

“The Greatest Need” – Pr Jim Sprengle – Mission Sunday June 30, 2024

- I. **Acts 1:8** – [Jesus said,] “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”
- II. **What is a witness for Jesus?**
 - a. Certainly we know what a witness does in a court of law.
 - i. A person testifies or gives testimony to an experience they went through firsthand.
 - ii. What did they see, hear, smell, feel, or taste... as the senses establish memories of an experience that someone can tell others.
 - iii. A witness is a powerful part of court cases and is often the main reason a jury or judge decides on a verdict or ruling.
 - b. The witnesses, or Apostles who followed Jesus during His earthly ministry, and those who were directly connected to them, gave us a testimony about Jesus through the Scriptures.
 - i. A careful account was taken by Luke, who also wrote the book of Acts... Listen to what he says as he begins the Gospel of Luke, “Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, ² just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the Word have delivered them to us, ³ it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴ that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.” (Luke 1:1-4)
 - ii. All of the writings of Scripture, along with the people who told the story of Jesus were trying to state, or put the focus on, the truth.
 1. The underlying point of all witnessing is to get to the truth – to share the truth with others.
 - c. So, a witness for Jesus is a person who:
 - i. Shares their testimony about Him – the story of salvation, but also what Jesus has done for them personally...
 - ii. Wants to share the truth, and Jesus is the “Truth” (John 14:6).
- III. **Witnessing, telling, or sharing Jesus** can be very challenging for Christians.
 - a. Some Christians don’t fully apprehend the gift that Jesus brings by grace through faith, and they aren’t motivated by that gift to share it with others.
 - b. Sometimes Christians are just too afraid of the consequences of sharing.
 - i. It might mean rejection... like friends or family... or someone mocking or ridiculing.
 - ii. The consequences for Christians witnessing about Jesus in other parts of the world are prisons, assaults, loss of property and business, and even death.

1. Yesterday, June 29, happens to be the Day of the Christian Martyr (actually in the Church calendar it's remembering St. Paul and St. Peter who died in service to Christ).
2. As we consider the martyrs all around the world, let's not forget that the Greek word for witness is "martus" or martyr – from the beginning, even Jesus died for sharing the truth.

IV. **Witnessing or sharing Jesus begins within our own hearts.**

- a. As Christ made His way into our lives through the power of the Holy Spirit, we come into a new life – we are a new creation. (2 Cor. 5:17)
 - i. We know that Holy Spirit is in charge of getting our faith to us, as the Bible says, "no one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except in the Holy Spirit." (1 Cor. 12:3)
- b. That same Spirit guided someone to bring you to the baptismal font or came to you at some point in your life with the Gospel message, otherwise you would not know Jesus, nor have a life-saving relationship with Him!
 - i. Paul says in Colossians 1:5 that we have a confident expectation of heaven, which came when we heard the word of truth... the Gospel.
 - ii. But... how did you receive this "word of truth"?
- c. All of us had someone come to us in our past and testify – witness the Word of God and the saving truth in Jesus Christ.
 - i. Even after baptism as babies, we had the second part of Jesus' Great Commission shared with us... because He says not only to baptize, but to teach... and people around us testified...
 - ii. The message that saves is the Word of the Good News... that every person since Adam and Eve have sin in them... and our sin separates us from God, but Jesus Christ came into the world to be the payment for sin, and by His death and resurrection He offers forgiveness and life to all who believe in Him.
 - iii. And from that faith comes a burning desire to share it with others... That's why Paul says in Romans 10, ⁸ "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart' (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); ⁹ because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved." (Romans 10:8-10)
- d. Confessing our faith in Christ to others is not only a statement of our faith, but also the God-given call to share His story with others.
- e. The question is how we get in front of others to share that message... and often the best way to do that is building a relationship by meeting needs.

V. **Today, we are recognizing the importance of mission and witnessing.**

- a. A part of that witness comes from our desire to fulfill what Jesus says in Acts 1:8, that we will bear witness about Him to the world.

- b. The world is full of people who need to experience the love of Christ, the power of the Holy Spirit, and the forgiveness that comes in Jesus' name.
- c. You might say that the Gospel reading is God's Mission to go into the world and baptize in His name and teach every person the message of salvation.
 - i. Our mission should reflect His Great Commission, and that might be here in Gresham and Portland, in the region, or in the world.
 - ii. As we witness... and carry the truth to others... our love extends to them in more than words, but we often open the door to hearing the Gospel by meeting their needs.
- d. I went to Guatemala to the orphanage or "hogar" (which means home) that Child Beyond operates on a couple of occasions.
 - i. At one point a little girl was brought in, probably about 6-years-old, who was abused by her father and had a disease... she had lice in her hair... and she was overwhelmed by the kids and people.
 - ii. But it happened to be the birthday party for another little one, and they put her at the head of the table to celebrate with all the rest.
 - iii. One of the children was asked to pray, and she bowed her head in prayer too, thanking God for the nannies, the hogar, and Jesus' love.
 - iv. After a year of rehabilitation, medical care, emotional care and therapy, education, and people with a heart for Jesus caring for her, I had a chance to see her again.
 - 1. She immediately smiled and gave me a big hug, and then brought me her two little sisters who had come to be with her.
 - 2. The love of Christ had shown through this ministry to that little girl, and she will remember not only the witness of love she received, but the witness of Christ that will stay with her forever.
- e. Child Beyond is one mission of millions around the globe – and all of them want to share the love of Christ and the Gospel with people.
 - i. Sometimes, we are brought into relationship with a specific mission by God's connections, and that is what happened with Child Beyond.
 - ii. As we consider ways to "confess with our mouths" the saving grace of Jesus, many of these children will be raised up learning from their caregivers about God's grace in the midst of terrible circumstances.
 - iii. Not only that, but the vision is to support the whole family and community surrounding these children once they are placed in care of safe people.
 - iv. Child Beyond is a mission that is meeting needs in order to be a long term, locally run ministry that bears witness for Jesus in both deeds...and the Word of God... which is truth.
- f. I want to encourage you to support Child Beyond, along with our own ministries that go out from here and confess that Jesus is Lord.

g. So, celebrate mission with us today and meet the needs of those around you with Christ's love, but remember the greatest need is always being saved by grace through faith in Jesus. Amen.