

Evangelism 02 We Do Not Well

by Welcome Detweiler

The sermon emphasizes the urgent call for Christians to actively share the gospel as a response to the spiritual hunger of the world.

Duration: 38:22

Scripture: Malachi 3:17, John 3:16, Acts 1:8

Topics: "Evangelism", "Discipleship"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of sharing the message of salvation with others. He encourages the audience to take seriously the responsibility of witnessing to others and not neglecting this duty. The speaker shares a personal experience of feeling weary but still making the effort to visit someone and share the gospel, resulting in a positive outcome. He references the command given by Jesus to go into the world and proclaim the gospel, and highlights the early believers' obedience in spreading the message everywhere. The sermon also includes a story from the Bible about a famine in Samaria and how Elisha prophesied that it would end, demonstrating the power of God to provide for His people.

Transcript

Since arriving on the conference ground yesterday, I discovered that you folks are normal, because I already had someone ask me, how did you get your name? And if enough people really want to know, I might tell you on Tuesday night how I got my name. The, uh, I understand that usually when you have a speaker here for a week, they will follow some kind of a theme. The Lord has laid upon my heart just one word for this theme.

It starts with the letter E, evangelism. And the reason for it is this, that during the past year, I have heard a number of Christians raise this question, where are the evangelists? There are only two age group of Christians alive on the face of the earth. They are the young Christians and the middle-aged Christians.

And this question comes mostly from the middle-aged Christians, ages 70, 80, and 90. They are raising the question, where are the evangelists? And I presume that they could look back to a day in their experience when evangelism, perhaps, was just a little more prominent than today. I'm not sure if that's true, but I'd like to find out if I just heard a few people say, I found that when I hear three people within two weeks say, where are the evangelists? I draw a conclusion that the whole world is asking the question.

And, of course, I'm exaggerating when I say that. So, maybe only a few people are raising that question. But it is a subject that is very important.

It's in the Bible. It's very near to my heart, and it's a biblical term. In the gifts that Paul mentions in the epistle to the Ephesians, he says, among the gifts that are given, evangelists, pastors, teachers.

When he writes his letter to Timothy, he says, do the work of an evangelist. In the book of the Acts, Philip has the title of being Philip the Evangelist. So, it is a definite part of the work of the Lord.

In introducing a subject like that, perhaps it will be well for us, first of all, to define what is evangelism. I have heard a number of definitions. I didn't go to Mr. Webster to get the definition, because it was too long, and I couldn't hang on to it.

The best definition I have heard is this one. One beggar telling another beggar where to find bread. I don't know who coined it, and that's why I can't give him credit.

But, if I ever find the fellow who coined that, I say, thank you. For some reason or other, you got a lot of molasses on it. It sticks with me.

It's the best definition I've heard. And then, after I get acquainted with a man, I will ask him the question, do you mind if I change your definition just a tiny bit? And maybe he will be kind enough to say yes, and I will say, how about an ex-beggar telling a beggar where to find bread? And then, I'm going to ask him, where did you get that idea? And do you know what I expect him to tell me? One day, while I was reading from 2 Kings Chapter 7, I got my definition. Would you like to turn to that portion? 2 Kings Chapter 7. I don't think I should read all of it, because you are familiar with it, but you do need some homework, and you will read the latter part of Chapter 6, and then into Chapter 7, and you will have the story.

Let me give you just a brief review as a setting. At this particular time, King Ben-Hadad, who is king over Syria, wants to have a battle against the nation of Israel, and he besieges the city of Samaria. This is what is called a cold war, and this is his way of winning the battle.

Closing up the city, no food gets in, and they will have to bow their knee. Things are getting desperate, because the king is walking on the wall, and a woman stops him. He's all excited.

I've got a problem. What's your problem? Another lady and I made a pact. We said, today, we are going to kill my child, and eat the child, and tomorrow, we will kill your child, and eat your child.

And guess what she did? I killed my child, and we ate him, and now she hid her child, and that's not fair. When the king heard that, my goodness, things are getting terrible. What in the world are we going to do? And someone suggested, it's all Elisha's fault.

You've got to get rid of Elisha. Elisha was quite calm, and he said, don't worry, things are going to change. Something's going to happen, and we won't have this famine very long.

