

Our Role in the Kingdom - Evangelism

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[0 : 00] Question for you. Who here is really good at evangelism?

Put your hand up. Like I'm talking really good. Like kind of the Michael Jordan of basketball. You're the evangelist of evangelists. All right.

Nobody is raising a hand to answer that question. Now let me give you a free few reasons why I believe that this isn't true.

And what I mean is I don't believe you're really good at evangelism because you do not know anyone who doesn't know Jesus.

I don't believe this is true is because you don't love or care for someone deeply.

[1 : 02] And it's not because you don't have a message to share about what Jesus has done in your life.

So what's the issue? Sometimes we believe we aren't good evangelists because we don't get to see a lot of people saved.

So we wonder I can't call myself a good evangelist because I don't see all these different people getting saved. We reach out to others. We love others. We are kind to others.

We share the gospel. We demonstrate these things that we believe are of Christ yet nothing happens. And often in our discouragement we ask certain questions.

Maybe it's me. Maybe it's this gospel. Maybe it's somewhat deficient. Or maybe I need to fix it up or make myself more presentable so people could understand it.

[2 : 06] But the issue that I'm trying to deal with during this sermon series on evangelism is to disengage yourself from wrong thinking and engage yourself in biblical thinking.

And the way we've been doing that is jumping into the gospel of Mark for a foundational teaching on what is the basis of evangelism.

I'm not going to go through certain aspects of what can make you a better evangelist. That's not for today. But as we're teaching it's important for us to understand the foundation.

Luke 13. If you turn with me to Luke 13 that would be really great. Luke 13. Verse 22. There's this great narrative that's going on here.

And it's essentially Jesus Christ. I'm just going to paint you a little bit of the picture. Has been now ministering, teaching, doing miracles for probably around 18 months.

[3 : 19] It's kind of happened concurrently with what we're reading in Mark. And it's interesting in the question I'm going to bring this out. But scholars believe at this point the crowds that surrounded Jesus were probably 20 to 25,000 people.

Okay. The Bible actually talks about that Jesus couldn't even go into some cities and towns. That's how captivating he was. People wanted to see the miracles. They wanted to hear teaching unlike they had ever heard before.

So and I don't know who this guy is. Now notice it says verse 2. He went, Jesus, on his way through towns and villages teaching and journeying toward Jerusalem.

Now check out verse 23. And someone said to him. It doesn't even identify who the person is. Just someone almost is shouting from the crowd who's been following the Jesus, is all in on Jesus, has believed the miracles, probably saved, but is asking this question, Lord, will those who are saved be so few?

What a gut-wrenching question that is. There's this crowd surrounding Jesus, but yet he's able to assess, or she is able to assess, that there's so few of these people that are surrounding the greatest evangelist in the world.

[4 : 47] And yet there is so few. And it's almost like Jesus gives this motivation.

He says, verse 24. Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. When once the master of the house has risen and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, open to us, then he will answer you. I do not know where you come from. And then you will begin to say, we ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.

But he will say, I tell you, I do not know where you come from. Depart from me, all you workers of evil. In that place, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

When you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves cast out. And people will come from east and west and from north and south and recline at table in the kingdom of God.

[6 : 01] And behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last. These are sobering words, are they not?

But at the same time, it should ignite a fire to make sure we are what? Spreading this gospel. In chapter 4, we find four specific parables, all relating to the kingdom of God, that give us the foundation for our evangelism.

If you've been with us last couple of weeks, you will know what some of them. And so the first parable is the parable of the soil. We read about the parable of the lamp, which we'll be covering today. And then we'll be learning about the parable of the sower in sleep and the parable of the mustard seed.

In learning the principles of evangelism from these parables, the first parable we learn that it is God who prepares the soil for his acceptance of his message. It is God who doesn't.

We can't do it. It's a fool's errand to think that we can pick and choose who is the good soil. But he gives us this instruction that we're still supposed to sow.

[7 : 12] But it is God who brings about the results, that God is the one responsible for the responsiveness of the heart of one who hears this message. In this, we believe that God is sovereign.

