



Summer Preaching Series: Questions of Faith

***Why and how should I tell others about
God, Church, even Grace Church?***



A Sermon By
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August 27, 2017
Grace Episcopal Church
Silver Spring, Maryland

*An audio version of this sermon may be found on the Grace Church website at
<http://graceepiscopalchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/2017-08-06-RDM.mp3>.*

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The Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost
August 27, 2017

When Jesus rose from the dead he gives this commandment in Matthew 28:19, And you shall be my witnesses. We are the witnesses to the grace of God through His son Jesus Christ. We are witnesses by the very nature of who we are in Christ. Romans 5:1, Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God, through his son our savior Jesus Christ.

We who are blessed with reason, memory and skill, should join with all nature in manifold witness and tell others about the greatness of God. We do so by sharing the Good News; that God loves us and Jesus has saved us from our sin. I'll quote a response received from one of the members during this summer series. This eloquently describes one reason why we should tell others about God:

"For me, the death of Jesus is the most crucial part of my faith as a Christian. Otherwise, Jesus is just another really nice guy, prophet, and teacher...his death makes all the difference and sets Christianity apart from all other mainstream religions. For me, Jesus is the perfect offering for my sins and he died on that cross, for my sins, and in my place."

"His death purchased my salvation, and the salvation of all people. It is his death that redeems me. I believe, with all my heart, that Jesus died the death that I deserve. He took the sins of the world upon himself, and on my behalf." She is a witness to the death, burial and resurrection, by faith.

She confesses with her mouth and believes in her heart that Jesus is God's son and that God raised him from the dead. We have an obligation to tell the of God's grace whenever and wherever the opportunity presents itself.

The key to this conversation is we are witnesses, in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the uttermost parts of the earth. There is a legal definition of who and what a witness is and it is interesting. We are witnesses When we are called upon to rely on the testimony of another in order to form a judgment as to certain facts, That s/he knows the facts in question, and that he is not mistaken; and, That he is disposed to tell the truth, and has to desire to impose on those who are to form a judgment on his testimony. The confidence therefore, which we give to the witness must be considered, in the first place, by his capacity or his organization, and in the next, by the interest or motive which he has to tell or not to tell the truth. When the facts to which the witness testifies agree with the circumstances known to exist, he becomes much more credible than when there is a contradiction in this respect. Vide circumstances; Competency; Credibility.¹

By faith we are the ones who will tell others about God and about Grace. Our Bishop Michael Curry has expressed his desire through two themes on our Episcopal Church USA website and in his sermons.

First we are a part of The Jesus Movement: ***We're following Jesus into loving, liberating and life-giving relationship with God, with each other and with the earth.***²

¹ <http://legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/witness>

² <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/>

Second, *Evangelism Matters: Rising at a critical moment in the life of The Episcopal Church and as a part of the Jesus Movement.*³

Third, the catechism of the church asks this question, *What is the ministry of the laity? The ministry of lay persons is to represent Christ and his Church; to bear witness to him wherever they may be; and, according to the gifts given them, to carry on Christ's work of reconciliation in the world; and to take their place in the life, worship, and governance of the Church.*⁴

So here are three good reasons for why: You are by the very nature of your relationship to God through Christ part of the Jesus Movement. John the beloved says, For what manner of love has God bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons and daughters of God. This movement began when one silent night in Bethlehem when all the hopes and fears, of all the years laid still for a moment when God sent his only begotten son to die for our sins. Evangelism does matter. In a day and time when not much matters anymore, this is the day of whatever. Evangelism should matter. The word evangelism comes from the Greek word *euangelion*, translated to the Latin *Evangelium*.

It is the Good News. The good news of God's love. Good News not only to the bearer but to the hearer, of the joy, that comes from you. Third reason: you are the ones who have seen and heard the Good news, and the hearer of the news must by all means extend the news by testifying what they've seen and heard. Why wouldn't I want to tell the wonderful old old story of Jesus and his love.

We share this good news by taking the time to listen to others stories and begin to tell them about the good news. By listening we hear who they are, we learn their spiritual location or their position in relationship to God. We can always find an opportunity to share this Good News. How? Gladly and boldly. Remember the how is according to the gift that lies within you.

I was pulling up to the red light as I get off the I-83 in Baltimore and there sat a man who is always at the light begging alms. Like most days I can truly say to him I have nothing to give but I ask, "how are you today?" We talk about a red lights worth of conversation then I am about move on. On he has a box of pizza, and he offers me a slice, I reach out the window, reach into his box and take a slice of all-veggie pizza. Evangelism is easier when built into a relationship. An open exchange of love. It's part of God's law of reciprocity.

When you share the good news and the love of God a relational door opens, in most engagements you will give love, give love and you will receive love. When the good news is given in love it's easy. In order to tell about Jesus and talk about Grace you'll need to believe it in your heart.

So what do you tell them? Think of all the wonderful people you know here at Grace, tell it. Think of all of the good times you've had in fellowship with one another, tell it. Think of all the times you knew God was fully present and you felt the spirit move upon you, tell it. Think about the times you've sat in the pew and felt the arms of God around you, tell it. Think of the Good News in Christ and how he saved you, tell it. Jesus says, tell them, tell them if even if they don't believe you, just tell them, tell them, even if they don't receive, just tell them for me, tell them that I love them. Amen.

*When it seems you are forsaken
Just tell them
Though it seems you are earthly shaken
Oh, tell them for me
Tell them for me please
Please, tell them for me
Tell them that I love them*

⁴<https://www.episcopalchurch.org/library/glossary/laity>