

Vision 2010: Sharing Jesus by Caring for People

Proverbs 29:18

Here's Your Sign...Evangelize!

Matthew 16:1-19

Comedian Bill Engvall says, "Stupid people should have to wear signs that just say, 'I'm Stupid.' That way you wouldn't rely on them, would you? You wouldn't ask them anything. It would be like, 'Excuse me... oops... never mind, didn't see your sign.'"

"It's like before my wife and I moved. Our house was full of boxes and there was a U-Haul truck in our driveway. My neighbor comes over and says, 'Hey, you moving?'"

"Nope. We just pack our stuff up once or twice a week to see how many boxes it takes. Here's your sign."

"A couple of months ago I went fishing with a buddy of mine, we pulled his boat into the dock, I lifted up this big ol' stringer of bass and this idiot on the dock goes, 'Hey, y'all catch all them fish?' "Nope. Talked 'em into giving up. Here's your sign."

"We were trying to sell our car about a year ago. A guy came over to the house and drove the car around for about 45 minutes. We get back to the house, he gets out of the car, reaches down and grabs the exhaust pipe, then says, 'Darn that's hot!' See, if he'd been wearing his sign, I could have stopped him."

Signs are important in our lives. Road signs play a big part in our lives and we have come to rely on them. Gone are the days we find a location by "turning sort of left where the old school house burned down following the dry creek to the rock that looks like a man's head." We look for signs in the weather, relationships, highway travel, assembly instructions and whether or not I am in trouble with my wife because of something she may or may not actually know I did (or didn't do).

When it comes to Reaching Out – Evangelism – I am often asked for signs. Signs that say I am an evangelist or not. Signs that tell me someone is ready to believe or not. Signs that let me know when I can stop evangelizing. Sometimes I feel like I could use the Moose Warning sign when I enter into conversations with seekers.

Our text looks at three separate encounters Jesus had which Matthew places together – possibly to show his readers how intentional and demanding Jesus was when it came to calling people to himself. They all take place in the northern part of Galilee beginning on the Sea of Galilee and venturing with one occurring in the Pagan enclave of Caesarea Philippi. I show you this to demonstrate how far Jesus roamed to make his presence felt and his message heard.

Am I going the right way?

Matthew 16:1-4

The Pharisees and Sadducees came to Jesus and tested him by asking him to show them a sign from heaven. He replied, "When evening comes, you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red,' and in the morning, 'Today it will be stormy, for the sky is red and overcast.' You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times. A wicked and adulterous generation looks for a miraculous sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah." Jesus then left them and went away.

Jonah pointed to God

the reference to Jonah is not meant to point to the number of days that he spent in the belly of the whale. Jesus is warning them that the only sign they ever have received from God as a prophet. The fact that the prophet is often accompanied by miraculous powers

given by God has never swayed the people one way or the other. Just like the prophets of old God incarnate simply points to himself and says whatever you know about me do. If you're looking for direction in life point yourself toward God. If your life has come off the rails look for God to Road track.

Jonah brought God's grace

everyone Jesus was talking to would've remembered the story of Jonah quite clearly. How Jonah did not want to go because he did not want the grace of God given to the people in another. How God used Jonas reluctance to further impress the Ninevites with their need to repent. God's grace is given to anyone who repents. I know it's popular to say, "if God truly loved he would forgive unconditionally." It is good to remember that because God truly loves is unconditional forgiveness is freely given to those who want it and not forced on those who do not want it.

Just like Jonah Jesus came to bring the good news that God would not deal with the world as they deserved. He has reached out through his sacrifice and through those who speak for him so that you and I can have a full life.

Jonah's message was God's actions

the advantage that Jonah had when he spoke to the Ninevites was that they knew the God of Israel. They knew the stories of how God had defended his people. They knew that their gods were no match for the God of Israel. And so in Jonah told them that the God Israel had arrived in Nineveh they understood the hammer that was about to fall. When we soft cell the outcome of sin we do a disservice to anyone who hears us, including ourselves. Scripture is full of the things that God hates. Paul gives us less of the things that we can choose to do which will separate us from God forever.

