

“Go and Speak!” – Pr Jim Sprenkle – Easter 2 – April 24, 2022

- I. **Acts 5:19-20** - ¹⁹ But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said, ²⁰ “Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this Life.”
- II. **Locking people up is one way to shut them up.**
 - a. Well, at least it usually keeps people from running all over the place and sharing information or ideas.
 - b. It’s one thing to go to the county jail, or even a state penitentiary, but the worst offenders go to Supermax in Colorado.
 - i. People like the Unabomber and drug cartel leaders go to this place where they are locked up 23 hours a day, and every possible communication is stopped if necessary.
 - ii. Let’s just say you don’t hear much from Ted Kaczynski the Unabomber
 - c. Yesterday, we watched The Chosen TV series, and Herod locked up John the Baptist for speaking out against marrying his brother’s wife...
 - i. John the Baptist would no longer be able to share the message of repentance to the crowds because he was in prison
 - d. It seems that jails and prisons are the fate of most of the followers of Jesus – Paul was imprisoned in various places, John died in exile on the island of Patmos, also jailed were Timothy, Silas, Peter several times, James was executed in prison, and of course all the disciples were arrested and thrown in jail in our reading today.
 - e. In every case, it is because they were sharing the Gospel message.
 - i. In the chapter prior to this one, it says the leaders were, ² greatly annoyed because [Peter and John] were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. ³ And they arrested them and put them in custody...” (Acts 4:2-3)
 - ii. And later it says, ¹⁸ So [the leaders] called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. ¹⁹ But Peter and John answered them, ‘Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, ²⁰ for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.’” (Acts 4:18-20)
 - f. Going back to my Easter message and the quote from Chuck Colson –
 - i. Now some of you might not know Chuck Colson, but he read C.S. Lewis’ “Mere Christianity” and became a Christian as an adult...
 - ii. He was an attorney and one of President Nixon’s advisers who spent time in prison for another reason than sharing the Gospel – he was part of the Watergate scandal.

iii. He is a great apologist, or defender of the faith, and he truly believed the Gospel in part because the followers of Jesus never renounced their faith or said it was a hoax...

1. In the Watergate scandal, one guy caved within two weeks... after questioning and threats of prison... and that one person led to the whole thing coming down.
2. None of that ever happened with Jesus' followers, and whenever they did get out of prison, they just praised God and kept telling the story of salvation to everyone who would listen.

III. **What holds us back from telling the story?**

- a. The angel of the Lord tells us, just like those Apostles, "Go...and speak to the people all the words of this life." (vs 20)
- b. Are we facing threats of prison, torture, or death?
- c. Certainly, we can read about the Christians throughout the world that do face these consequences... the persecuted Church is found all over Africa, the Middle East, China and many parts of Asia.
 - i. The people that face loss of family, career, freedom and even life are many times willing to share the message of salvation – the words of this Life – despite the consequences.
 - ii. Maybe part of their willingness to share is precisely because the threat of punishment is so real... they weigh the cost and realize that it is far better to serve Jesus than worry about their earthly life.
- d. In our Christian walk, we might be more inclined to "do" rather than "speak"
 - i. In other words, we go out into the community and do good things.
 - ii. It's kind of a trendy thing to go out and do good – to clean up, to buy a lunch for someone, to do "random acts of kindness".
 1. This is very good by the way, as Jesus calls us servants.
 2. However, the good works may not always equate to someone seeing Jesus... or most importantly, hearing Jesus and the words of this Life.
 3. We cannot just assume that people will know the story of salvation because we are being helpful or kind.
- e. When we consider the consequences we face of sharing Jesus, it's mostly our fear of being rejected, called a name, or maybe facing anger.
 - i. But the sad thing is that no one needs to put us in jail to shut us up – we have found personal reasons to do the same job that jail does.

IV. **Remember again the salvation and wonder of our Lord Jesus!**

- a. The Risen Lord is not dead... He is risen! **He is risen indeed, alleluia!** – continuing to make Himself known to people all over the world.
- b. The first witnesses to His resurrection were the women at the tomb, and they were so filled with awe and wonder that they could not help but share.

- c. Next the Apostles shared the Good News... not only had Jesus died to pay for our sins, but He rose again so we might receive that forgiveness...
- d. All the people who witnessed God's amazing love and the miracle of Jesus' rescue could only pass it on... tell the next person... Go and speak the words of this Life.
- e. In our own lives we tend to be creatures of habit... we get into cycles of lows and highs when it comes to our excitement for what God has done... so we need reminders... and Easter gives us that!
 - i. The very word we go out to speak to others is also the Word of God we must hear all the time to remember His saving work for us.
 - ii. As it says in our Revelation reading today – “To Him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by His blood” (vs 5) – we were brought out of the prison of sin and death so that we could be free.
 - iii. We don't have to fear anything because God is with us from start to finish – from our Baptism... to His Word of forgiveness... to His body and blood... all parts of the freedom and peace we experience.

V. **What does this mean for us as Christ followers?**

- a. For one thing, don't make it about guilt and shame...
 - i. If we go out into the world and talk about Jesus because Pastor Jim makes us feel guilty... we are missing the point
 - ii. Instead, remember the blessings that God has provided in your life, or the lives of those around you... and talk about it like you would if you went to a good restaurant, or read a good book or saw a movie... of course you want others to experience the same joy you did!
- b. Secondly, don't force the issue.
 - i. No one is saying you need to go out and harpoon people for Jesus
 - ii. It might take a long time of serving and caring for someone to be able to share what's in your heart, but when the opportunity does arise, pray that God would give you the courage and willingness to share.
- c. Third, invite.
 - i. 80% of the people who come to a church were invited by someone they trusted.
 - ii. If you don't speak the words of this Life to them directly, perhaps within a church service, a Bible study, or other event held at the church, they will hear those words!
- d. Finally, pray.
 - i. Again, pray that God would give you reason to share His message
 - ii. Pray for willingness, courage and motivation to Go and Share Jesus Christ...
- e. You may not have heard our Mission Statement in a while – but that is who we are as Christians – we Go and Share Jesus Christ!

- f. It's not easy to share something as personal as our faith, and realize that it challenges us to consider whether our faith is worth sharing
 - i. As Jesus died and rose again for each of us, I wholeheartedly believe that every person in the world needs hear this gift is for them too.
 - ii. Entering the mission field begins the moment we walk out that door, so open your eyes to the potential harvest.
 - iii. Nothing can shut us up from sharing the Good News because we are witnesses who have seen and know the love of Jesus firsthand.
Amen.