

# **Evangelism (Witness) Must Be A Priority**

**Mark 5:18-21**

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Today is week three in a series of messages titled “Priorities for the New Year.” Over the past couple of weeks we have examined some of the things that MUST take precedent in the lives of a child of God. We have examined how love and worship must be a priority for the Christian. Today we move to the fact that evangelism or our witness must be a priority. The word “evangelism” is simply defined as the spreading the “good news of Jesus Christ. Being a witness is sharing what has happened in our life because of Jesus.

The Times-Reporter of New Philadelphia, Ohio, reported in September, 1985 about a celebration at a New Orleans municipal pool. The party around the pool was held to celebrate the first summer in memory without a drowning at the New Orleans city pool. In honor of the occasion, 200 people gathered, including 100 certified lifeguards. As the party was breaking up and the four lifeguards on duty began to clear the pool, they found a fully dressed body in the deep end. They tried to revive Jerome Moody, 31, but it was too late. He had drowned surrounded by lifeguards celebrating their successful season.

What a tragic story, but how much more tragic to think that lost souls that we encounter in our homes, workplaces, schoolhouses and yes, even in the church are surrounded by Christians and many will die and spend an eternity separated from God. There are people around us, even next to us who are separated from the grace and love of God. They are drowning...

How is this possible? Well, like the lifeguards in New Orleans we may spend our time basking in the glory of Jesus and celebrating our own successes and faith, consumed with ourselves and neglect to share the good news of Jesus Christ with others around us.

There are reasons that you do what you do: Why do you go to work? Why do you spend time doing recreational activities? Why do you go home at night? The reason that you do these things is because you have the motivation to do so. You go to work because you need/want money. You do recreational activities to relax. You go home at night because you love your family. What is to be the motive for our witness?

In our Gospel today we see a life that has been transformed by Jesus. In this account in Mark chapter 5 we notice three things:

- 1) The Painful Past Condition - This man was possessed with an unclean spirit. No one could help him. He was in continuous agony and couldn't stop from hurting himself.
- 2) The Powerful Permanent Change - He had an encounter with Jesus. Notice the change in this man after Jesus shows up: This man who couldn't be bound with chains was now comforted - He was "sitting" & "clothed." Peace has replaced torment. He is no longer out of control, he is completely sane and in the possession of a rational mind!
- 3) Jesus told him to share his story with others. V. 19 – "Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you." Jesus want us, too, to go and tell our friends, our family and others what He has done for us – He wants us to share our story.

Introduce video – Dr. Liz & Charlie Alm. Theirs is a story of devastating news, treatment, struggle, triumph and a miracle. Listen to a part of their story.

My great thanks to the Alms' for sharing their story with us. In their story you noticed the simplicity of this mission to go and be witnesses for Jesus. You don't have to be a theologian, but simply go and as we sometimes sing "tell everyone what He has done."

I thought of 4 things as I listened to their story:

Step #1 - Surrender – it was in God's hand

Step #2 - Seek – found an audience

Step #3 – Share – their story – stories can be of trials, of joys, of miracles, of blessings

Step #4 - Show – be an example of hope and trust for others

A woman put an ad in the local paper: "Lost 50 pounds! Selling my fat clothes – they're in good condition, sizes 18-20." She was bombarded with phone calls, but nobody wanted to buy the clothes – they all wanted to know how she had lost the 50 pounds. You see, the callers wanted to know about something that had changed her life hoping that this something could change their lives too!!! That's what the unchurched are really looking for. They want to know if Jesus really works in your life. They want to hear about what you've seen, touched and heard.

But, something needs to be said here. You and I need to ask ourselves – does Jesus show thru our lives? When we talk to people about our faith, it is easier to invite them to church than it is to share our faith and introduce them to Jesus. This isn't a condemnation... it's just a fact of life. It's a reality because of sin. We focus on self instead of others. We focus on our fears, instead of the mission for all of us.

And because it's easier for us to just invite, we often forget that our main goal SHOULD BE to bring these friends of ours to "fellowship with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ." If we're not careful, we can get into the mindset that our goal is to bring people

into this building so that we can pay the bills. So that we can fill the seats. So that we can make Jon feel really good (although, bringing a lot of people to church with you WILL make me feel really good).

Having people come in the door is a great thing. Having them join in fellowship with us is a wonderful thing. But let us never be deceived into thinking that church can be a substitute for a relationship with God.

And so, you should not only invite people to church...

But you should also find ways of inviting them to Jesus. Find ways to tell the old, old story of Jesus and His love, love that brought Him to earth, to a cross, and to a tomb for us and all people. His death brought us life. People need Jesus. They can discover Jesus...

- by your story
- and by your life.

Jesus should show thru in what you say and what you do... so that others will know who it is you have fellowship with.

It is not your duty to convict! It is not your duty to convert! That's the job of the Holy Spirit. It is your duty to convey! A witness simply tells what happens! You can do the same today!

If you are a Christian, you possess the greatest news in history, are you sharing that news with others? Being a witness for our Savior and of what He has done must be a priority! In Jesus, Amen!