The man who heard that said, if the Lord would open the windows of heaven, that's the only possible way that the hunger of these people in the city of Samaria could be fended. But, there were four beggars who were sitting at the gate of Samaria, and that's where we're going to start reading. Chapter 7, and verse 3. There were four leprous men at the entering in of the gate, and they said one to another, why sit we here until we die? If we say we will enter into the city, then the famine is in the city, and we shall die there.

If we sit still here, we die also. Now, therefore, come and let us fall unto the host of the Syrians. If they save us alive, we shall live.

If they kill us, we shall but die. And they rose up in the twilight to go unto the camp of the Syrians, and when they were come to the uttermost part of the camp of Syria, behold, there was no man there. For the Lord had made the host of the Syrians to hear a noise of chariots, and a noise of horses, even noise of a great host, and they said one to another, Lo, the king of Israel hath hired against us the king of the Hittites, and the kings of the Egyptians to come upon us.

Wherefore, they arose and fled in the twilight, and left their tents, and their horses, and their asses, even the camp as it was, and fled for their lives. When these lepers came to the uttermost part of the camp, they went in unto one tent, and did eat, and drink, and carried then silver, and gold, and raiment, and went and hid it, and came again, and entered into another tent, and carried then also, and went and hid it. Then they said one to another, We do not well.

This day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace. If we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us. Now, therefore, come, that we may go and tell the king's household.

I want to read verse nine once more, because this is my text tonight. Then said they one to another, We do not well. This day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace.

If we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us. Now, therefore, come, that we may go and tell the king's household. I told you a moment ago, I rather expect that the man who invented that definition of evangelism was reading this portion, and was convinced that the best definition is an ex-beggar telling a beggar where to find bread.

I think there are a number of things that we can learn from this text, and before I tell you about it, let me tell you something that happened a few months ago. I said to myself, You know, I haven't been memorizing the word of God lately. I know John 3, 16, and a few others, but I haven't been busy.

You know what I ought to do? I ought to at least memorize one verse out of every book in the Bible. So, can you quote a verse in Malachi? Yes, Malachi 3, 16. What about Zechariah? I'm going to meet Zechariah in heaven, and it would be nice when he said, I'm Mr. Zechariah.

Good, and I'll quote one verse out of his book. I don't know whether I'll be that cocky when I get to heaven or not, but if things were just like on earth, I would love to do that. I couldn't quote one verse out of that book.

Haggai? Habakkuk? Hosea? I've got to do it. And I started to pick out verses from every book in the Bible. Please don't ask me to quote them, because I haven't got the job done.

I wish that I had done this earlier when my memory apparatus was a bit fatter than it is today. I'm not able to do it, but I selected verses, and you won't be a bit surprised if, when I came to 2 Kings, I selected chapter 7 and verse 9. I did not allow Schofield to tell me what the key verse is of these books. I wanted my own.

I read the book through and then selected a certain verse. Now, I don't have a patent on that. I want you to do the same.

It wouldn't do you a bit of harm to at least be able to quote 66 verses one from every book in the Bible. You already have one from John and a number of other books. The New Testament, you probably have the 27.

But in the Old Testament, maybe you want to start where I started, Malachi, and go down towards Genesis. It would be nice if you selected one verse out of every book in the Bible. Let us look at this text for a moment.

Do you think there's anything here that is appropriate for the day in which we are living, 1980? Right to the middle of the verse, this day is a day of good tidings. Is that true? It is a day of good tidings. Just a few weeks ago, you were celebrating the Christmas season, and you remember that the angel came to the shepherd and said, Fear not, for I bring you good tidings and great joy unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior which is Christ the Lord.

Say, that was good tidings. A Savior. This world needs a Savior, and the Savior came.

But, really, the good tidings that we have to announce in 1980 is just a little better than what the shepherds heard. That one was born is not quite enough, but that he died on the cross, and that this is a day of good tidings. I wonder if you have ever complained to the Lord that you were either born too late or too early.

You would have loved to live when George Washington was on the earth, or Abe Lincoln, or even when Jesus Christ was on the earth. Wouldn't it have been delightful to have lived then? Why do we worry about things like that? He doesn't make any mistakes, and I want to tell you that you couldn't have been born in a more privileged age than right today. This world is hungry for the gospel, and this is a time for good tidings.