And because God is sovereign, I covered two aspects which are very important that I spoke about, yes, last week. One, if God is sovereign, it's somewhat humiliating, isn't it?

If you think about that, we're not in control. We don't have the say. We can't do what we might want to do. So what are we reduced to do? We are reduced to do probably one of the most awesome things, and that is to pray.

I talked about we are to pray earnestly, to pray urgently, and to pray with humility. J.F. Packer sums up prayer as being, the prayer of a Christian is not an attempt to force God's hands, but a humble acknowledgement of helplessness and dependence.

When we are on our knees, we know that it is not we who control the world. It is not our power, therefore, to supply our needs, but our own independent efforts.

[8 : 30] Every good thing that we desire for ourselves and for others must be sought from God. So when we're praying something good for something, we're actually praying that God be the one that gives it to them.

Isn't that awesome? It's to come to God. It's acknowledgement. And the second aspect that I talked about God's sovereignty is God is sovereign in who we are.

Do you know that? We talked about that, who we are, our dislikes, our likes, our hobbies, whether it be our jobs, whether wives, husbands, whether you have children, whether you're a banker, a tradesman, a pastor, or you work from home or a teacher, that God, through his providence, has created you to like mountain biking, to like downhill skiing, to like painting in your home when everything's quiet.

That God is the one ultimately who has given you those things. And he's given you those things for a reason. Some of us, no matter how much we want to be someone else, we are ourselves.

Amen? And it's hard sometimes. Some of us aren't that easy to live with. You can ask my wife about me, right? Not that easy to live with.

[9 : 49] So we have to live with ourselves. But it's dependent on something. It's interesting. I've got two friends. I don't know if you've heard the Master's Way of Evangelism. If you look on YouTube, you'll find Ray Comfort.

And remember Kirk Cameron from Growing Pains. And they kind of have this system for evangelizing to reach out. And I've got two buddies, Chris and Corey, who go to everything that

these guys do.

They want to be evangelists. They've both been saved. And they want to share their faith. And what's really interesting is they know everything. It teaches you these strategies and just ways to turn the conversation back to God when people are debating them.

And both of them, and I've sat down in a restaurant. A server comes over to talk. They both have this way to create this conversation that goes immediately to God.

And the person has to reveal whether they believe in God or not. And they kind of take this trail. When the one guy does it, I've actually seen him lead a person to Christ right at a table. Boom, right there.

[10:51] He just has this ability. The other guy, when he does the same conversation, he has the same intention of heart. He has the same love for the lost. Kind of comes across as a total creep and a stalker.

Right? You know? And they have the exact... Everything is the same. But God just brings out something different in them that they're able to communicate.

So that's the first principle. We're sovereignly created to who we are. Our second principle comes from Mark chapter 4. So please turn with me back to our key text of Mark chapter 4.

And the second principle of evangelism is simply found in this very simple parable of Mark 4, verse 21. And he being Jesus said to them, Is a lamp brought in to be put under a basket or under a bed and not on a stand?

For nothing is hidden except to be made manifest, nor is anything secret except to come to light. This is a simple parable.

[12:10] The Bible is using Jesus, a lamp, for a metaphor of his kingdom. And Jesus is the embodiment of this word. If you know Jesus, the news of Jesus, you don't hide it.

To do so is as ridiculous as placing your lamp underneath a bed or a basket. This parable simply teaches us is that we both have a responsibility to evangelize.

You know that? In fact, we are called to evangelize. We are called to put Jesus on display for others to see.

Amen? Amen? Amen. What Jesus is calling for here is simply called obedience. It's not a choice. But you and I possess the light, and we are to let that light shine.

Shine, Jesus shine. Remember that? We grew up Sunday school, kids club with that, maybe at camp, maybe you've never heard it and you think I'm a really bad singer. I get it. But even at a young age, we were taught to shine this light.

[13:33] Now, I know some of you are asking the question, wait a second, the first principle all had to do with God's sovereignty. And if it's God's sovereignty and it's God's power, how do I fit into this?

Why bother evangelizing? This really trips up some people who I believe have a deficient view of predestination and God's sovereignty.

