

# Work Of Evangelism is Serving Others

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[ 0 : 00 ] we ask in your holy name. Amen. I'd like you to turn to that passage in the scripture which was read as the epistle for today and comes from the first epistle of Peter, the first chapter, and beginning at the 10th verse on page 216.

You'll know perhaps that Fran and I are going to Mombasa this week and we're going to take part in a conference there on evangelism.

And there will be representatives from different Anglican churches throughout the world, and the purpose of the conference is to encourage one another and to share with one another how the work of evangelism is being done in different parts of the world so that one of the responsibilities of the conference is that I should tell them how it happens here.

I asked you in a note in the bulletin two weeks ago if you'd help me, and I got one letter in response. Sorry about that, but I just thought you might like to know.

That it wasn't a subject that everybody grabbed hold of and said I'd like to say something about it, and I think that maybe because it's somewhat of a mystery how evangelism does in fact take place.

[ 1 : 42 ] While I'm gone, which will be really for just over three weeks, here at home we'll be working on a visiting every home in the parish, setting up a program to visit every home in the parish.

That's not an easy thing to do. I wanted to do it for at least the 11 or more years that I've been here, and there are many homes that I've never seen, I've never been in, and so this concerted effort to visit every home is very important to the life of the parish because we want to find out what's there in the same way that Christ visited different homes and was received or rejected in different homes. So we want to determine how the gospel is received in the various homes of the parish. We also want to ask people to give a gift for the restoration and renovation, but that really depends on finding in that home a willing heart.

And so in addition to taking part in this visitation program, which I hope all of you will seriously consider doing, it's very important that we pray that when we get to various homes we find a willing heart or hearts, hearts in a sense that have been prepared by God, and that's important.

So it's not just a matter of organizing it because that we know how to do more or less, but what do we find? What do we bring when we go to visit the home?

[ 3 : 39 ] What do we bring to that home? And what do we find in that home? And it's very important, and I commend it to you. And it's very close to the work of evangelism.

Now, if you want to know what evangelism is, it's in this passage, which we have to study this morning, which is from 1 Peter 1.10 to 12. And the Greek word is right there.

Euangelis sammonom. That's right there in verse 12, where it says, in the things, I know that it's just about at the end of the passage, where it talks about, preach the good news to you through the Holy Spirit.

That is, evangelized you through the Holy Spirit. That's the function. Well, how is this work of evangelism done?

And Peter gives the kind of background to the work of evangelism that went on there, and perhaps it will help us to try and identify the work of evangelism as it goes on here on a continuing basis.

[ 5 : 03 ] You know what happens when somebody brings you a little photo of themselves when they were 18 years old and says, there's my 18th birthday.

And you have a tiny picture taken in a fraction of a second within the whole extent of a lifetime.

If you were to take that tiny picture and try and write the autobiography of the person on the basis of that picture alone, one fraction of a second within a lifetime, you would then be familiar with the problem of the astronomers.

They have maybe a snapshot of the universe around us, which was taken in less than, I don't know, three or four hundred years.

That's the whole picture of the universe since they've been able to look up in a telescope. And that three or four hundred years compares to less than a fraction of a second in the history of the universe.

[ 6 : 21 ] And they try and tell the whole story of the universe on the basis of that brief snapshot that has been taken, which has only lasted a few hundred years.

Say where it all came from, where it's all going, to tell everything about it. It's roughly equivalent to writing an autobiography on the basis of a black and white print of your 18th birthday.

It's very difficult to do. And all that is a buildup to tell you that if you take the whole life of the Church of Jesus Christ and you take the snapshot, which appears in verses 10 to 12, and then you try and say what the whole history of the Church is on the basis of that, you have a fairly prodigious task and a task that I want you to begin on as you listen to me this morning.

The life of the Church begins, as you will see here, with the prophets who prophesied of the grace that was to be yours. They searched and inquired about this salvation.

The gift of prophecy, we learn in 1 Corinthians, is to understand all mysteries and all knowledge. So that what's required is that we try and plumb the mysteries and the knowledge which undergirds the whole of human history.

[ 7 : 59 ] And that's what the prophets tried to do. As Dr. Packer read to us of Ezekiel and his Valley of Dry Bones, trying to look deeply into the whole problems of man and his relationship to God was the work of the prophets.

And that research goes on all the time. So that when people write plays, when they produce movies, when they write music, when they produce, when they create commerce and markets and all those kinds of things, the ultimate purpose of all that work is to help us to understand the gospel. That's what it's about. It's all dedicated to that end. So we are very indebted to a whole lot of people who in our day and in our generation have worked in a sense as the prophets worked of old, searching and inquiring.

