

Last week I told you about a sheep named Shrek.

Shrek Pic

He got lost in a cave in New Zealand for 6 years...and grew 60 lbs of wool. Until his shepherd finally found him, sheared him and brought him back into the fold.

Remember that's Shrek

Now who was Shrek's love interest in the movies?

Pic of Shrek and Fiona from movie

Fiona!

Now you aren't gonna believe this- but as if we got a sign from God- There was another sheep rescued this week that made international news. It has no relation to Shrek the Sheep. This one was in the UK.

And the Sheep's name? You guessed it- Fiona.

Fiona pic

Fiona had wandered down a cliff and she was stranded there for 2 years. She was first spotted in 2021, but it was too dangerous to try to rescue her. She had plenty of grass to eat on the cliff and a cave to keep her out of the elements, so she was left alone.

The farmer that owned Fiona didn't want to ask for help when she got stuck because he didn't want anyone to get hurt during the rescue.

But Cammy Wilson- was willing to take on the risk. He got some of his farmer friends involved...and they took on the dangerous task of bringing Fiona back.

Pic of Farmers w Fiona

They created a pulley system with a hammock that would hold Fiona and even allow her to stick her mouth out and eat grass while she was pulled up the cliff.

The biggest threat to Fiona was not that she couldn't find food. It wasn't that she couldn't find shelter. Not even necessarily that she wasn't perfectly content on that cliff. It was the slow, gradually increasing danger of the wool that grew on her.

Over time, unshorn wool eventually impedes movement. Sheep can overheat and die in the summer months if not shorn, and become the target for parasitic species such as ticks, lice, mites, and the maggots that cause fly strike, a gruesome and even deadly condition.

Without a shepherd- she would die.

So when they got Fiona to safety- they gave her a shearing.

Pic of Wool with Fiona

And they shaved off 20 lbs of wool.

Today is a call to action. Which means we're going to pause for this week in our trek through Romans- just after a week where the Apostle Paul unpacked the gospel of Jesus for us in a very vivid way... and we're asking- "What are we doing with that good news?"

The fact is- that as the body of Christ- the church has the calling, the joy, and the responsibility to work together to take the saving good news about Jesus to people who don't know that.

The thing about being an evangelist- a word that just means messenger of good news- is a lot of times we think about doing this alone. But we are the BODY of Christ- which means we are going to tell people about Jesus together- a lot like these farmers worked together to get Fiona.

Pic of Farmers w Fiona

And sometimes- actually a lot of times- this feels scary. It feels risky. Unnatural. Over the years I've heard a million times - nah its a piece of cake...if you just learn this trick or technique. I can tell you- it does get easier with practice- but its also never easy.

My heartbeat always picks up. Palms are sweaty. Knees weak. Arms are heavy. Vomit on my sweater. Moms spaghetti.

Wait...I think I got lost there for a minute.

Ok Back to reality.

No seriously...coming back now.

When Cammy Wilson- the farmer the was the lead on this team- said,

"Sometimes you just need a group of idiots to get a job done. We got a great result today but a slip of a foot and we would have just been fools with good intentions."

Today, I'm asking the question- what's the difference between a group of idiots that get a job done...or fools with good intentions.

Because what Cammy means by "idiots" is not an insult...he's talking about the fact that most people looked at the rescue of Fiona as too risky...too dangerous...and that you'd have to be an idiot to go out there.

In fact, Paul wrote to the Corinthian church something similar... he said- to proclaim the gospel to the world- takes a certain kind of fool

1 Corinthians 4:9-10

For I think God has displayed us, the apostles, in last place, like men condemned to die: We have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to people. 10 We are fools for Christ.

Then later he said- but with a slip of the foot...like imagine if Jesus didn't resurrect from dead...if he didn't Paul wrote...we're a different kind of fool.

1 Corinthians 15:19

If we have put our hope in Christ for this life only, we should be pitied more than anyone.

Title Slide: "IHOP for Shrek & Fiona: How 2024 Will Be a Harvest Year for City Church"- Matthew 9:35-38 & 28:16-20 (pg. 1213 & 1247)

Here's what I'm saying.