I've been accused of this. Oh, you're a Calvinist. You believe in predestination. You must not believe in evangelism. I can tell you wholeheartedly that is a complete lie.

There is an important tension that exists here. And now, some people might say, if God is sovereign, do I really have to say something?

Can't I just live this really moral life? And if God wants someone to be saved, he can use the good things that I do as an example of what he can become.

[14:35] The fact of the matter is, God can do that. But I need us to understand a little bit about God's sovereignty.

In order for you to do this, we now have to move from a church to a seminary class right now. So you guys are in Seminary Theology 101 with me.

And I want to explain something. It's the age-old question of understanding God's sovereignty. How much does God control? Did God really have sovereign control over the oatmeal and banana I had this morning?

Did God have his control on those things? Did God sovereignly choose these clothes for me to wear? Or was this all me and all my will?

Right? Well, these questions fall under the topic which is known as the providence of God. And this is the biblical idea essentially teaches us that though God is actively related to and involved in creation in each moment, creation is still distinct from him.

[15:52] Okay? What he's saying is, we're actually free agents to a point in this thing called creation. Nothing, absolutely nothing in Scripture tells us that there's such thing as random chance.

There's nowhere in Scripture that things happen by accident. Or nor is there any teaching that anything happens by impersonal faith. But the Scriptures teach us, but God who is the personal yet infinitely powerful creator and Lord determines all things.

So this falls under what's called the doctrine of preservation. And what that means is, God preserves creation as he created it.

Okay? I'm going to give you three passages which describe this. It's found in, one is Hebrews 1.3, the other one is Colossians 1.17, and the third one is Job 34.

14 to 15. And I'll read these verses. This is under the doctrine of preservation. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.

[17:11] That word upholds. It's like a clock. Not only does he create a clock, he winds that clock. You with me on that? So he's created that clock to keep functioning.

Colossians 1.17 says, For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities. All things were created through him and for him, and he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

All right? So not only does he create them, he's holding them together as well. Job tells us, He should set our heart to it and gather to himself his spirit and his breath.

All flesh would perish together, and man would return to dust. Job is essentially telling us, if God removes himself, everything falls apart.

Now we conclude from this that God preserves water in such a way that it is to continue acting like water. God creates grass that grows into more grass.

[18:23] Rock acts like a rock. If you hit someone with it, it hurts. Always. Always. Okay? And this doctrine is why you study science.

You know that? These things have been going on since the beginning of time. There has been no shift in this. All right? Rock all of a sudden didn't start acting like water.

Why would you study science if you didn't know what was going to happen? So then we have doctrine of sovereignty coming in here, and you'll notice I put a term in our bulletin called the doctrine of concurrence.

But we're going to talk about personally how it all figures in. And there's several verses here. I'm going to read them off for you guys that are taking notes. First one is Ephesians 1.11.

The second is Job 12.23. Psalms 22.28. And Acts 17.26. And simply says, Ephesians, In him we have an obtained inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will.

[19:40] Job 12.23 says, God makes nations great, and God destroys them. God enlarges nations, and God leads them away.

Psalms 22.28 says, For kingship belongs to the Lord, and he rules over the nations. In Acts 17.26, And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place.

that God has allowed Canada, allotted it, to look like Canada, function like Canada, and to be Canada at this time in history.

Now what about us? Philippians 4.17 says, And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Jesus Christ.

That's Philippians 4.19. Ezra 6.22 says, For the Lord has made them joyful and had turned the heart of the king of Assyria to them so that he aided them in the work of the house of God.

[20:55] And then Ezra 1.1, In the first year of Cyrus, king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and put it in writing.

So the decisions we make, whether I eat or what I dress, they are never outside of God's control.

Do you know that? They are never. Now how does free will figure into this? And I'll give you guys a perfect example. We have lived in Squamish since March.

My wife and I really love it here. Thank you. We love the people. We love the atmosphere. We love being outdoors. But Squamish took a big hit for me this week.

Okay? Finally something moved over to the negative side. My mom comes to visit and in my mom's great love for me, she always makes me my favorite meal.