The Chronicles of Narnia are a collection of stories of a fantasy land created by and regulated by Aslan, a lion of mystical and magnificent powers. When he is absent life turns ugly and when he is present there is a battle for right. In "The Last Battle" King Tirian (called "The Last King of Narnia") and his friend Jewel the Unicorn are rejoicing over the news that the Lion, Aslan, has returned to Narnia. Their joy is short-lived however, when Roonwit the Centaur tells them that there is no sign of Aslan's return amongst the stars, and the stars never lie. Not only that, but the stars tell of some great evil hanging over Narnia. As they are speaking, a dryad runs into their midst crying that her brother and sister trees are being felled. Before she can finish, her tree is cut down and she dies. Tirian and Jewel immediately start a journey through the forest where they find a large logging project underway and two Calormenes whipping a Talking Horse of Narnia. In their fury, they kill the two Calormenes. The Horse then tells them he is following Aslan's orders in submitting himself to such treatment. After hearing this, Tirian and Jewel have the following conversation:

"He is not a tame lion," said Tirian. "How should we know what he would do? We, who are murderers. Jewel, I will go back. I will give up my sword and put myself in the hands of these Calormenes and ask that they bring me before Aslan. Let him do justice on me."
"You will go to your death, then," said Jewel.

"Do you think I care if Aslan dooms me to death?" said the King. "That would be nothing, nothing at all. Would it not be better to be dead than to have this horrible fear

that Aslan has come and is not like the Aslan we have believed in and longed for? It is as if the sun rose one day and were a black sun."

"I know," said Jewel. "Or as if you drank water and it were dry water. You are in the right, Sire. This is the end of all things. Let us go and give ourselves up."

"There is no need for both of us to go."

"If ever we loved one another, let me go with you now," said the Unicorn. "If you are dead and if Aslan is not Aslan, what life is left for me?" — C.S. Lewis (The Chronicles of Narnia) The Last Battle ~ (1956)

Do not be deluded into thinking that "Sweet Jesus Meek and Mild" is anything other than the Lion of Judah and He is not a tame lion. He hates sin and he hates all who cause his children to sin.

Proverbs 6:16-19

There are six things the LORD hates, seven that are detestable to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil, a false witness who pours out lies and a man who stirs up dissension among brothers.

Proverbs 6:16-19

There are six things the LORD hates. There are seven things he cannot stand: a proud look, a lying tongue, hands that kill innocent people, a mind that thinks up evil plans, feet that are quick to do evil, a witness who lies, and someone who starts arguments among families.

What should I watch out for?

Matthew 16:5-12

When they went across the lake, the disciples forgot to take bread. "Be careful," Jesus said to them. "Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees." They discussed this among themselves and said, "It is because we didn't bring any bread." Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked, "You of little faith, why are you talking among yourselves about having no bread? Do you still not understand? Don't you remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered? Or the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered? How is it you don't understand that I was not talking to you about bread? But be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees." Then they understood that he was not telling them to guard against the yeast used in bread, but against the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

The chemical definition of ferment or yeast is 'a substance in a state of putrefaction, the atoms of which are in a continual motion.'" It is also a substance that puffs up. However, Jesus does tell us that the Kingdom of God is like a woman who uses a little leaven to leaven the whole loaf, so, we can conclude that a little bit of evil and a little bit of righteousness go a long way. So let me be positive here.

Watch out for leaven in your friendships

If your friends are not followers of Jesus then you are God's leaven in their lives – you're the one, by your actions, who will cause the word of God to grow in them. Do not let their sins grow in you.

Watch out for leaven in your choices

In what ever you do or say do and say it all in the name of Jesus.

Watch out for leaven in your beliefs

The first and second commands are always in affect. There is never a time when God is not the only one we worship as God nor a time when we do not love him and his creation with all our heart, mind, soul and strength.

How do I know when I get there?