Now they may not have known what they were looking for, but we'll come to that in a few minutes.

If, for instance, you take the issues that seem to occupy our minds and hearts most these days, you'll find that we are looking for a new age.

Well, where does the new age begin? We're looking for a new responsibility for our environment.

Where does that begin? We're looking for peace on earth.

[ 9 : 36 ] Where does that begin? We're looking for human rights. Where does that begin? We're looking for justice. Where does that begin? We're trying to examine the deep moral problems of abortion.

Where does that lead us? Well, those are the things, those are the mysteries that we're trying to investigate. And as we investigate those things, we are doing what the prophets have to do, that is, searching and inquiring.

But the prophets had one thing that we don't have for the most part. They had help. And the help that they had, you will see, was that the spirit of Christ within them was helping them to understand the issue.

That's why in our age, we need the spirit of Christ to tell us what the new age is all about. The new age is all about the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the implications of that.

That's where the new age begins. We look at the question of the environment. And man was born, as we're told in Genesis, into a perfect environmental setting.

[ 11 : 01 ] And the problem in the environment was man. wasn't trees and elephants and zebras. The trouble with the environment was man.

And if you can deal with that, perhaps we can get closer to that. The peace movement is a primary concern of the Christian faith because peace is established only through Christ's death on the cross.

You look at human rights and human rights are only an extension of the principle of loving your neighbor as yourself. You look at justice and the only reason that we can ever hope that justice will be done between men is because we know through Jesus Christ that ultimately justice will be done. So that justice must be done because justice finally will be done. And when you look at the question of abortion, the ultimate issue is what does human life mean?

And human life is the prelude to an eternal life which God has opened up to us through Jesus Christ. So you see, this is all the background issues against which we have to probe and see what the salvation is that God has prepared for us.

[ 12 : 43 ] The searching and inquiring work into the grace of salvation. Salvation means this.

It means salvation. It means to move from darkness to light. It means to move from alienation to a share in divine citizenship.

It means to move from guilt to pardon. It means to move from slavery to freedom. It means to move from fear of hostile powers to liberty and assurance.

Well, the mystery is how is that to be accomplished? How is that grace? salvation to be made available to the people of the world? And the prophets inquired of this and their inquiries led them to, as they were led by the Spirit of Christ, to predicting the sufferings and the subsequent glory of Christ.

So that all the questions point us to the cross of Christ. All our research, all our inquiries, all our longing for a new age, for a better environment, for peace, for human rights, for justice, all those things lead us to examine the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glory.

[ 14 : 11 ] That's what it focuses on. And that's why when you go on from there, you will see that out of the research and inquiry, out of this research and inquiry, coming, bringing us to the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glory as being the key to all that we're looking for, then you see what happens then.

This results in an announcement being made. You see where it says in verse 12, the things that have now been announced to you, and how were these things announced?

They were announced by the preaching of the gospel. So that you get research into this salvation.

This salvation is revealed in the sufferings of Christ and his subsequent glory. that fact is then preached to the people by way of announcing to them what the good news of the gospel is, and that is done through the work of the Holy Spirit.

The work of the Holy Spirit then is to take that announcement and to establish it in the hearts of people.

[ 15 : 45 ] the announcement is this, that the gospel itself can be briefly comprehended as the saving power of God at work in the world and available for all who will receive it into their hearts by faith.

It's preached, it's preached with the power of the Holy Spirit, and hearts are to receive it, research, announcement, through preaching to be received by faith into the hearts of people.

And that's how the work of evangelism is done. that's how the whole sort of ferment of our age, which is such an exciting and challenging age in which to live, has to see as the central activity this process going on.

Now in verse 12 it says something which I think is very important, that it was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves, but you in the things which have now been announced.

These people who did the research, who made the inquiry, who then pointed people to the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glory, these people made the discovery that they were serving not themselves, but they were serving somebody who was to follow them.

[ 17 : 24 ] the people who were to follow them, then were the people for whom the prophets had lived and worked and died.

Now we live, I think, in the same way and in a sense under the same proscription. That is, we are not here to serve ourselves but to serve someone else.

the thing that the future of our world needs most is the inquiry into the mystery of grace and salvation which focuses in the sufferings of Jesus Christ and in his subsequent glory so that people, not just ourselves, but people beyond ourselves, can come to know that so that it would be said of us as it was said of them, they were to serve not themselves but those who followed them.