[22 : 05] Okay? She makes a special ham and scallop potatoes. All right? Right? It's good. It's good. And if you guys are blessed coming over, it will be the best ham that you've ever had.

Right? So this was our will to go out. So there's a special ham that we have to have. So what did we do? We went to Independence Grocery Store. Did they have it? No, they did not have it.

We went to Savon Grocery Store on the whole other side of town. Right? We invested a whole extra ten minutes of our lives to get over there. They did not have it.

And thinking we were richer than everybody else, we went to Nestor's. Right? Figured if there was some place where the rich people eat, they'll have the right ham.

Did they have it? No, they did not. Strike one, Squamish. Strike one. And I did not call Marty.

[23 : 07] Anyway, so strike. So anyhow, the whole point of this is even though we had this will to go have the greatest ham that Squamish had ever seen, Squamish didn't have the ham to be had.

Right? So even though we have this will to do something doesn't mean we can accomplish what we want to see accomplished. Right? There's a tension in this.

It all depends where you live, who you are, who your parents are, what your family history is. All those things happen and it's no accident.

So on the subject, God creates a rock to be hard. God creates water to be wet. And God creates us to be responsible for our actions.

That's how it all fits together. Our decisions and actions have consequences. You might cite you have free will.

[24 : 15] You can say, I feel bad for BK. He didn't get his ham. But I'm going to have him over for fish. Well, you're not going to get a second time I'm going over.

All right? I hate fish. You might have the freedom, but that's the consequence of this action. You might say you have the freedom to light sparklers and go into work and decorate your office all you want.

Yes, you have that freedom, but the consequences of that, you will have no job, right? So we need to understand where that fits in. That means there's something always bigger, more sovereign, stronger over you than just simply your desires.

In fact, Jesus goes on in verse 26 of Mark 4. It says the kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground.

He sleeps and rises night and day and the seed sprouts and grows. He knows not how. The earth produces by itself first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear.

[25 : 24] But when the grain is ripe at once, he puts in the sickle because the harvest has come. In God's economy, in God's sovereignty, you and I are the means to spread God's word.

How serious is this responsibility? One theologian writes, we are not left in this world to bide our time until Christ returns.

We are not left here simply to become more Christ-like in our personal satisfaction. In fact, if that were the goal for us to become perfect in our satisfaction, Jesus would just come right now and it'd be done.

The fact of the matter is, we all recognize this as being important, but we all know it's not easy.

Although, there are several verses that talk about this, first thing to understand is what does it mean to share the gospel? I believe one of the best passages, Matthew 28, 19.

[26 : 41] I've read it to you several times. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations. That make disciples is the primary verb.

Notice Jesus doesn't say make a Christian because a Christian is always disciple and a disciple is a learning believer. Our role is, one is learning, that means someone must be teaching.

Learning believer is one who is growing in their faith and their love for God. Now, because of this, we can understand there's a few implications if we understand of discipleship.

Evangelism isn't just dropping a whole bunch of gospel tracks. You know, if we wanted to really do a good job, we'll hire a plane, fly over Squamish and we'll just deliver all the tracks, eh?

job done. But the primary area, my friends, is disciple is about an investment of self. It's an investment of self.

[27 : 48] self. It begins with a process of willing to build into someone. Two points of application I want to provide for you today if we are understand to make disciples and willing to invest ourselves.

disciples. The first point of application is understanding that willing to invest the command to make disciples is a command to invest ourselves in others.

It's a command. Can't get around it. It's what we've been created for. It's why we exist.

The implication is if you are not willing to do this, something needs to happen in your heart. I don't know what it is.

Only God can answer for you what that blockage is. Could be some issues you need to deal with in your past. Maybe it's because you're scared, you're an introvert.

[29 : 06] But something needs to be overcome so you can obey Jesus Christ. You might say I'm not bold.

You might say I'm not an extrovert. I don't know, but God doesn't say everyone is supposed to evangelize except those who aren't bold or extroverts, right?

