

Unshakeable: Colossians 4:2-6, Winsome Witnesses, 5/21/17

Colossians 4:2-6

Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.

Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

Today we are going to talk about evangelism. But before we even are able to get to the text we need to lay some groundwork, because this word evangelism such a loaded word, laden with a lot of false notions and negative images. By evangelism I mean simply this: sharing the gospel with non-Christians.

Evangelism is intolerant and should be avoided.

Now that's kind of an unpopular notion in postmodern 2017 because we live in a culture that says our faith is something private and we shouldn't share that with anyone else or try to persuade someone that yours is right and theirs is wrong. That your truth is your truth and mine is mine, no one is right and no one should tell anyone else that they are wrong. Postmodernism hates binaries. And this can infiltrate our sensibilities as well. We start agreeing, who am I to tell anyone what they should believe. With the internet anyone who wants to know more can search for themselves.

However, **Christianity is designed to be shared**. It has been a converting faith from the beginning of Jesus' commission in Matthew 28 to go to the ends of the earth with the message of salvation through Jesus Christ, an exclusive statement. It is evangelistic. It is persuasive and missional. It is NOT coercive. It does not use the sword, manipulation, or brainwashing. But it does proclaim, and persuade and plead and pray. And where this is not believed and practiced, Christianity ceases to be Christianity and starts to become something else. The church becomes a country club for insiders that used to be a medical clinic for the community. And it caters to the members who become fewer and fewer...Go visit the churches that have abandoned the evangelistic heartbeat of the gospel and that is what you will find. It is sad.

May it never be said of Brandywine Valley Baptist Church! This is why we must become a lighthouse of real hope and real help through the saving and restoring message of Jesus. It is why we want to go after the REAL needs of our community-brokenness, relationship challenges...equip you to be the powerhouse and send you out. It is why we preach salvation through no other name than Jesus, because we genuinely believe lives are at stake. In the coming years together we will be doing more and more to equip us to share our faith...training, etc.

Evangelism is for evangelists

The other common misconception within the church what many church people think whether publicly or in their minds is that evangelism is for particularly gifted. Street corner people, strike up a conversation with anyone, or pastors that preach... but not for me. Or they think that if they are going to do evangelism it means that they have to pass out tracts at the bus station.

Two truths-

-**All of us are called to evangelism** (sharing the gospel) not just the particularly gifted.

-For the vast majority, the expected way the Bible points to evangelize (share our faith) is through **every day lifestyle and relationships**. We don't have time to trace this theme through New Testament but this is what you will find.

And so how do we as "ordinary Christians" without the gift of pastor, evangelist, apostle... how are we to be effective at sharing our faith? And that is what this message is all about today because Paul is instructing the church in Colossae in how to be effective.

What we want to see in this passage are 4 Ways to be Effective Witnesses

1) Rely on God's Power not our own

Colossians 4:2-4

Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.

Have you ever said, "I just don't have opportunities to share my faith." Or "I don't know what I would say." The answer is prayer! Paul believes that his effectiveness in sharing his faith, both the opportunities (open doors) themselves and even how clear he will speak has everything to do with a commitment to prayer. Why? Because evangelism is God's work, we just tag along! Get this. Not only is it God's work in providing the opportunities to share our faith, God does the conversion work, not us!

1 Corinthians 4:4-7

The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.

For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ. But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.

Our job? We are just the ordinary vessel. We share Christ. God's job? Open blind eyes. The power is from God not us! The result is in God's hands.

Two experiences: debating theology...didn't work, simply sharing with Kevin- God opened blind eyes. God does the saving.

And prayer is the link between our sharing and God's work. Devotion to prayer as Paul is requesting will reveal how much we really believe it is God not us. We must believe as John Piper talks about, that prayer is designed as a walkie-talkie for spiritual battlefields. It's the link between active soldiers and their command headquarters, with its unlimited firepower and air cover and strategic wisdom. In other words God will create opportunities for the gospel to be heard in response to prayer. He will open doors as Paul puts it.

