

Good News is Meant to be Shared!
GFC – 6-24-18

We are preaching through Colossians verse by verse in a sermon series entitled Christ Above All. Today I'm preaching on Colossians 4:2-6

Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

The title of my sermon is Good News is Meant to be Shared. I mean – think about it – when you have some really good news you don't keep it to yourself – you tell everybody! I got a new job! I got a raise! I got married! Good news is meant to be shared!

What would happen if someone discovered a cure for cancer, but kept the good news to themselves? That would be criminal! Would you not be obligated to share that good news with the world?

And we have even greater news than a cure for cancer! We know the cure for sin and spiritual death. We have the good news that Jesus Christ died on a cross and rose again to save you from your sins and we are obligated to share it.

Our passage in Colossians gives us 4 keys to sharing the good news about Jesus.

1- Prayer comes before Share

Paul said, *Pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message...*

Paul was in prison as he wrote this letter. But he did not ask people to pray for an open door to get out of prison. He prayed for an open door to share the good news about Jesus.

We too need to pray for discernment about open doors. We must walk through open doors to share the good news. But not every door is open to the gospel.

Acts 14:27 says *God opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.*

In 1 Corinthians 16:8-9, Paul said: *I will stay on at Ephesus until Pentecost, because a great door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many who oppose me.*

Just because you face some opposition doesn't mean the door isn't open!

But sometimes the door does slam in our face. For instance, Paul said in Romans 1:13

Now I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that I often planned to come to you (but was hindered until now).

So – who’s doing the hindering? Sometimes it’s people. Sometimes it’s Satan. 1 Thessalonians 2:18 says:

We wanted to come to you — even I, Paul, time and again — but Satan hindered us.

Obviously, Satan does not want us to share the good news and will do anything to stop us. But look at Acts 16:6-10

Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas.

During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

Notice that the Holy Spirit closed some doors to Paul. Why? Because of timing. The people of Asia and Bithynia were not ready yet to receive the good news, but the people of Macedonia were. So, God closed some doors to open another.

What I want you to see is that Paul knocked on every door. If the door wouldn’t open, he moved on to the next one and the next one until he found an open door.

This is what happens with our Taking Jesus to the Streets teams. They go out knocking on doors. Some doors are closed, but they keep knocking until they find an open door to share. They don’t try to force their way through a closed door.

And it’s the same for all of us when we share our faith. Some people are ready and some are not. Some doors are open and some are closed.

So, we should pray for God to open those doors! According to Colossians 4:3-5, we ask God to *open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ... and pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.*

There are other prayers we need to pray before sharing the good news.

In John 6:44, Jesus said, *"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him,"* so we pray for the Father to draw them to Christ.

According to 2 Timothy 2:25-26, we pray that *God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.*

2 Corinthians 4:4-5 says that *the god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*

So, we bind the enemy in Jesus name and pray their eyes will be open to the truth about Jesus. Witnessing is warfare! We are in a battle for the souls of people. Satan has people captive and he doesn't want to let them go. But greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world!

In Matthew 16:18-19 Jesus said:

On this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

We have the power of binding and loosing. Notice the context is building the church. Not the building – but adding more people who get saved. When it comes to extending the kingdom of God on earth, we have the power to bind the spirits that blind unbelievers to the knowledge of the truth.

Prayer is spiritual warfare. Ephesians 6:10-19 lists our spiritual armor. Then it says:

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel.

So many times, we look at spiritual warfare as something we do for ourselves. It is also something we do for others so that we may have an open door to share the gospel with them.

Think of people in need and begin praying for them. Tell them you're praying for them. Most people are very open to prayer.

If the spirit leads you and the person agrees, actually pray out loud for them. If not, just tell them you'll be praying. Then pray. Then follow up.

Pray for the sick to get healed and captives to be set free. God loves to answer those prayers to show lost people His power and glory!

When it comes to sharing the good news - we need to balance Go and Tell with Come and See. We are commanded to go into the world and preach the gospel.

We should also be inviting people to church to experience the presence and power of God.

There is something about praise that draws people to God. Psalm 40:3 says:

He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the LORD.

God's power through spiritual gifts also reaches unbelievers. 1 Corinthians 14:24-25 says:

If an unbeliever or someone who does not understand comes in while everybody is prophesying, he will be convinced by all that he is a sinner and will be judged by all, and the secrets of his heart will be laid bare. So he will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, "God is really among you!"

That is why our vision is to touch heaven and change earth! When we touch heaven through our corporate worship and prayer – it opens doors on earth! Don't be ashamed of a church that praises exuberantly because that draws people to God. Don't be ashamed of the gifts of the Spirit – they draw people to God.

2- Start where you are

Paul was in prison when he wrote this letter. He didn't wait until he got out of prison to witness. He started right where he was!

So many people are waiting until some vague time in the future to share the good news. When I'm ready. When I learn more. When I have more faith. It's always somewhere out there sometime. But it's never here and now! Proverbs 17:24 says:

Wisdom is in the sight of him who has understanding, but the eyes of a fool are on the ends of the earth.