Those of us who have found, let me just think of those four lepers who haven't had a decent meal for a long time, because when a city is besieged, they won't get anything. They're the first ones to be hurting. They are getting the scraps or the leftovers when things are normal, but as soon as people say we're in the same boat as they are, the food is getting less and less and less, we're all going to starve.

These fellows recognized we have three options. We can go in the city and die there. We can stay right where we are and die here, or we can take a chance and go up to the Syrians.

Maybe those Syrians will say, poor lepers, I feel so sorry for them. Let's give them some food. Let's take a chance, and when they arrived, I can't believe it.

Where are they? Everyone's gone. It would almost seem as though Paul Revere, or someone like him, drove down and said, get out as fast as you can. The Hittites are coming.

We heard them. Last night, I heard a rumbling. I said, I wonder what that noise is.

Is that the Hittites? They're hitting. I believe it's a freight train, and so it was. But it made me think of this.

Those poor Syrians there, the Lord has a strange way of winning battles, doesn't he? I don't know how he made that noise, but I hear horses. What do you hear? I hear chariots. They're coming.

It's getting louder. They're coming closer. We don't even have time to grab our things.

Let's go and go, and save our lives. And the tents are filled with food, and those poor lepers are having a real feed, and enjoying it. But, at a certain point, they stop, and they say, we do not well.

This isn't right. Our friends who used to give us handouts down there in the city of Samaria, they are starving. They are eating their children, and we have all this food here, and it's going to waste.

We just can't sit here. We've got to go, and tell them this is a day of good tidings. When we go down there in the city, and say, would you like to have some food? Don't tantalize us.

You know we do. There's plenty of food up on the hill. Come on.

Someone may not believe it, but there'll be somebody there who'll believe it, and we have the joy of telling hungry people where to find food. 1980. You and I are living in a world that is hungry for something real.

They have religion, and it isn't real. It hasn't satisfied us, but the hungry hearts of men and women are saying, can you give us something that makes life worthwhile? Can you give us something that will assure us that our sins are forgiven, that we can meet God without being afraid? Can you give us something that will make life on earth bearable, enjoyable? Can you give us something that guarantees at the end of the road we're going to be better off than ever before? A wonderful heaven, and the Christian can say, yes I can. I have a person to offer to you.

I have tried him. He has fully satisfied my heart, but suppose these men, after they said we do not well, they would have said, well after all, we don't owe them anything. Let's not tell them.

They couldn't do it. Is it possible that the Christians that are living on the face of the earth have forgotten? Phil, Jesus Christ saves and satisfies. There's a hungry world out there, and we ought to say to ourselves, we do not well that we hold our peace.

We do not well. It isn't right. What did Paul say when he wrote to the Roman Christians? I am debtor, debtor.

I owe it to them, to the Greek, to the barbarians, anyone. I owe them the message of the gospel. Down through the ages, God has left a church on earth, one church, to evangelize one world.

Every generation has had a number of Christians on the face of the earth to meet the needs and to tell the starving world of a savior that can save and can satisfy. I know that you have thanked the Lord for saving you, and perhaps at times you have thanked the person who may have been the last link in the chain of events that led you to the Savior, and you call that person your spiritual father or your spiritual mother, as the case may be. But did you ever go a little farther and ask that person who led you to Christ, who led him to Christ? And he'll mention somebody's name.

And who led him to Christ? And who led him to Christ? And then you could say, I don't know where it began, but somewhere, a way down the line, somebody told somebody else, and he told somebody else, and he told somebody else, and finally. And I owe a great owe of gratitude to all of them that were used to bring me to Christ. Now, what should I do to express my appreciation for all those who were used to bring the message to me? It is possible that I shall break the chain, that I will stop and not pass it on.

What would have happened if in those people that were lined up that brought the message to you, someone had fallen down on the job and had said, let them find their way. But they were faithful, were

they not? And I want to press upon our hearts tonight the fact that we have an obligation to a starving world to tell them the message of salvation. Our good tidings are that there is no one living on the face of the earth that has to go to hell.