Are you praying for open doors for our missionaries? Are you praying that when I share the gospel God would open the eyes of the blind? And how about for your personal life? Are you praying that God would supply opportunity and clarity when you have the opportunity to share with your coworker or neighbor or family members?

2) Exercise Wisdom

Colossians 4:5 Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders

Wisdom is the use of knowledge in helpful ways.

"The way you act" Paul has in mind here our social interaction, our behaviors with the world around us, particularly those who don't know Christ. How do we relate to others in ways that are most helpful for the gospel? We don't give anyone a reason to say- "And that guy is a Christian?" or "See, that's why I don't want anything to do with Jesus."

Question we should always ask, is there anything about my behavior among non-Christians that would make Jesus look bad? Are you known as a complainer? Are you always fighting or angry about something? How do you talk about people on the other side of the political fence? Do you tip well? Do you work hard?

Maybe that means exercising wisdom about what you post on Facebook. Do your posts portray you as someone who has a strong opinion about everything? Someone that thrives on drama or controversy? Someone who is constantly sarcastic or combative with people who disagree with you?

Our lifestyle should clear a path for the Gospel...this leads right to point 3.

3) Anticipate Divine Appointments

Colossians 5:b make the most of every opportunity.

The King James says redeeming (or buying back) the time. Using the time for God's redeeming purposes. In other words it means that we see the world through the lens

of divine appointments! And this makes sense because if we are persistently in prayer, if we are watchful in our prayer throughout the day it means that we will see circumstances, relationships and conversations around as divinely appointed, not random, meaningless, or interruptions. Paul modeled this in how he looked at seemingly terrible circumstances like imprisonment as divine appointments.

Philippians 1:12-14

Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel. As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ.

And because of my chains, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear.

I would have written a letter that to the Philippians that said this... **Get me out. – Nate.** But Paul saw through the lens of divine appointments. One of the things I'm often praying for when we meet as a staff on Monday mornings are divine interruptions. That throughout the day God would bring people and situations into our lives that we may think of as interruptions to what we need to get done that are actually divinely appointments, opportunities to be a witness for Christ and that we would seize that opportunity.

Your neighbor that is going through crisis in their marriage right now and confides in you- Divine appointment. You end up in the hospital and are being attended to by nurses and doctors- Divine appointment. You sit down at Brew Ha Ha with your Bible and someone asks you about it- Divine appointment. A friend in school has a meltdown because their boyfriend broke up with them- Divine appointment.

But we also should be proactive, not just reactive. We can do little things that set us up for divine appointments.

-Look for opportunities to serve others. Babysit, lend your tools, fix something in their house, help someone financial need, listen to them and pay attention to their life. Then take opportunities when they come.

-Let others know you go to church

-Let others know you are a Christian and that means something to you. Like friend who is angry at husband. Christian faith has helped me with that...

Who is a divine appointment in your life right now?

4) Share what you love.

Colossians 4:6 Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

I take this to mean that what we say about Christ and about the Christian life should be made as appetizing as possible. When food is not salted, its taste is bland. People don't want to eat it. It's unappetizing. Sharing our faith is not supposed to be like

that. We don't do that in a false way like a slick car salesman selling a lemon. But the genuinely winsome because you are sharing with others the greatest news and what has changed your life!

Think about it for a moment. How can you develop the ability to speak about Christ so that there is an appetizing flavor to it? How do you learn to talk about Christ in a way that makes people's mouth water? I think the answer is simply sharing what you love. You love Jesus. We share what we love- pictures of our kids, a vacation, a funny joke....Do you share what you love? What your faith in Jesus has meant for your life? How it changed my life it can change yours. It's that simple. This is either freeing or convicting. If you can't point to how your faith has made a difference in your life, if you don't treasure Jesus then there is some serious heart work that might need to be done. Conversation with Jesus about that...

Recap: How do we become effective, winsome witnesses for Christ?

- 1) Rely on God's Power not ours**
- 2) Exercise Wisdom**
- 3) Anticipate Divine Appointments**
- 4) Share what you Love**

This week, pray throughout the day for an open door (divine appointments) and for clarity of speech.

10:30 service, Desmond Frick