Going along with God's sovereignty, God has brought about those aspects in your life for a purpose. Sometimes the reason you went through a divorce is so you can reach someone else who went through a divorce.

Perhaps the reason you're struggling with cancer is God is designing you in a specific way to relate to someone who's got cancer. For some of you it might be the loss of a child or a loved one.

But the fact of the matter is only you are you. The second point of application that I want to bring about today and it has everything to do with the passage that Carl read to us this morning.

[30 : 30] It's understanding the condition of the unbeliever. It's understanding the condition of the unbeliever. Carl read this passage of Luke 4.

Jesus Christ came in a synagogue as his purpose to go in to the synagogue. They give him the scroll to read and he simply says the spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me. When people ask what did God do? What is he preaching when he's going around Galilee? What is the message that he has? Who is it for? And he says because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and he sent me to recovery of the sight of the blind and set liberty to those who are oppressed.

Isn't that a beautiful thing? It's the whole purpose that God comes from and it happens when we understand that we were just like that. We were blind.

[31 : 36] We were poor. We were captive. And when we look at unbelievers we're not supposed to morally change them. Hey you need to quit swearing.

Alright? You need to quit acting like this. Changing their moral behavior isn't going to save them. What's going to save them is meeting the need of what's going on at their heart level.

Some are in bound they're bound by their sin or other people's sin. They just can't forgive. Some are trapped. Some are blind. Some are poor. I think we all think it's kind of easier to share the gospel with someone who's almost a Christian.

Right? My neighbor is such a really good guy. He keeps his lawn really green and it's cut nice. He's good and polite with his kids. He just needs the gospel.

[32 : 40] We kind of think if Jesus can he's kind of almost there. That's where we always tend to lean on. But God has put us in a position in his sovereignty to reach the people that we know that are poor, captive, blind, and oppressed.

The fact of the matter is some don't know that they are poor, captive, blind, and oppressed.

That neighbor who keeps his grass really green and cut really well and is really good with his kids, he might be doing it because he thinks he's earning points with God.

And he's just as lost as the prostitute that we see that is downtown. The Bible teaches that they are slaves to sin just like we were.

We are not believers because we have a better standing before God. It's simply because Jesus Christ freed us. Amen? There was nothing we could do to unlock that prison door.

[33 : 49] There was no way to pick it, escape it. The fact is we didn't even realize we were locked in that door, that prison, right? But God came in, he unlocked it, and we saw some of you for the first time, you knew all of a sudden what it was to be free, and it was amazing.

So what is the result of their poverty, their captivity, their blindness, and their oppression? Matthew 25, 46, that they will be cast away in eternal punishment.

2 Peter 3, 7-9 says, but God is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish, but for all to come to repentance. What a wonderful tension.

Hell is coming, but God is holding it back. Why? So we can reach others with the gospel. So how are we to respond to this message?

Luke 15 gives us a great reminder. What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the one that is lost until he finds it?

[35 : 05] When he is found it, he lays it on his shoulders rejoicing, and when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.

Just so I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven when one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

I don't know all your stories, but I know enough of you to know that some of your testimony reflects these truths. that God chased you, hounded you, no matter how far you tried to run, it wasn't beyond his grasp.

That God found you, no matter how hard you tried to stay lost. That God came to you when you thought no one cared, no one loved you, but that you found out that you had lived a life no one could accept, Jesus was waiting for you all along.

John Piper writes, the supreme demonstration of God's love was the sending of his son to die for our sins and to rise again so that sinners might have the right to approach God and might have the pleasure of his presence forever.

[36 : 28] My friends, do you realize that by sharing the good news of Jesus Christ is you declaring God's glory, that your testimony is a part of God's glory.

That glory is not meant to be hidden under a basket or under a bed. It's to be displayed for all to see.

Ultimately, it's why you are created. My prayer as a pastor is that you would grow to be willing to give yourself over to disciple someone, to help them grow in the knowledge of him.

It's being willing to see an unbeliever for who they are. And by doing so, you would develop a heart of God that you would want to see them found, and then you want to rejoice as God and the angels do when he reveals himself.

Let us pray.