Jesus spent his time eating and drinking—a lot of his time. He was a party animal. His mission strategy was a long meal, stretching into the evening. He did evangelism and discipleship round a table with some grilled fish, a loaf of bread, and a pitcher of wine."

Now, this can feel someone weird and gross if we're thinking of it from the wrong perspective. Christian hospitality isn't network marketing for Jesus where we're trying to sell a product like Tupperware or essential oils. This isn't a bait and switch: "Come over and let's eat—where would you end up if you died tonight?"

And, yet, Jesus was constantly sharing the good news of the kingdom of God. He shows us it's about opening up your life and your heart while you welcome in those who might be on the margins of your life and even the margins of the kingdom—whether they grew up outside the church or they've been hurt by the church and swore it off forever.

This means a life of fewer gospel tracts and more gospel relationships. Fewer bullhorns and more beignets.

You might also be thinking, *Do I have to know everything in the Bible or even believe everything in the Bible to share the good news?* What I would say, is start where you are and just start with Jesus. Start with him and with what he's done. Get to know people around you, get to know their history, their hurts, their fears, and share about how God has encountered you in the midst of all that to show you his love, his care, and his enjoyment. That is the good news people are longing for.

INSPIRATION

Lance Ford & Alan Hirsch: “If every Christian family in the world simply offered good conversational hospitality around a table once a week to neighbors, we would eat our way into the kingdom of God.”

CONCLUSION

.Sharing Good News

- **Beginning:** Read the book of Acts, paying attention to how apprentices to Jesus shared good news about him

- **Baseline:** Join a group to embody the good news in community
- **Stretch:** Invite someone to a meal or coffee and ask about their spiritual history

Prayer