

FRIENDSHIP EVANGELISM

5. “Reaching to People Who Do Not Yet Know Him”
Luke 5:1 – 11

Introduction:

As we turn our attention to the Word of the Lord this morning, we another look at the concept of Friendship Evangelism. That is simply a fancy term for seeking to help our friends, family members, people in our sphere of influence to come to know Jesus Christ our Lord. Helping others to come to know Him is a significant part of our task we have been given to do as His people, our **Marching Orders** that have stood for 2000 years.

Matthew 28:19, 20 *“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*

Acts 1:8 *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*

What we are really talking about is the central issue of our Christian faith, what it means to know and walk with Jesus today. The truth is relatively few people have the gift of evangelism, enabling them to walk in the Holy Spirit’s gifting to lead others to personal faith in Christ. But each and every child of God has been called by God to our **Common Calling to Make Disciples**. This is one of the things that is absolutely non-negotiable for the followers of Jesus.

We are called to know the saving grace of our Lord Jesus Christ in deeply personal ways, to be inhabited by His Holy Spirit, to be being transformed by His powerful presence in our lives. His holy presence dwelling in us working in our lives changing our desires, affections, and thought patterns to become more like Jesus, is fundamental to our story, what **we Bear Witness to Others**. Telling people in our sphere of influence our story is a way for us to get the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ into the thinking of people who may never read a Bible!

Being a part of the Brethren in Christ church causes our local church family to embrace the core value of doing the **Work of Evangelism**. We believe it is absolutely true that only God can save someone’s soul, because only God can deal with sin and change a human heart. But we also believe it is true that God uses His men and women on the earth to do the practical works of evangelism that pave the way for Him to minister His salvation in a person’s life.

The works of evangelism involve **Praying** deep and heartfelt intercession before the Lord for those who cannot pray for themselves. To intercede before the Lord is to earnestly desire the will and inner work of the Holy Spirit of God to touch someone’s heart and life. It is to feel His love for a person and pray out His desire for them.

The work of evangelism also involves **Witnessing to the Presence and the Power of the Spirit of Jesus dwelling in our lives.** In both the way I choose to live my life and in the words I speak to someone about the essence of my life, my goal is to help them to see Jesus is living in me changing me from within.

As we think about the issue of doing the works of evangelism it is important to visit our motivation, asking ourselves the question, “Why am I doing this?” When it comes to giving of ourselves for the salvation of other people, what moves us to do this?

There are good motivations for evangelism. One is the whole issue that the person’s life will be made better if they come to know Christ Jesus as Savior and Lord. Another good motive is the advancement and enlargement of the kingdom of God on the earth. A third is that society will be bettered as more people come to know Christ and learn to live differently.

But for me the absolute best motive I can think of for the salvation of someone’s soul is – **to bring Pleasure to the Lord.** The bottom line here is this: God loves this person – presently in a state of sinfulness – with a tremendous drawing love. It will bring great joy and pleasure to the Father’s heart to wash them of sin through the precious blood of Jesus, cleanse their heart, and come to live in them by the Holy Spirit.

Disciple-Making is at the very core of God’s heart for people. Listen to the following words of Scripture: Romans 10:13 – 15 *“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!’”*

Paul is quoting Isaiah 52:7. That text is a picture of a messenger running to a commander with news of the battle. The runner’s feet are muddy and sweaty but they are beautiful to the commander if they bring news of victory. What we are talking about is much more beautiful than a military victory. We are talking about freedom from guilt, freedom from loneliness, from meaninglessness and from death! How beautiful are the feet of people who bring good news of salvation.

Listen very carefully to John recording the words of Jesus to His followers, found in John 20:21 – 23 *“Again Jesus said, ‘Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.’ And with that He breathed on them and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.’”*

In that call to make disciples, Jesus says as the Father sent me into the world to make His heart of holy, self-emptying, other-oriented love known to people, I am sending you my followers into the world to enable people to see my holy, self-emptying, other-oriented love for them living in you!

We ought not to miss the powerful truth Jesus is expounding to His followers in this text calling them to be on mission with Him. The Father’s call on Jesus’ life was to love people so much that

He willingly laid down His life for them. **This Call Consumed the Heart of Jesus** and He never deviated from it. John tells us 23 times, Jesus came to fulfill the will of the Father!

Jesus says in the same way the Father sent me into the world, now I am sending you into the world. This calling to exemplify my holy, self-emptying, other-oriented love is to consume or ravish the hearts of His people, you and me as we live here in Mifflintown, PA. There are a number of things, which are inherent to the command of the Lord Jesus, to go out and make disciples:

We are called to **Invade** our world with the love of God that is in Christ Jesus, to make His power to change their lives evident by enabling them to see His power changing our lives, from selfish, self-interest, to living a life of love. We are not primarily called to **Invite** them to come to church!