I am often asked, “Pastor, am I going to heaven?” We all want to know if we have reached the point that we are now acceptable to God. If you have put Jesus on the throne our your life and been obedient to him in baptism then you have entered into a covenant with God that He will not break. Let’s see what happens when the all important question is asked.

Matthew 16:13-19

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?” They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

For this session Jesus takes them out of the familiar world of Galilee and Judea and into an unsettling world just across the border - into pagan territory.

He takes them to the capital of the Roman province in Judea, the seat of the governors or procurators that ruled their land, and the headquarters of the Roman troops.

Caesarea Philippi was the heart of the kind of pagan worship God had always condemned.

As Jesus stood there, He was surrounded by numerous idols and pagan that populated the region (14 temples to Baal, one to Caesar and a nearby cave was rumored to have been the birth place of the Greek God of Nature: Pan)

So there in the middle of the most pagan place close to their homes he gives them the keys to the kingdom.

First: You will confess that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and your personal savior.

Second: You will be in church which:

Is Built by Christ - “I will build”

Belongs to Christ - “my church”

Is Powered by Christ - “all the powers of hell shall not prevail against it”

Is Guaranteed to last - “hell shall not prevail against it”

When Jesus said, “I will build my church” he used the Greek word ekklesia the first time in the New Testament which comes from two other words - ek – meaning out or out of and kaleo – meaning to call. So ekklesia, then, came to denote a group of people called out and assembled for a specific purpose (religious or otherwise). God has called his

people out of the world to go back to the world – the gates of hell – and gather them into his church.

Third: You will go to hell for family, friends and neighbors who do not know Jesus.

The Church, while created by God, is populated by people. In other words, you will always be able to find people in the church who have done or will do stupid things. I run into people all the time that tell me they don't go to church because it's filled with hypocrites. Actually, it's simply filled with imperfect people who act in accordance with their imperfections. Don't expect this or any church to treat you perfectly because no one is capable of doing that. You can expect the church to do it's best to relate to you the love of Christ and the grace He offers, but it will do it imperfectly.

We have to be willing to look beyond the imperfections of people and see the perfect messiah that they represent

I read once the story of a young black man in the ghettos. He was fortunate in that he had both of his parents, and they struggled to make ends meet. But for his birthday that year they had scraped together enough money to pay for a brand new bicycle. A few days later someone stole it. Enraged, the boy went looking for the thief and in the process of his search he encountered a policeman. The policeman asked him what he was going to do if he caught the boy who stole it and the boy said that he didn't know.

It was obvious to the cop that if this boy ever did find the person who stole his bike, he might not only lose the bike but be beaten terribly in any fight that ensued, so he asked the boy if he would like to go the gym with him. The boy agreed and they went together to a nearby sports center where the policeman began teaching the boy how to box.

That boy was named Cassius Clay. Later he changed his name to Mohammed Ali and became one of the greatest fighters to ever enter the ring. But while Mohammed Ali was similar to many of the fighters of that time – he worked out just like they did, he boxed, and sparred and ran for miles in preparation for every fight – he had one distinguishing difference that gave him the edge whenever he put on his gloves.

Ali said, "To this day I never found my bike, but every time I got in the ring, I'd look across at my opponent and say to myself, that's the guy who stole my bike!"

I have in my life a person who never made a decision for Jesus – somehow what I was for that person did not move them and what I did was not enough. Do you know someone like that? Someone you know you will not see in eternity. Someone you miss like you would miss your next breath and know you will never see them again because you did not do all you could to give them the opportunity to accept Jesus as Lord and Savior? I know it is their decision and we can only do what we are able, but, I have discovered that when I look across the yard at my neighbor and see Those friends and family members who have left this world without God's grace, I pray a little more consistently and look for closely for opportunities to say a good word for Jesus. I am also more aware of what kind of image I am giving them of a follower of Jesus.

My Next Steps will be to:

- 1. Memorize Matthew 16:16**
- 2. Make my first decision to follow Jesus today.**
- 3. Commit to attend Church at least three times a month this year.**

4. **Bring at least three people to church this year – please pray for them by name** _____
5. **Attend the following Maturing in Christ Class January 31st.**