And so part of our responsibility as a Christian community in even the restoration and the renewal of this church is not to serve ourselves but to invest in the business of making known, announcing to other people the gospel of Jesus Christ so that they too might hear it and receive it and share it, that they will comprehend the gospel and all the great mysteries which men are investigating, the mystery of man's relationship to peace on earth, the mystery of man's relationship to the environment, the mystery of where human justice comes from, the mystery of where the new age begins, all those issues which occupy the minds and hearts of people in our day and generation

must ultimately lead people to a consideration of the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glory in which the salvation of God, the plan of God for all of us is revealed. Well, the passage ends then with a rather poignant statement.

[ 19 : 52 ] It says things into which angels long to look. the process of evangelism, how God is going to bring the world to acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord is something that the angels are in on.

They know that that's what has ultimately to happen. And what they're watching for is how it is going to happen. and it's going to happen by this very process which Peter describes to us here of search and inquiry into the grace and salvation so that we are able to tell those beyond ourselves, not just ourselves, but those who come after us.

We're able to announce to them the gospel and in announcing to them the gospel to make known to them how it is that we move from darkness to light, from alienation to a share in divine citizenship, how we move from guilt to pardon, from slavery to freedom, from fear of hostile powers to liberty and assurance.

And that's contained in the gospel. And our function as a congregation is that we might do the research, that we might expound the mystery, that the mystery finds its ultimate exposition in the suffering of Christ and the subsequent glory.

Well, that's the work of evangelism, and that's the thing that we're called upon to do. And that's the ultimate work for all of us as we are bound together by God's grace in a congregation of those who would serve him with all their hearts, mind, soul, and strength.

[ 22 : 01 ] Amen. Amen. We kneel or sit to pray.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. We includes Loving Father, we join together this morning to worship and adore you.

As your creatures, we are meant to sing forth your praise as we prepare our hearts and minds for confession and intercession and thanksgiving. In the words of Psalm 148, Praise the Lord from the heavens. Praise him in the heights above.

Praise him, all his angels. Praise him, all his heavenly hosts. Praise him, sun and moon. Praise him, all you shining stars. Praise him, you highest heavens and you waters above the skies.

Let them praise the name of the Lord, for he commanded and they were created. We kneel before you, Lord, in awe at the majesty of your creation.

[ 23 : 27 ] Yet we confess that our minds are filled with our own agendas. The busyness of our lives too often take precedence over the desires of our hearts. Help us, Lord, to focus on you, to be still and to hear your word.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him and he will make your paths straight.

Give us trusting, obedient hearts and free us, Lord, of our pride so that our desires may become yours. Lord, in your mercy.

Hear our prayer. Lord, we pray for all who are in distress. We pray for those who are ill or recovering from illness.

In the silence of our own hearts, let us each bring before God those people whom we know to be in need of physical and emotional healing. Amen. We pray for our church leaders and our clergy.

[ 24 : 39 ] We pray for the trustees who are charged with the responsibility of leadership and decision-making. We pray for the restoration and renewal committee and for each of us as we prepare ourselves to give freely and generously of what God has given us.

We pray for Harry and Fran, that they might be safe and healthy during their trip to Kenya. May this be a time of rest and renewal for them. May this be a time of rest and renewal for them.

May this be a time of rest and renewal for them. We pray for all of the church committees and their activities as they organize and plan for the benefit of all of us. And finally, Lord, we give thanks for all the blessings you have bestowed upon us.

Mostly, we thank you for your love and the gift of grace. Without grace, we would not know you and would be unable to overcome our sinful natures. We close with a prayer written by Richard Halverson.

We thank the gracious Father for your unconditional, impartial, unwearying, patient, forgiving, victorious love. Love which never changes, never coerces, never manipulates, never ceases.

[ 25 : 54 ] Forgive our indifference, our reluctance, our rejection, our rebellion against this relentless love which seeks us throughout our lives from birth to death. Deliver us from whatever it is within us that causes us to deprive ourselves of the matchless grace thou dost lavish upon us.

We pray in the name of him whose cross is the measure of that love. In Jesus' name, amen. We now turn to our offertory hymn.

It's number six. Amen.

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CHOIR SINGS Holy love, the love of soul, O us, temptation, sharply new, O us, the tender of the world.

[ 28 : 37 ] O us, the brave, O us, the calm, O us, the tender of the world.

My words have silent and action's heart Till the sea beyond its own heart.

O us, the wicked, and the brave, Searched up in purple crown of rain, The Lord, the sinful cross and death, O us, the brave, and the brave.

O us, the tender of the world. O us, the tender of the world.

O us, the tender of the world. O us, the tender of the world.

[ 30 : 08 ] O us, the tender of the Lord. O us, the tender of the world. Oese, the tender of the world.

O us, the tender of the world. O us, the tender of the world. CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS

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CHOIR SINGS Amen.

Amen.