

Sermon Series: Spurred on to Holiness (and Power) by Immersing Ourselves into the Life of Christ Through the Eyes of the Apostles – A Harmony of All Four Gospels

Sermon Title: Are You Producing Hundredfold or Sixtyfold or Even Thirtyfold?

July 28, 2019

Today's Scripture:

Series Theme verse: Acts 4:13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus. (ESV)

Introduction: Why is it we in the church are illogical about church growth and the process of making disciples? Why is it that we tend to think that if we don't get immediate results from our witnessing or our outreach that what we are doing is not "working"? What is our definition of working? It is funny to compare. Salespeople know that only 1-4% of people respond to cold calls. So they know that they have to make 96 cold calls before they get 4 sales or 99 to get 1. Yet we in the church tend to give up long before we get to 50! Jesus has a word of encouragement to all of us who want to see results to our witnessing. He gives us four categories of people that we will encounter in our witnessing and we have no idea which kind we are talking to until later.

Main point: Do not get discouraged when witnessing. Not everyone will respond immediately (and some may never) as you expect by becoming full-fledged committed disciples of Jesus Christ.

Context:

Exegesis

1. It is the word of God that has power to sprout new life.
 - *Isaiah 55:10–11* "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it. (ESV)
 - From the Book the Purpose Driven Life: "First believe, believe God loves you and made you for His purposes. Believe God has chosen you to have a relationship with Jesus who died on the cross for you. Believe that no matter what you've done, God wants to forgive you. Second, receive Jesus into your life as your Lord and Savior. Receive His forgiveness for your sins."
 - "So I invite you to bow your head and quietly whisper the prayer that will change your eternity. Jesus, I believe in You and I receive You." "If you sincerely meant that prayer,

congratulations, welcome to the family of God.” What’s missing? Acts 2:38

- *Acts 2:38 And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (ESV)*
 - The Word that Jesus talks about planting mentions heaven and hell, judgment and sin, condemnation and repentance. Until those subjects are dealt with biblically, do not expect any kind of transformation.
 - Paul sums it up this way: *1 Corinthians 15:1–4 Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, (ESV)*
 - Far too many Young Life, Youth For Christ, Crusade leaders and youth pastors will shy away from mentioning sin and God’s wrath because they want quick and easy decisions for Christ. Remember the tract that Bill Bright wrote: “God has a wonderful plan for your life.” Sounds like Joel Osteen’s book “Your Best Life Now”!!!
2. Some recipients will find the gospel message illogical. *Then Satan will use their pride to get them to dismiss it. When anyone hears the Word of the Kingdom and does not comprehend it, then 2 at once Satan, 1 the wicked one, comes and snatches away that what was sown in the heart, 3 lest he should believe and be saved. 1 This is he who received seed upon the roadside.*
- The Greek word means to set together and join in the mind. Many non-believers cannot connect the dots to think they are sinners deserving of wrath. This is the group in our world today who have been taught evolution and atheism. Their minds cannot compute a personal God who takes sin personally. Since they have been indoctrinated by school after school and philosophy after philosophy to believe this way, they cannot imagine any other way of thinking. So, even before the H.S. begins his work or moments after, Satan does his best to whisper to that hearer- “It’s all nonsense”. Don’t believe a word.”
 - Best way to witness to this group is to ask them if they believe in God and start with creation. Get them past the hardness of their disbelief to acknowledge that all of creation could not have come about by chance. Then the dots can start coming together.
3. Other recipients will accept a superficial gospel. When they hear prosperity, wealth, health and healing they jump on board. Maybe the presenter shared the gospel correctly but they only heard the benefits and not the sacrifice. *And likewise 1 he who received seed on rocky places, this is he who hears the Word and at once receives it gladly; yet he has no root in himself, and 3 believes and 2 continues only a little while. Then later, when adversity arises, or persecution on account of the Word, he is caused to stumble immediately, 3 and falls away.*
- *John 6:26 Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. (ESV)*

4. Other recipients will accept half a gospel. They want to serve Jesus and money. *He also who received seed among the thorns is he who, 3 on hearing 2 the Word, 3 goes his way; 2 and the cares of this world 3 and the pleasures of life, 2 the seductiveness of riches and passionate desire for other things, enter in and choke the Word and it is made unfruitful-3 it brings no fruit to completion.*
 - *1 Timothy 6:9–10 But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs. (ESV)*

5. Other recipients will receive the gospel gladly and humbly with no divided hearts. *“But he who received seed upon the good soil is he who, 3 hearing the Word in an honest and good heart, 2 welcomes 1 and understands it 3 and holds it fast, and with patience 1 bears fruit indeed and brings forth, 2 some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundredfold.”*
 - So what is a yield? Fruit of the Spirit? Christian character? Disciples of Christ?
 - What will be your yield?

Application

1. Hardened soils don't need to stay hardened. Prayer can soften those soils which are hearts. Pray without ceasing for loved ones.
2. Check the hardness of your own soil. Keep it loamy as we say. Fertile ground for the Holy Spirit to work His will.
3. Ask the hard question of yourselves. If a true Christian reproduces like grain are you? Are you sowing seed?