

## 11.07.2020 WINSOME WITNESSES: THE POWER OF PERSONAL TESTIMONY

***“For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard” Acts 4:20***

There are three things on earth today that reveal God to the world: nature, the Bible and God’s people. Our study this week looks at the importance of personal testimony in revealing God to the world.

*You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men; clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of the heart. 2 Corinthians 3:2, 3*

### **Unlikely Witnesses: Mark 5:1-20**

*Jesus said to him, “Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you.” And he departed and began to proclaim in Decapolis all that Jesus had done for him; and all marvelled. Mark 5:19, 20*

Jesus often invited those who heard Him and who were healed by Him to follow Him. Here, when the healed man wanted to follow Jesus, Jesus asked him to go home and witness to his friends and family.

Why did Jesus do this? What are the possible reasons?

1. For the man himself.

This man had been a raving lunatic. His newly healed mind needed to be occupied. If he just followed the disciples and Jesus, it would have been easy to be a passive follower, watching and hearing the work and words of Jesus and the disciples. By giving him an active ministry, Jesus ensured that his mind would be occupied with the things of heaven. In re-telling the story, he would be re-affirming to himself and others the grace of God in his life.

2. For his family and community

His community knew him well. This sudden miraculous transformation would have had a great impact on them and been a major talking point. Who better to tell them the story of Christ, the great Healer and Deliverer from sin than the man who had experienced it firsthand? We know that his ministry had an impact because when Jesus returned to Decapolis, great multitudes followed Him.

### **Proclaiming the Risen Christ**

*But the angel answered and said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.” Matthew 28:5, 6 (Mark 16:6, Luke 24:6).*

The life, death and resurrection of Jesus is the theme of all the sermons and defences of the disciples in the apostolic church.

*“Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know—Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it... This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear.” Acts 2:22-33*

*“Let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. This is the ‘stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone’. Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” Acts 4:10-12*

*“The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Saviour, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him.” Acts 5:30-32*

### **Changed Lives Make a Difference/ Sharing our Experience**

In our 21<sup>st</sup> century world, where men and women no longer believe in God and a vast number of clergy in Christendom do not believe in miracles, the Virgin birth and the Resurrection, how shall we convince them of the truth of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world?

The answer is simple. **Men and women will not believe unless they see the evidence of what they are told.** They need to see the resurrection life of Jesus manifested in His people – the people who proclaim His name and salvation.

***I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. Galatians 2:20***

*Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marvelled. **And they realized that they had been with Jesus.** Acts 4:13, 14*

*But I make known to you, brethren, that **the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.** Galatians 1:11, 12*

This is the basis of all true witness. We can only witness of that which we know, which we have seen. We are called to be Christ’s friends, to know Him through the stories in the Bible, the Spirit’s guidance and by personal daily communion with Him. If we only know about Him, our witness may be knowledgeable and persuasive but will not draw men to Christ. Christ first moved among men as the Friend of sinners; He then became their Saviour. After the resurrection, it became clear that His purpose was to lead many sons to glory. That glory is the righteousness of Christ and it must be seen in all who call themselves Christians.

*That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life—the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us— **that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.** 1 John 1:1-4*

‘As witnesses for Christ, we are to tell what we know, what we ourselves have seen and heard and felt. If we have been following Jesus step by step, we shall have something right to the point to tell concerning the way in which He has led us. We can tell how we have tested His promise, and found the promise true. We can bear witness to what we have known of the grace of Christ. This is the witness for which our Lord calls, and for want of which the world is perishing.’ *Desire of Ages p 340.*

### **The Power of a Personal Testimony: a Winsome Witness**

‘Winsome’: *attractive and pleasing, with simple qualities, sometimes like those a child has.*

*When I first came to you, dear brothers and sisters, I didn’t use lofty words and impressive wisdom to tell you God’s testimony. For I decided that while I was with you I would forget everything except Jesus Christ, the one who was crucified. I came to you in weakness—timid and trembling. And my message and my preaching were very plain. Rather than using clever and persuasive speeches, I relied only on the power of the Holy Spirit. I did this so you would trust not in human wisdom but in the power of God. 1 Corinthians 2:1-5 NLT*

We do not have to be intellectuals to share the story of Jesus. It is a simple yet profound story that can be told with simplicity, yet have the power and authority of Christ and His Spirit to convict men and women who hear it. The sermons

in the book of Acts and the letters of Peter, John and Paul were written to the common people that they may know Christ.

**If I am to be a true witness, I must:**

1. Have a story to tell of Jesus, the Saviour of the world.
2. The story of Christ must be true. Christ is the faithful witness; I must be a faithful witness to Him. I must not give men a false vision of the gospel, of what it takes to be saved.
3. Have a story to tell of my personal friendship with Jesus; what He has done for me, how He has led me through the years, how He has done all things well for me and made every situation in my life 'work together for my good'.
4. Be humble. I must be willing to tell people that the Lord has had compassion on me and that I am a sinner saved by grace.
5. Be motivated by love for souls as Christ was.

**I must start 'at home' ...'go home to your friends...'**

1. My family

I must represent the love and justice of God to my family, my spouse, my children, my parents and siblings.

2. My friends

My life must reveal to my friends that I have 'been with Jesus'.

3. My work colleagues

Do my colleagues see that I work as one who professes the name of Christ? Sincerely, conscientiously, with care and concern for colleagues and for those who are served by the institution where I work? Am I willing to be different if the work ethic of my workplace is selfish rather than selfless?

4. My community

Do people in my community recognise that I am different in that I live by the spirit of Christ in all my relations with them? Is my unspoken witness (my behaviour) as great as my spoken witness?

**Conclusion:**

All genuine Christians want to be a witness for their Saviour. But unless we ourselves know, experience and are convinced of the unconditional, unchanging, self-giving love of God to us, we shall have no story to tell of God's love. If we are still unsure of our salvation, because we are unsure whether to believe the promises of God, then we will have no story to tell of the assurance of God's salvation.

Above all, the experience of salvation we share with others must bear the evidence of the resurrection life of Christ lived out in us.

***"As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." John 20:21***

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