

“What the World Needs Now!”

John 15:1-8

Intro. – We all are hearing about it now – what the world needs now: better economy... cheaper energy... balanced budget... etc. The rhetoric goes on and on. Why, we even have songs telling us what the world needs now. Remember the Burt Bacharach tune: “What the World Needs Now”?

“What the world needs now is love sweet love,
It’s the only thing that there’s just too little of...”

I don’t know the real intent behind this song, but in one sense it’s not too far off. Why? Because the world needs now more than anything is what it has needed all along – Christ!

You’ve heard the story of a town’s agnostic at the church fire haven’t you? Church building in a certain town was burning and it was observed that the town’s agnostic was present. One of the elders of the church inquired as to why the agnostic was present since he didn’t care. “Are you kidding,” the agnostic responded, “I wouldn’t miss this for anything. This is the first time I’ve seen this church on fire!”

The First Century Church was a church on fire. These early saints literally turned the world right side up – they gave the world Christ!

The question I want to raise this morning in each of our minds is this: Are we a church on fire? Are we giving this community Christ? Are we doing our part in giving what the world needs now?

Purpose: to prove we are Christ’s followers by the fruit we produce

I We FACE a Challenge

- know this isn’t revealing – we face problems/challenges every moment of every day...
- the challenge I’m talking about here; however, is so important it deals with more than just time, it deal with eternity!

A. What the Challenge Is

1. Simply put = The Church is NOT keeping pace with the population increases...
2. Historians are recording in spite of modern communication advances that the Lord’s Church is NOT coming close to keeping pace with population increases...

B. Illustrations of the Challenge

1. Jared F. Gerig – “It is not new that America is losing her grip and fast slipping from her spiritual moorings. In spite of increases in memberships in churches, only 8% of the population is in worship at any given Sunday...”
2. Elliot Fisher – “...more than 60 million people of the US living in areas with no churches... 60,000 churches have recently closed with 1,000 more closing annually.”
3. “Kansas City Star” (editorial) “The Great American Surge to Church Goes On” – “After rejoicing in gains,” the writer wrote, “Some churchmen make clear that much of the boom in church membership is shallow, not deeply rooted in conviction or dedication to God...” i.e. it is a *false increase*.
4. Put in perspective: world population exceeding 7 billion and more than half that number have yet to even hear of Jesus Christ... and of the 315 + million in the US, 2/3rd to 3/4th no church home!

Because of this, we the Church face a real challenge!

II The ANSWER to the Challenge

- simply put – the answer is evangelism = a church on fire, a church bearing fruit even as the text states!

A. Even Lies Succeed with Fire

1. Illus. – the fires of Nazism, Fascism, Communism, Socialism... all explained as to how they grow
2. Consider the fires (enthusiasm and influence) of cults, sects etc. (Jehovah Witnesses, Mormons, Muslims) all of which compose some of the largest religious groups in world...
3. If “error” succeeds with fire, imagine how much more *TRUTH* could succeed with fire!
4. Such is more than possible for the Lord’s Church today!

B. We Are at a Critical Hour

1. Don't necessarily need BIG beginning = remember BIG fires started by little sparks!
2. So many friends, family, neighbors who are lost (i.e. outside of Christ)... the longer we do little about it the less hope they have and the more we become a withered branch bearing no fruit...
3. Theodore Cuyler (book entitled *Kindling Fire*) – “The danger in our churches is that individual (opportunities) will be lost sight of and each Christian will neglect their own opportunity while waiting for others to move. Instead of this, let the ones who have consecrated themselves to Christ begin at once to labor upon the cases that lie nearest to their hands. Thus, the fire spreads. The few who are red-hot kindle others.”

The answer to the world's greatest challenge = the Church aflame = evangelism = bearing fruit!

III The KEY to the Challenge

- simply put, the key is you and me:

A. Leadership is a Key

1. Leadership of local church must be consumed with a passion for souls if they would see the rest of the congregation with such a mindset...
2. People will not go where they are not led... why the leadership (preacher, elders in particular) must be a big example in this area...
3. Our Lord came to do what?... “*To seek and to save that which is lost*” (Matthew 18:11; Luke 19:10) – promise you such is what our Lord desires of His people right here!

B. People Following Leadership is a Key

1. Roland Leavell wrote a book entitled: *The Romance of Evangelism*
 - 20% church members never pray
 - 25% church members never read the Bible
 - 30% church members never/seldom attend worship time
 - 40% church members never give financially
 - 50% church members never/seldom attend Bible School
 - 70% church members never/seldom support missions
 - 80% church members never attend Bible Study time
 - 90% church members never/seldom have family devotions &/or prayer at meal time...
 - 95% church members never have let themselves be used of God to win a soul to Christ...
2. Role of every person in Body of Christ cannot be overstated – too easy to misplace our energies – we are all so busy with so many “good things” that the best matters get lay wade...
3. Illus. – it's a known fact, every person who hears a piece of gossip and passes it on to two others in a span of fifteen minutes the entire world would know about it in less than eight hours!
4. The Church has had better than 8 million hours to get the Gospel spread... Frankly, we've barely scratched the surface.
5. Preacher friend of mine once said: The whole matter comes down to this: each church member must consecrate themselves. Generalities will not do. When church members stop talking about what they think may, can, must, might, could and should be done and instead simply go about doing what Jesus said to do, the job will get done!

Conclusion: Sure you've heard of the following statistics: if 20 Christians would simply win one person a piece in one year, that would be a total of how many? 40. If that 40 would each win one more in the next year that would be 80 at the end of the second year. If that continued at the same rate for ten years, the number would be what? **20,480!**...

Brethren, we have the most thrilling message in the world to give – the Gospel (good news) of Jesus Christ! This is what the world needs now. Let's take it, let's show it and let's live it!