We are to aim to make **Disciples** not to get **Decisions!** Throughout Scripture God has woven an “All-nations” imperative. It is about God’s intense love for all people. God deeply desires to bring about significant change in the lives of people by His presence and power dwelling in them. When someone opens his or her heart to the Gospel of Jesus Christ it is the beginning not the end of their journey of becoming a disciple.

We are called to be **Constrained** by His love burning in our hearts. His love moves us to be friends of people, to genuinely care about them. Paul told the Corinthians in II Corinthians 5:14, 15: *“For Christ’s compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all and therefore all died. And that he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for them and was raised again.”*

I. Passionate Followers of Jesus:

Luke 5:8 – 11 *“When Simon Peter saw this (The incredible catch of fish) he fell at Jesus’ knees and said, ‘Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!’ For he and all of his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon’s partners. Then Jesus said to Simon, ‘Do not be afraid; from now on you will catch men.’ So they pulled their boats up on the shore, left everything and followed him.”*

The setting of this miraculous catch of fish is near the village of Capernaum, on the Sea of Galilee, and in Peter’s fishing boat. Capernaum was the hometown of Andrew, Peter, James, and John. The whole crew has been out fishing all night and they haven’t caught a thing. Jesus asked to use Peter’s fishing boat as a preaching point along the shore, while people lined up along the shore crowded around to hear Him.

The picture Jesus is painting is the deep hunger of heart, people have for the spiritual reality of a walk with God, which He alone can give them. The people who listened to Jesus were fed up with cold and dead formalism. They wanted to know God the way Jesus knew God. They gathered at the seashore like a school of hungry fish gathers around a food source in the water!

If Peter was ever going to be the Spiritual Leader He was called to be he needed an expanded Vision of how hungry these people were who were all around him. So Jesus asked him to put out into the water for a catch. Peter's answer is loaded: *"Master, we've worked all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so I will let down the nets."*

The miraculous catch of fish got across Jesus' message to Peter and his partners. Peter was overwhelmed with **Fear** when he saw this tremendous spiritual power. "I can't be your follower Jesus. I am unworthy. I might fail you!" (Can you or I relate to Peter's fear of failure?) Jesus responded to him in a tender and beautiful way, *"Don't be afraid . . . from now on you will catch men."* You will be involved in the miracle of harvest of people in the spiritual realm Peter. You'll bring people to faith in me. (It is His work in us that will draw people to Himself).

With those words the disciples entered into an adventure. *"They left everything and followed him."* What this word means is that they were deciding to go with Jesus, to live with Him, and to observe Him what He did and didn't do. They would see Him minister to people in many situations, and they would be involved in a three year running dialogue with Him, three years of personal training to become like their teacher!

As they got to spend time with Him they actually began to take on His the contents of His heart. They began to **Love** what He loved and they got practical life lessons that His life and His truth is for **Sharing**.

Peter had to have this experience with Jesus. He had to come to better mentality than he had. Peter needed a "Because-you-say-so-Jesus" mentality. That is what it means to be a follower of Jesus, to hear His voice and do what He is asking us to do with Him. Independent people have a hard time with Jesus asking us to have a "Because-you-say-so-Jesus" attitude.

This is crucial to our topic today because doing works of evangelism begins with having His heart of love for Prechristians and unchurched people. The only way I know of for you and me to get to know His heart is to invest sweet and quality time with Him.

II. Moved from the Heart by the Heart of God:

Not only must we come to know more deeply His heart of love, we must also come to know our hearts as well. We must know why we are doing what we are doing. Luke 5:10b Jesus told Peter and other would-be followers: *"Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch men."* Peter and the other disciples had to learn that bearing witness to Jesus does not originate in their humanity, it originates in the heart of God. Of course we will be fearful and our human strength and will let us down!

The real issue here is this: Are we moved to minister grace and salvation to others because we have experienced His heart of love and compassion deeply in our hearts? Have we developed a "Because-you-say-so-Jesus" mentality because we have heard Him say to us: *"Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men?"*

Our motivation to do the works of evangelism must spring from **our new Allegiance**. In Peter's case he was to no longer be primarily a professional fisherman. His new primary allegiance was to be disciple of Jesus Christ as Master. The word discipleship means primarily a personal relationship between two people who love each other in which ***the learner takes on the heart of the Master! The work of catching people alive took first priority in their lives because it was a first priority to Jesus.*** Jesus used Peter's fear and took him from being paralyzed by it to be catalyzed by it!

