



What About . . .

Telling the Good News about Jesus

What is our great privilege as Christians?

Through faith, we become disciples of Jesus Christ and, as such, it is our privilege to tell the good news about Jesus. We share with others the message of the salvation that is ours. And who are the people with whom we are to share the faith? Well, they are certainly our family members: husbands, wives, children, grandchildren, parents and so forth. But it does not stop there. That is only the beginning. It reaches out from there to our friends, to our fellow congregation members, to the people with whom we work, to our neighbors, and to the strangers we meet in our daily lives. Yes, this means actually talking to others about Jesus Christ and His great salvation.

Our privilege as Christians is to identify and recognize opportunities to tell others the good news about Jesus. And then, having recognized and identified those opportunities, ours is the privilege and responsibility of actually doing it—telling the good news about Jesus.

Where does telling the good news about Jesus begin?

It begins with our personal thankfulness for the salvation that is ours in Jesus Christ. Each of us daily sins much and because of that, if left to ourselves, we deserve nothing but God's wrath and eternal damnation. And so does everyone in the world who has not come into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

But thanks be to God, something miraculous happened in your life! So great is the Father's love for all humanity, that He sent His precious Son into this world, to obey God perfectly, and to suffer and die for your sins and the sins of the whole world. Because of Jesus Christ, each and every one of your sins has been washed away. You are cleansed, pardoned and given the peace that passes all human understanding.

Of all the blessings that God will ever give you in your life, without a doubt the greatest one of all is the forgiveness that is yours in Jesus Christ, and with that forgiveness, the promise that when you die you will spend all eternity with the Lord in heaven. Thanks be to God for His mercy!

What do we do with the good news of Jesus?

God has not given us this great salvation merely for us to content ourselves with it, and to stick it away and treasure it privately. He has given us this great salvation and then called

each one of us to a life of being His witnesses. He gave us this great salvation to rejoice in, to live in and to share—yes, to share with others! He wants us to bring many others into His church, where they too will receive the blessings of God's Word and Sacraments, where they too will be made part of God's people—one of His own dear children. And what is more, God has promised that as we do, He will bless. For this fact too, we have every reason to thank and to praise the Lord.

The first president of our church, Dr. C.F.W. Walther made this extremely important point:

"Another major duty of a Synod that wants to be and remain an Evangelical Lutheran Synod is that it not seek its own glory, but only the glory of God, being intent not so much on its own growth, but rather on the growth of Christ's kingdom and the salvation of souls. You see, dear brethren, we are assembled here not for our own sake. We are in the faith, and by this faith we hope to be saved! But there are still many millions who have no faith! This is why we are here—so that we might bring salvation to as many people as we possibly can, so that the sad situation in Christendom and the corruption of the poor, blind heathen might be remedied. Only for this reason does our gracious God allow Christians to live on earth, that they might bring others to the saving faith. Otherwise God would immediately take a Christian to heaven as soon as he is converted."²¹

Isn't evangelism just the pastor's job?

Evangelism is one of the pastor's important duties, but evangelism is not only the pastor's responsibility. Every Christian, through Baptism, is given the privilege of declaring the praises of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9).

Whenever we speak the Gospel, it is an actual communication of the forgiveness of sins. Telling the good news about Jesus to another person is not merely a casual conversation, nor is it merely expressing pious wishes. When we share with others the good news of Jesus, we are actually conveying to them the forgiveness of sins, for that is what the Gospel is all about. When the Gospel is presented, God the Holy Spirit is present to work faith in the hearts of those who hear it.

What about Telling the Good News about Jesus?

Pastors and laypeople work together in the great task of making disciples of all nations, as together they tell the good news of Jesus. Together they work to make their congregations places where visitors feel welcome and places that have as a priority reaching out boldly with the Gospel. Hand in hand, pastors and congregations tell the good news about Jesus!

What is the starting place for telling the good news about Jesus?

It begins with our love for others. Love always takes an interest in the good of our neighbor, our friend, our family member, without trying to figure out what we will receive in return. God's love is poured out into our hearts and overflows into the lives of others. God doesn't need our good works, but our neighbors, our friends, and our family members certainly do.

Once we recognize how great is our own personal salvation and the enormous love of the Father's heart in saving us, we recognize that this love can remove barriers that stand in the way of our outreach to others. Barriers include apathy on our part and antagonism on the part of those with whom we speak. When we tell the good news of Jesus, following up that witness with love and kindness, there is something here that makes people pause and consider just what it is that makes Christians unique. It can lead people to ask, "What do you have? I need it?"

How do we respond to our neighbor's question? We answer by telling the good news about Jesus. We explain that because of sin we are separated from God, but God loves us so much that He sent a Savior into this world to bring us back to Himself. The Bible says, "Always be ready to answer anyone who asks you to explain the hope you have, but be gentle and respectful" (1 Peter 3:15). Telling the saving Gospel is the greatest service any Christian can perform for a neighbor, or family member, or even the most casual stranger.

Isn't it rude for me to impose my beliefs on another person?

Telling the good news about Jesus is certainly not rude, though the way we go about it might be. That we must avoid. The best way to tell the good news about Jesus is to do so gently and kindly. Telling the good news about Jesus is not "imposing our beliefs on another person." We need to shake ourselves free from the myth of our day that all beliefs are equally true, and one is no better than the other. We do respect the beliefs of others, but we can't give them "equal time" when it comes to the question of where that person is going to spend all eternity.

Telling the good news of Jesus is more than merely "shar-

ing my opinions." It is actually giving another person the Word of Life—the powerful, faith-creating Word of God by which God brings that person into His kingdom. So, telling the good news of Jesus is not rude, it is the most wonderful gift you could give to another human being.

What can be done to prepare ourselves to tell others about Jesus?

To witness about Jesus we need to be strongly in the Word and Sacraments. In so doing, we are kept by the Lord in constant contact with the power and strength for witnessing, our Lord Jesus Himself. Receiving forgiveness and peace, we then are able to share it with others.

Turning to the Lord in prayer is the next thing we do when we wish to tell the good news about Jesus. Just imagine how much better we will be able to recognize opportunities to tell the good news about Jesus when we ask our heavenly Father to show them to us and then pray for the courage to speak. When we ask for open doors to tell the good news, we will be amazed to notice how doors are open and just waiting for us to walk through, telling the good news about Jesus!

Suggested Resources

Excellent resources having to do with our church's emphasis on telling the good news about Jesus may be found on the Internet at: www.lcms.org/310.

1. Walther, *Essays for the Church*, (CPH: 1992) II:262.

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