We have prayed for Spiritual Renewal over the last year and half. My hope is now we are willing to be the vessels that God uses to bring that to our city. In 2024- our emphasis is going to be on proclaiming the gospel to people who don't know Jesus. That is going to mean its time to match your theology with your practice. Its time to reevaluate the way you spend your time and the intentionality with which you pursue people who don't believe like you do.

And I think for most of us, its not that we don't realize its important...its that quietly, our busy lives have come up and choked out any zeal we have for making Christ known to others.

So today I'm going to review something we went through in the Spring. A simple action-oriented Acronym that IHOP that we're going to spur one another on with in 2024.

First, let's recalibrate with the motive and the importance that Jesus brings to this topic.

Matthew 9:35-38

35 Jesus continued going around to all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every sickness. 36 When he saw the crowds, he felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dejected, like sheep without a shepherd. 37 Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is abundant, but the workers are few. 38 Therefore, pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest."

Matthew 28:16-20

16 The eleven disciples traveled to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had directed them. 17 When they saw him, they worshiped, but some doubted. 18 Jesus came near and said to them, "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

1) We're sent to bring teaching, Good News, and healing acts.

Making disciples doesn't just mean making a declaration of faith- it means your whole life is swallowed up in Jesus'. It means that we are called to be and sent to make people that want to hear what Jesus says- and do what he says to do.

v 9:35 & 28:19-20 (end at "commanded you")

The Good News of the Kingdom in v 35- Is the news that despite the pain, and brokenness in the world- Jesus is LORD. And he is going to make all things new.

The baptizing in chapter 28 can only come after you repent of your sin and receive God's forgiveness.

THAT can only come by believing that Jesus took your place on a cross- received the just punishment for your sin- and then you say yes to him calling all the shots for your life.

Baptism means immersion. On one hand- it is the act of putting you under water and coming back up to identify with Jesus' death and resurrection- as a symbol- but think of the naming aspect here. You are baptized IN a name- the name of the trinitarian God. This means that you are surrendering your identity. You are saying "I am not my own. I belong to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit." My life is immersed in him.

See that's the Good News of the Kingdom. Jesus, the crucified and risen Messiah is Lord. Not only is he fixing the world- he's putting me back together. He has forgiven me of my sin- and immersed in Jesus- I am a part of his New Creation.

We are supposed to PREACH that Good News. And we're supposed to teach. Teaching here refers to teaching people what Jesus taught. This is how to live a life that points others to Christ. This is how to live a life that shows what God is like.

And notice in v 35- that Jesus performs healing acts. He heals every sickness and disease. Just after this Jesus sends his disciples out to heal diseases and sickness... just like he did.

Miraculous healings were not magic tricks to prove that Jesus and his disciples had power. They were signs of the Kingdom of God. In other words- little previews of what the Future of the World under Jesus' reign would look like.

Revelation 21:3-4

3 Then I heard a loud voice from the throne: Look, God's dwelling is with humanity, and he will live with them. They will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them and will be their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; grief, crying, and pain will be no more, because the previous things have passed away.

So- when we go out as Jesus' disciples, we aren't ONLY looking to teach about what Jesus taught...and we aren't ONLY looking to share the good news with words...we are also paying attention to how people's lives are broken and unlike the Kingdom- and we are looking to show people something better.

Think about listening for the 3 NOTS

The 3 Nots

1- Things are NOT going well.

2- I was NOT prepared for that.

3- I'm NOT from here.

The first is a statement of someone recognizing the brokenness of the world.

The second is a statement of a break in the status quo- which always sends us for a loop and pushes a kind of reset on our life- where someone becomes more open to consider Jesus.

The third- people are looking for belonging. To not belong to a people is NOT how God intends your life to go. You know the number 1 reason people stop going to church. I mean, by far...and it's not even close- It's because they moved. That's it. Not deconstructing their faith. Not because they watched a bunch of Atheist Tik Toks. They just moved. According to recent surveys- over 90% of those people are willing to come back to church on an invitation.

