

"Growing Larger Through Evangelism"

Ruth 1:1-18; Matt 28:16-20

**All Saints Cathedral
7.30 am, 09.30 am and 11.30 am**

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Introduction: St. Paul says,
"For if I preach the Gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!" (1 Corinthians 9.16)

- ✓ The early church grew because they shared about Jesus Christ. The Book of Acts is the Witness of the early Church through miracles, reluctance and opposition. But the Lord's commission to evangelise did not change.
- ✓ In the work of Evangelism, the Bible is emphatic that a Christian **IS** a witness NOT that a Christian witnesses (adjectival not a verbal description). The NIV rightly uses the word "witness" 42 times in the New Testament and none of them is, **"to witness"**! similarly we **ARE** the salt, the light, ambassadors; Evangelism as our lifestyle.

An atheist and former Member of the UK Parliament, Matthew Parris, said, *"As an atheist, I truly believe Africa needs God."* He goes on to say,

"Now a confirmed atheist, I've become convinced of the enormous contribution that Christian evangelism makes in Africa: sharply distinct from the work of secular NGOs, government projects and international aid efforts. These alone will not do. Education and training alone will not do. In Africa Christianity changes people's hearts. It brings a spiritual transformation. The rebirth is real. The change is good."

"Removing Christian evangelism from the African equation may leave the continent at the mercy of a malign fusion of Nike, the witch doctor, the mobile phone and the machete."

It is remarkable that an atheist recognizes the value of what the Christian has to offer. But does the Christian know or show that they know its worth.

We may ask, why do we need evangelism, or why must we be His witnesses? I give a few reasons that make it incumbent on Christians to evangelise.

- a) **God commands it** - All Gospel accounts say so (Matthew 28.18-20; Mark 16.15f; Luke 24.48; John 20.21).
- b) **We are compelled by the love of Christ** (2 Corinthians 5.14-15); to evangelise is to love Him back, and to genuinely love the world.
- c) **Evangelism fulfills Jesus' Mission**; He came to proclaim Salvation. Evangelism continues His Mission (Luke 19.10).
- d) **People need the Lord**. Jesus said, "the fields are ready for harvest" (Luke 10.2; John 4.35). We live with tired people who long for real joy rather than '*synthetic*' joy.
- e) **The Gospel is the greatest gift to all mankind** - God's forgiveness of all sin, the gift of eternal life (John 3.16; Acts 2.38). *It is cruel of us and an act of murder to deny a perishing world this gift, which they cannot get any other way!* (John 14.6; Acts 4.12).

Yet with all this Christians do not evangelise. Why? Why do we or why do you avoid talking about Jesus? I suggest that for many Christians:

- 1. *We do not know or do not have the message; we have no testimony;*
- 2. *We are not convinced of its urgency or that it is indispensable;*
- 3. *Others are not convinced that there is NO OTHER WAY;*
 - a. *They believe unbelievers are OK without the Gospel; we think they will be saved without it. They do not need it!*
 - b. *The reality of their perishing does not weigh on our hearts.*
- 4. *Many do not want to disturb the peace of the unbeliever;*
- 5. *We are gripped by fear; fear of their reaction, their arguments, etc.*
- 6. *There are many in the Church who think that Evangelism is the Pastor's work. They think their task is to bring the unbeliever to the Pastor for the latter to do the work of evangelism!*

We have much to learn from Politicians who are trying to win our 2016 vote, and maybe our hearts! Four things they use that we need to win the world. Do we have all these? We need:

- a. **A MESSAGE**. We alone have the unique Good News that Jesus has paid the full price for our sins. All people can be reconciled to God, become His children and have eternal life through Him NOW. No other religion has this message!
- b. **MEDIA CHANNELS**: We need three things to do the work of evangelism: **the Voices, the Transformed Life and the Fellowship of Love** among believers to exhibit Jesus Christ (Luke 24.47; Matthew 5.13-16; John 13.34-35)? Let us not misunderstand the word of St. Francis of Assisi, "**Preach the Gospel. If necessary, use words.**" He did not mean that we do not need to speak, to proclaim (1 Peter 3.15).

- c. **A PLAN TO CANVAS ALL OF THE COUNTRY (WORLD):** What is our plan to reach the world? Are we a church whose only plan is to keep her members satisfied? Where is All Saints Cathedral going tomorrow? We must know that a church that does not send missionaries is a shrinking church!
- d. **A TEAM WHO BELIEVE IN YOU:** Do we really believe Jesus? Is He Lord of our lives? Do we believe what He tells us to do? Do we believe His promise to be with us always? Are we mobilized to go out, even in twos?

Jesus started with only Eleven timid men! He had already lost one! But Jesus trusted they would do that work He left, and He trusts we shall continue that work. Erasmus, the famous Renaissance scholar on Jesus crafted a story of Jesus telling angels about His earthly work in heaven:

“When He finishes his story, Michael the Archangel asks Jesus, ‘But what happens now?’ Jesus answers, ‘I have left behind eleven faithful disciples and a handful of men and women who have faithfully followed me. They will declare My message and express My love. These faithful people will build My church.’ ‘But,’ responds Michael, ‘What if these people fail? What then is Your other plan?’ And Jesus answers, ‘I have no other plan!’”

- a. What assurance did Jesus have to win the world?
- b. The All Saints team: What assurance does the Provost have to grow this Church through evangelism?

Yet of these weak and fearful disciples, it was later said, **“These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also”** (Acts 17.6). What is said of you?

I. The Master has Equipped us for Evangelism

1. The disciples believed and obeyed Jesus (v. 16). They went to the mountain He told them to go to. They appeared to have ‘Blind faith’ but it worked! All it takes to do evangelism is to obey His voice.
2. They had the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1.8; 2.1ff). **Evangelism is not our work for Him but His work through us.** Do you personally know Christ? Are you filled with the Holy Spirit? If you do not know Jesus personally, you need to commit yourself to him first and join other Christians to evangelise.
3. His authority in heaven and on earth became their and our authority (v. 18). We have His authority to speak and to do as He did. When we speak and minister, we use that authority.
4. And the Lord said, “I am with you always”. His presence will never leave us. That is why His authority becomes authority always available to us.

II. The Vision of an Evangelist is the Vision of His Master

1. **Sent to All Nations** (v. 19). No one is excluded, not even those we fear or dislike!

My former pastor in the US, Bob Hudnut, thought unbelievers are OK without Jesus. I challenged him for Jesus stands uniquely to offer what no other religion or person or prophet can offer. Jesus is alone!

2. **We are sent to Make all people Disciples** (v. 19). This means by all means possible! Not followers, Not church members, for Jesus is not looking for crowds!! Disciples imitate their Master; they live His life and continue His mission. Jesus began, we continue.
 - a. Mark 1.1, ***“The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.”***
 - b. Dr. Luke says, ***“In the first Book, ... I have dealt with what Jesus began ...”*** Acts 1.1.

He did not finish the work that brought Him, but expected the Church to continue this work. Disciples do all that He commanded, **INCLUDING** the command to evangelise (2 Timothy 2.2)! A growing church is a church mobilised for evangelism.

Keith Green sings and asks,

- ✓ *“How can they live without Jesus? ... Without God’s love?”* and
- ✓ *“The world is sleeping in the dark, but the church just can’t fight as it sleeps in the light!”*

Let our prayer be like that of Christian martyr, Jim Elliot, who prayed,

“God, I pray Thee, light these idle sticks of my life that I may burn for Thee. Consume my life, my God, for it is Thine. I seek not a long life but a full one like You, Lord Jesus.”

A full life pouring out Jesus Christ wherever I go! Amen.