Not one. There is no one on the earth who can say, I would like to be in heaven when I die, but it's not for me. No one can say that.

God's whosoever takes in every person. Let me give you an experience I had back in 1948. A man attending our services regularly, and I heard some rumors.

It's very strange that that man should be in church. He's not a church-going man. One day after the service, out in front, I asked him, and he said, no.

He said, I haven't been in church for 18 years, except at a few funerals that I had to go to. But I said, I see you nearly every Sunday. Yes, he said.

I'm interested. And a few days later, I got a letter in the mail, and he said, before you can help me, you will have to know something about my background. I am an ungodly man.

I have cursed God. I'm perhaps the worst sinner in this city. And he said, a few years ago, while I was out there fishing with some other men, I just thought I was going to act smart, and a big thunderstorm came up.

And I said, all right, God, if you're up there, I dare you to strike me with lightning. You can't do it. And the men that were with me said, I'll never go fishing with that man again.

On another occasion, I got mad at someone, and I was so infuriated, I cursed God, his son, the Holy Spirit, and anybody else that's up there. I cursed a whole bunch of you. And when I did it, something within me says, now you've done it.

You have committed the unpardonable sin. You might as well face it. You're as good as in hell right now.

I've lived that way for a number of years, knowing there is no salvation for me. Now, he said, after knowing all that I have done, if you think that I can still be saved, I'm interested. I read the letter, and a day or two later, I got a telephone call.

Did you get my letter? Yes. I'd like to talk to you. I'm not pressed.

I'm going to pull out in front of the car, or in front of the house. I'll blow the horn. I want you to come out to the car.

I came to the car. He said, you know all about me now. I put everything down in that letter.

Can you prove to me that there is still salvation available for me? Yes. Show it to me from your Bible. I am the door.

By me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved. What does it mean, if any man? Does that include you? It does. Have you got another verse? Yes, I do.

Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out. John 6, 37. He said, that means that with all that I have done, I still can be saved.

Yes. He said, I'm ready to trust the Savior right now, and in that old Plymouth car, he bowed his head and trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior. He is in our meeting ever since.

He takes part of the Lord's Supper every once in a while, maybe not every Sunday, every other Sunday. His prayers do not exceed 30 seconds, but they come from the heart. Let us grasp the fact that there is not one soul living on the face of the earth that can't be in heaven if he wants to.

Some years ago, I had the privilege of preaching to the inmates in the New Jersey State Penitentiary. What do you say to lifetimers, men who are guilty of murder, whose hands are stained with human blood? Do you have a message? Yes, I do. The same message that I would give to a reverend, or anybody else.

God only has one message. Whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. This is a day of good tidings, and we do not well to hold our peace.

Besides the definition, you are aware of the fact that God has commanded us, as soon as we are saved, to go out and to tell others, because this is the means that he uses. You can say, why didn't he send angels down to proclaim the gospel? Why did he allow poor, failing Christians to do it? He wanted to, and he wanted us to get the blessing in doing it, and it's tremendous, and Paul expresses this. How marvelous that the Lord allowed me the privilege of proclaiming the gospel.

I must remind you that in all of the gospels, you have the Great Commission, in some form or another. Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel. That's a command.

To whom is it spoken? To every believer in Jesus Christ, without any exception. Every person should hear from the Son of God, go ye into the world and proclaim the gospel. Acts, chapter 1, verse 8. But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto me in Jerusalem, in all Judea, in Samaria, and then to the uttermost parts of the earth.

He sent them out, and when you turn to the eighth chapter of Acts, you will read, Therefore, they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word. In the last part of the last verse of Mark's gospel, it says they went forth everywhere proclaiming that message. How wonderful that down through the ages, Christians have taken seriously the privilege of evangelism, of telling people how they can be saved.

I have to ask myself once in a while, do I really believe this? That sinners who die in their sins are going to hell? Do I really believe there is a hell? I'm Orthodox enough to answer that question rapidly, yes I do. And then I have to ask myself the question, what did you do in this past week that indicates that you really believe that? And I have to hang my head and say, there's very little evidence to prove that I believe that when a soul perishes in his sins, he is separated from God for all eternity. It wouldn't do us any harm to ask ourselves the question, do I really believe what I profess to believe? I was at a Bible conference some years ago when the morning session was an open Bible reading, a discussion class, and the subject of backsliding came up.