That means start looking for God in the situation you are in right now! Some people expect God to show up only in certain ways in certain places – and it's always some other place and some other time!

The thing about God is that sometimes He is found in the unlikeliest of places and in the most unexpected circumstances:

- Moses countered God in a burning bush on the backside of a desert
- Gideon encountered God while he was hiding in a winepress
- Elijah encountered God in a gentle whisper in a cave
- Daniel encountered God in a lion's den
- Jonah encountered God in the belly of a whale

- Two thieves encountered God while hanging on a cross
- Saul (the apostle Paul) encountered God on a road to Damascus on his way to persecute Christians
- The apostle John encountered God in prison

And every single one of these lives was dramatically changed by encountering God!

Paul started where he was and prayed for opportunity to speak to his prison guards and the magistrates who were holding him.

But the majority of us do not take advantage of the opportunities we already have, so praying for more opportunities would be pointless. So, start where you are, then...

3- Act wisely

Paul said to conduct yourself wisely toward outsiders. Outsiders are those who have not yet trusted Jesus as the Lord and Savior – so they are outside of the faith.

To be wise toward outsiders means that we're careful not to say or do anything that would make it difficult to share the gospel. Those who don't yet know Christ are watching us. 1 Peter 2:12 says:

Be careful to live properly among your unbelieving neighbors. Then even if they accuse you of doing wrong, they will see your honorable behavior, and they will give honor to God when he judges the world.

How are you doing in this regard? Would people be surprised to find out that you're a Christ-follower? How would you like an unbeliever to come up to you and say, "Excuse me, but what you're doing speaks so loudly that I can't hear anything you're saying."

When Jesus sent His disciples out to spread the good news, he told them in Matthew 10:16

I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves.

We need to be careful about the way we act because people are making decisions about the validity of Christianity based upon how we're living.

When we pray, God will give us open doors. Let's not shut those doors by our behavior. Don't put people off; instead, let's pull them in. Our walk with Christ enables us to talk of Christ.

1 Thessalonians 4:11-12 says:

Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.

By the way – this assumes you have relationships with outsiders. The longer you are part of a church – the fewer relationships with outsiders you tend to have. We must cultivate those relationships intentionally. And we must live in a way that attracts outsiders rather than repels them.

Paul tells us to make the most of the times. Redeem the time. The word time here is not chronos, but Kairos - a specific opportunity at a specific moment of time; an opportunity in a short season. Not every time is the right time to witness. Be watchful – alert – to times when you can share your faith.

People don't usually come to Jesus when things are going well. The Kairos moments are usually times of transition, tension or trouble! Ephesians 5:15-16 says:

Be very careful, then, how you live — not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.

When people observe your wise walk – it gives you the opportunity to talk. I usually quote St. Francis – Share the gospel all day long. If necessary, use words. Let me just say – it will become necessary to use words! Don't think you can lead someone to Christ through your walk alone – you must also share the Good News of Jesus Christ with them!

That's why I think it's better to say – Preach the Gospel all day long. When necessary, use words. If we don't use words – we miss the point of the walk.

That would be like saying, Feed the hungry all day long. If necessary, use food. Obviously, you must use food to feed hungry people and the food of witnessing is the word of God!

And when you do speak, Paul says:

4- Speak clearly

Paul says to pray to speak clearly and he gives three characteristics of what that looks like.

Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

Full of grace means to be full of love - aware of the needs of others and contributing to the good of others.

Seasoned with salt. Salt does three things: It makes food tasty, it creates thirst and it is a preservative. So as Christians, our conversation should be tasteful and gracious – not rude and crude. Our words should not make people thirsty for God. And our words should preserve integrity in a godless world.

Lastly, Paul says we should know how to answer everyone. This does not mean you must know the answer to every deep question. 1 Peter 3:15 says:

Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.

What's the reason for the hope you have? JESUS!

This reminds me of the blind man Jesus healed. He was brought before the religious leaders and asked theological questions he could not answer. He finally said this – All I know is I once was blind but now I see!

That's the reason for the hope in you!
 You were blind but now you see.
 Lost but now you're found.
 Captive but now you're free!
 That's good news and it's meant to be shared!

So, when you find someone in need – you know the good news that the answer to their need is Jesus!
 God meets all needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus!
 Whatever the question – the good news is that Jesus is the answer!
 Whatever the problem – the good news is that Jesus has a solution!
 That's good news and it's meant to be shared!

To the lost, the good news is that Jesus will save you!
 To the sick, the good news is that Jesus will heal you!
 To the addicted, the good news is that Jesus will set you free!
 To the depressed, the good news is that Jesus will give you joy!
 To the anxious, the good news is that Jesus will give you peace!
 To the confused, the good news is that Jesus is wisdom!
 To the hopeless – the good news is that Jesus will give you hope!
 To the grieving – the good news is that Jesus comforts all who mourn!
 He gives beauty for ashes and the oil of joy for mourning!
 The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.
 He rebuilds old ruins and the desolation of generations!
 He will clothe you in the garments of salvation and the robe of righteousness and
 He will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations!
 That's good news and it's meant to be shared!