The new allegiance of discipleship gives **a new Agenda**. "From now on" are three little words that are as powerful in the hearts of men and women today as they were to these precious fishermen who heard them 2000 years ago. A complete change of agenda: "From now on, Peter, James, John, and Cedar Grove Church family things will be different!"

The new allegiance of discipleship gave them **a new Aim**. They now had been given a new goal in life, a reason for existence, which would outlive them by 2000 years. "You will catch men" is a word that tells Peter and his companions in the boat that day, as well as disciples today what our purpose in life is supposed to be by God Almighty. You will help other people come to know this Lord who captures people's hearts by His love!

Please look at this beautiful illustration of fishing for people with me. When you and I think of fishing we think of angling with a pole and bait on a hook. But Jesus had in mind net fishing, not angling. There are chasms of difference between using a net to fish and using a fishing pole. These differences between the two methods have a message about our motivation and our means of evangelism:

First – angling with a pole involves Solo Effort, while fishing with a net is an enterprise of many team members taking part. The church family all works together in net fishing a community, churches, pastors, Sunday School classes, teachers, youth ministry workers, children's ministry workers, greeters, ushers small group leaders and shepherds. The body of Christ is a key part of the attractiveness of the message!

Second – angling with a pole depends on Trickery and Deceit done to the fish while net fishing is a much more natural method that seeks to take fish in their Natural environment. What Jesus calls all of His followers to live and to be in our sphere of influence flows out of love for Jesus and love for people. We are called to live a life of love just as Christ loved us and gave His life as a ransom for the many. Self-emptying love is central to the message of the Gospel we bring!

Third – Anglers fish for sport, while net fishermen fish for a living. The angler is interested in the trophy fish. The net fisherman does so to sustain his life and the lives of others, who depend on him.

As the life of Jesus was consumed with desire to enable people to know and love the Father for the first time in their lives, you and I are called to be message bearers, men and women who love Jesus, love our friends and family, and seek to find ways to introduce people to what a relationship with the Lord looks like!

III. Compassion and Acceptance:

As we think about this word of calling to witness to other people, the calling the Lord Jesus has given all of us to do with Him, we need to get just a bit more specific. **As we minister to people about Him it is extremely important that we do so from the context of Relational Love for and with them.** It is really important that we take the time to get to know people, to just learn to love them and to pray for them before we ever tell the Good News of Salvation.

The Lord Jesus showed us, in myriad ways, what it is like to truly Care about people.

Caring evangelism isn't about spiritual soul-winning, which is often more akin to scalp-hunting than it is advancing the kingdom of God in someone's heart by grace.

To enter into a relationship with people who do not yet know Him as personal Lord and Savior is to decide on the front end to **Selflessly Serve** them, whether they come to know Christ or not I am in this thing for them.

Friendship or relational evangelism takes into consideration that most people in our world today are already quite painfully aware of their shortcomings. What most people in our culture need is someone to listen first, not tell, and someone to accept them right where they are not speak judgment to them.

Speaking personally now, when Jesus first called me friend and told me He loved me, I didn't smell very churchy and I didn't look very good on the inside or the outside. Today He has me preaching His Word to hundreds of people. If I can change and you can change, can't your friend who is captivated by sin also be radically changed by meeting this same Jesus?

Permit me to leave you with one final thought: To engage in friendship or relational evangelism is to embrace the fact that **people in our spheres of influence need to know they are loved with a love the likes of which they have never seen or experienced before.** People need to experience the **Unconditional Love** God has for them in Christ Jesus our Lord. It was the love of Jesus that caused people to want to be near Him, and motivated them to want to learn to walk with the Father like Jesus walked with the Father!

When the New Testament writers wanted to show the different nature of the love of God, from all of the human loves people have known, they took the Greek word agape and applied it to the love that flows from the heart of God to the human heart. The word agape became a powerful picture to people of the love of God shed abroad in the hearts of simple men and women!

This agape love, the holy love of God is something you and I only have in our lives because we received it from the Lord Himself. Our friends will only experience this love when they see Him – who is agape – dwelling in us by His Spirit.

He gave us a spiritual principle of which we must never lose sight: *“Freely you have received, freely give!”* So how have we been doing at giving away the contents of agape in your heart and life sowing this wonderful love in our relationships with our unsaved, unchurched, or pre-Christian friends?

FRIENDSHIP EVANGELISM:
5. "Reaching Out to People Who Do Not Yet Know Him"
Luke 5:1 – 11

Introduction:

Our topic for the first part of 2018 is "Friendship Evangelism," a term meaning to care deeply about the spiritual lives of people we love.

