

PCPC “Rescued”
 Evangelism Formation
 Summer, 2015

Evangelism and God’s Good News

Introduction

“There has been a long tradition which sees the mission of the Church primarily as obedience to a command. It has been customary to speak of ‘the mission mandate.’ This way of putting the matter is certainly not without justification, and yet it seems to me that it misses the point. It tends to make [evangelism] a burden rather than a joy, to make it part of the law rather than part of the gospel. If one looks at the New Testament evidence one gets another impression. **Mission begins with a kind of explosion of joy.** The news that the rejected and crucified Jesus is alive is something that cannot possibly be suppressed. It must be told. Who could be silent about such a fact? The mission of the Church in the pages of the New Testament is more like the fallout from a vast explosion, a radioactive fallout which is not lethal but life-giving. One searches in vain through the letters of St. Paul to find any suggestion that he anywhere lays it on the conscience of his readers that they ought to be active in mission. For himself it is inconceivable that he should keep silent. ‘Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!’ (1 Cor. 9:16). But nowhere do we find him telling his readers that they have a duty to do so.” (Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralistic Society*)

What is “Evangelism”?

The word evangelism comes from the Greek word, “euangelion,” which in the form of a verb means, “to announce or proclaim or bring good news.”

Psalm 40:9: “I have told the glad news of deliverance in the great congregation; behold, I have not restrained my lips, as you know, O Lord.”

Evangelism is predicated on the belief that we have good news that is worthy to be shared.

“I had never noticed that all [joy] spontaneously overflows into praise.... The world rings with praise – lovers praising their mistresses, readers their favorite pet, walkers praising the countryside, players their favorite game – praise of weather, wines, dishes, actors, motors, horses, colleges, countries, children, flowers, mountains, rare stamps, rare beetles, even sometimes politicians or scholars....

I had not noticed either that just as men spontaneously praise whatever they value, so they spontaneously urge us to join them in praising it: ‘Isn’t she lovely? Wasn’t it glorious? Don’t you think it magnificent?’... “Wasn’t that incredible!”

I think we delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise not merely expresses but completes the enjoyment; it is its appointed consummation.... It is frustrating to have discovered a new author and not to be able to tell anyone how good he is; to come suddenly, at the turn of the road, upon some mountain valley of unexpected grandeur and then to have to keep silent... to hear a good joke and find no one to share it with.... (C. S. Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*)

The first practical step to evangelism is finding deep joy in God for ourselves.

What is “the Gospel”?

Mark 1:14-15: “Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God: “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.””

The gospel is good news that the kingdom of God has come in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Evangelism is not only joy, but also translation. It is connecting the reality of God’s kingdom in Jesus Christ, with lives of real people who are living in totally different stories.

Read Acts 17:16-34. What can we learn from Paul’s approach?

The Bible’s Basic Storyline:

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|-----------------|---|
| 1. Creation: | Who we are, What God wants for us |
| 2. Fall: | What went wrong |
| 3. Redemption: | What God has done in Jesus to make things right |
| 4. Restoration: | How history will turn out |

Points of Contact

Great evangelists are great listeners. They take people seriously, both their minds and hearts.

Listen for...

1. Points of pain: suffering, confusion or poverty
2. Points of longing: hopes, dreams, ambitions
3. Points of challenge: beliefs, assumptions, views

“There is something in us, as storytellers and as listeners to stories, that demands the redemptive act, that demands that what falls at least be offered the chance to be restored. The reader of today looks for this motion, and rightly so, but what he has forgotten is the cost of it. His sense of evil is diluted or lacking altogether, and so he has forgotten the price of restoration.” (Flannery O’Connor, *Mystery and Manners*)

Conclusion

“How is it possible that the gospel should be credible, that people should come to believe that the power which has the last word in human affairs is represented by a man hanging on a cross? I am suggesting that the only answer, the only hermeneutic of the gospel, is a congregation of men and women who believe it and live by it. I am, of course, not denying the importance of the many activities by which we seek to challenge public life with the gospel – evangelistic campaigns, distribution of Bibles and Christian literature, conferences, and even books such as this one. But I am saying that these are all secondary, and that they have power to accomplish their purpose only as they are rooted in and lead back to a believing community.” (Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*)