And the question was raised, what does a Christian have to do to prevent backsliding? And the two standard answers were given. He must read his Bible daily, and he must find a time of prayer, a quiet time of communing with the Lord. And then, the conference was shocked.

When a brother got up, there are three things you have to do to remain in happy fellowship with the Lord. We all look, Paul's doctrine, what's he going to say? You have to go out and tell others, or you won't be as happy as you ought to be. You know, I believe he's right.

Keep it to yourself. Some of you remember Alfred P. Gibbs. He had his ABCs.

Accepting the person makes you safe. Believing the word makes you sure. Confessing his name makes you strong.

If you want to be a strong Christian, if you want to be a happy Christian, if you want to keep in fellowship with the Lord, if you don't want to backslide, yes, you will have to read your Bible. You will have to pray, and you will have to pass it off, or you won't be happy. Do you remember the moments immediately after your conversion, the happiness? You can't get that again.

You can enjoy it, of course, but the next best thing is to have the privilege of leading another soul to the Lord. Psalm 51, David's penitential prayer, he said, Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation. Verse 13, Then will I teach transgressors thy ways.

When do people witness? When they've been restored to the Lord, and there is a possibility that sometimes the very fact that our lips are closed, we do not well, is because we are in a fact-slidden condition. I hope I am not over-emphasizing evangelism. I don't think I can.

When I think of hungry souls out there, there will be people out there tonight who will say their prayers, and they will say, Lord, I can't take in another day. I don't really want to commit suicide, but I don't know any other thing to do. I've got to.

And to reach those people just before they do it, and tell them, Life can be beautiful. Life can be wonderful. All you need to do is trust this wonderful Savior of ours.

There's an urgency about this. These lepers said, If we tarry till the morning, if we put it off, some mischief will happen to us. And that will be true.

There's something urgent about this, that each one of us takes seriously the fact, if we haven't been telling people about our Savior, we do not well. I want you to memorize this text with me, and every time you read it, I want you to say, If I haven't witnessed to a person today, I am not doing well. On a few occasions, my body got a bit weary, but I had to go make a visit, and so on, and I forced myself to do it.

When I got to the place, the person said, Will you sit down and show me how to be saved? And I take the scriptures and show them how to be saved. And I come out of that house like a 15-year-old. I've never felt so good in my life.

What did the Savior say? I have meat to eat that you know not of. There's nothing like it. Now, I want to ask you, when is the last time you had the privilege of leading a soul to Christ? You are in circumstances where it's not very convenient.

Would you like to tell the Lord that? Or would you like to say, I want to be a soul winner for Jesus Christ? I think we should sing of our closing hymn tonight, number 566, which is a very searching hymn, and while you're turning to that number, once more, I have to speak to anyone who may be in the audience tonight who doesn't know the Lord Jesus as Savior. I don't want to take the chance of any of you going home without knowing Jesus Christ as Savior, and I want to speak to anyone who is at that place where you can say, I would like to be saved tonight. These searching words, 566, must I go and empty-handed, thus, my dear Redeemer, meet, not one day of service, give Him, lay no trophy at His feet.

Not at death I shrink nor falter, for my Savior saves me now, but to meet Him, empty-handed, thoughts of that now cloud my brow. O ye saints, arouse and be earnest, up and work while yet this day. E'er the night of death, or take thee, strive for souls while still you may.

I would like to sing verses 1, 2, and 4 of number 566. Our gracious Father, we thank Thee for Thy Word. Sometimes it is very searching, and we pray that it may search our hearts.

The Thou hast allowed us to live in 1980. We give Thee thanks. The Thou hast allowed us to live where there are souls benighted all around us.

We thank Thee, and if we have been careless, indifferent as to their need, O God, awaken us tonight and make us to realize that there are tremendous opportunities that are ours. The far-reaching effects of telling some poor sinner that they can be saved by trusting Thy Son help us to recognize the debt that we owe to these people, and help us in the days that lie ahead to seize every opportunity of making Jesus Christ known. For this privilege, we give Thee thanks, and pray Thy blessing on Thy Word to every heart, in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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