Belonging is its own kind of healing. Certainly we see that in the future Kingdom of God. We are a people that BELONG to him

Back to 1)

We are sent to bring teaching, Good News- the gospel of Jesus, and Healing acts.

2) We're sent together.

In both these passages, Jesus addresses his disciples together. He sends them out together. The church is the body of Christ. And the scripture over and over emphasizes that not everyone is the same in the body of Christ- that we all play different roles.

That doesn't mean that we aren't all called personally to proclaim the gospel.

But it does mean there are ways we work together to bring someone to trust and follow Jesus.

Pic of Fiona's team

Remember it took more than just one guy willing to be the idiot to bring Fiona back. It took a bunch of farmers playing different roles.

Not everything is up to you. You can invite and bring friends to church. You can throw parties that bring other brothers and sisters in Christ around people that don't know Jesus. Maybe someone you are talking about Jesus with has a question you just don't know how to respond to. You can call on another person that you think might have a good response- or has been in a similar situation.

Alpha Group starting soon. For Non-Xians, people of any faith or no faith to come and talk about the big questions in life. That starts in mid- January.

Also- after next week's worship gathering you can come to a brief workshop we're doing on how to share your testimony and proclaim the gospel. Its a great way to partner together to prepare to take the gospel to this city.

3) We're sent with compassion

We aren't just called to proclaim the gospel because Jesus says so- if we are becoming like Jesus- then we he is going to create compassion in us.

9:36

When Jesus saw the crowds of people- he had compassion on them- he said they were like sheep without a shepherd.

In other words- when Jesus saw people he saw Shrek and Fiona.

Shrek pic.

He didn't see people that got on his nerves...or people he didn't gel with...he saw people who were lost...distressed...dejected.
Weighed down and dying because they had strayed from God and were living life on their own terms.

9:36

The word compassion means to be WITH someone in their suffering. He saw and felt it. In fact- on the cross you see Jesus bearing the weight of all of our sin and suffering.

The greek word here means "He felt it in his gut...or his intestines"

So we aren't just sent with a project...or to make people into projects, or to put a notch in our spiritual belts...we are sent to hurt with people- to see them where they are- and it is our compassion and empathy that drives us to introduce them to Jesus.

4) We're sent to pray & to be the answer to the prayer.

Jesus does a great little Ninja Jiu Jitsu trick here.

9:37-38

Don't you think Jesus should have said- Pray for the lost. Or pray for the people out there in the harvest...that don't know about the Good News of my Kingdom?

But he doesn't. He says- "Pray for farmers. Pray for workers who will go out into the fields...and bring them in."

Now what happens when you are praying for someone to be sent to tell your friend or co-worker about Jesus. The Holy Spirit answers back "Hey, pal- why don't you do it. you be the answer to the prayer you are praying."

You be one of the shepherds that gets Fiona off that cliff instead of just praying for it.

5) We're sent with Jesus' power & presence.

The 2 biggest fears that I think we have in sharing the gospel with people are

- 1- I don't know enough
- 2- rejection.

Jesus answers both of those in the Great Commission in Matt 28

Matt 28:18 & 20b (start at "and remember")

He says he has authority.

Its not your job to convince someone to trust Jesus.

Its your job to pray for workers. ANd its your job to go. But Jeuss has the power...the authority to change someone. You leave that to him.

And if you are afraid of rejection?

Well- Jesus told his disciples not everyone is going to receive the Good News as very good. In fact- some people will reject you for it. But he tells them- just keep going- knowing that I am always with you. Remember- I love you. I am with you. I am not rejecting you. If you have my love and presence- that no one can take away- then there is no one who can reject you that will leave you without love.

So what do we do with this? Well...

Invitation- to Church

Hospitality- into your Home/3rd place

Obedience- to the Spirit

Proclamation- of the Gospel

Lets start with Christmas coming up.

Not Afraid Slide

Invitation to Advent series...

Invitation to Not Afraid.

Finally- maybe some of you...are trusting in Jesus- and want to be baptized.
December 10th.