Right before Jesus went back to heaven He left His followers specific **M** _____ **O** _____: Matthew 28:18 – 20, Acts 1: 8. The Biblical call to **M** _____ **D** _____ is non-negotiable.

Being inhabited by the Holy Spirit, being transformed in desires, affections, and thought-patterns is fundamental to our story, what we **B** _____ **W** _____ to others.

The Brethren in Christ Church has a core value of doing the **W** _____ of **E** _____. The work of evangelism involves **P** _____ in deep intercession for those who cannot pray for themselves. It involves **W** _____ to His presence and power in our lives.

As we bear witness to others it is important to visit the "Why questions," Why am I doing this? The absolute purest motive is to bring **P** _____ to the Lord when someone we love gets redeemed!

D _____ **-M** _____ is at the core of God's heart for people, Romans 10:13 – 15 Paul's quote of Isaiah 52:7

Let's carefully consider the words of Jesus to His followers in John 20:21 – 23. Jesus says, "As the Father sent me, I am sending you." This **C** _____ **C** _____ **H**is heart.

Jesus was sent into the world to fulfill the will of the Father to lay down His life for others. We are sent to exemplify His holy, self-emptying, other-oriented love for others.

We are called to **I** _____ our world with love, not merely **I** _____ them to church. We are called to make **D** _____, not merely get **D** _____. We are called to be **C** _____ by His love burning in our hearts. II Corinthians 5:14, 15

I. Passionate Followers of Jesus: Luke 5:1 – 11

The setting is the Sea of Galilee and the miraculous catch of fish from Peter's fishing boat.

The picture Jesus is painting is the hunger of people's hearts for a real walk with God He alone can give them!

If Peter is ever going to be the **S** _____ **L** _____ Jesus wants him to become, he will need an expanded **V** _____ of the hunger people had.

Peter comments they worked hard all night and caught nothing, but "because you say so, I will let down the nets." The miraculous catch got Peter's attention and the others too.

Peter was overwhelmed with **F** _____ when he saw the spiritual power in Jesus: "I might fail you Lord!" Jesus told them all, "Don't be afraid. From now on you will catch people!" He invited them to a spiritual adventure.

As they spent time with Him they experienced a deep **L** _____ from the heart of Jesus that is meant for **S** _____.

II. Moved from the Heart by the Heart of God:

Like the disciples of Jesus, we must know why we want to tell people our story. Luke 5:10b... Have we heard the words of Jesus to us personally?

Telling people our story must flow from our having a new A to Jesus ... a new A, "from now on." A new A, "You will catch people.

Jesus has in mind net fishing, not angling. The differences are striking:

1. Angling involves a pole and is a S E. In net fishing a T of people work together.
2. Angling depends on T and D. Net fishing takes fish in their N environment.
3. Anglers fish for sport and a T. Net fishing is done as a W of L.

III. Compassion and Acceptance:

As we tell others our story it is important that we do so on the basis of R L with the hearers. It is vital for us to remember Jesus showed His followers the importance of genuinely C about people.

It is important that we choose to love deeply, decide to S S others in love whether they decide to follow Jesus or not!

One final key thought. It is important to embrace the truth that people in our sphere of influence need to see and feel a love the likes of which they have never seen or felt before: U L of God.

- 1. Do you think most Christians really understand the fact that we are all called to make disciples and that it is non-negotiable?*

- 2. Read together aloud Matthew 28:18 – 20 and Acts 1:8 and what you hear Jesus tell His followers will happen as we walk in the Spirit in life.*

- 3. Do you think most Christians understand that we are all called be part of doing “the work of evangelism,” praying and bearing witness to His power in living in our lives transforming us?”*

- 4. What do you think Jesus meant when He told His followers “As the Father has sent me into the world I am sending you into the world?”*

- 5. Why do you think Peter was struck with a sense of fear when he saw the miraculous catch of fish? What message do think the disciples received as they saw what Jesus did as He filled their nets with fish?*

- 6. Do you think Christians in North America really understand the message Peter received from Jesus, “Because you say so Jesus I will let down the nets?” What are some things that prevent us from hearing the message of surrender to Him?*

- 7. What are some of the key differences between fishing with a pole and net fishing? What lessons do we learn from net fishing about doing the work of evangelism in our community?*

- 8. Why is it so important for us to live a life of unconditional love as we share our story of life-change with people?*

- 9. Read together aloud the story of the evangelization of Philippi, from Acts 16. What lessons do we learn about the work of evangelism from these stories of life change as Paul, Timothy, Silas, and Luke worked in their city?*

- 10. Are there people in your sphere of influence who do not know Jesus? Have you written your story and are you prepared to share your story with them?*