



30 Days of Devotions
EVANGELISM EMPHASIS MONTH
September 2017



September 22
Rev. Jay Crout
Jeremiah 17:7-8

*“Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord.
He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream,
and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green,
and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit.”*

Do the “statistics” of your evangelism efforts ever discourage you? How many people did I share my faith with this week? How many of those people wanted to hear more? And how many of those people prayed a prayer with me at the end? As someone who had a career in sales, this doesn’t look very different from my old performance meetings with my bosses!

Evangelism is decisively different than that though. And this is where our passage in Jeremiah is so helpful. The image we have here is the very heart and posture of a man equipped to evangelize. He does not trust in himself, rather his trust is in the Lord. In fact, his trust *is* the Lord! He is so rooted in his union with Christ that no matter what circumstances surround him, he remains healthy and vibrant.

The discipline behind evangelism is found not in a statistical chart akin to a sales plan. Rather, it is found in the discipline of being rooted in the Lord in all seasons and all circumstances. The Lord opens doors for us to share our faith and to testify to the

Risen Savior, Jesus Christ. Of course, we must open our mouths when those doors are opened – but when we are rooted in Christ, we are ready and prepared to give an account in those times.

So if you struggle to evangelize and share your faith, it's probably not because of an insufficient strategy, which might require a sales-type discipline. The call to evangelism is actually a gracious call from the Lord to seek to be one who is so connected with Christ that the world cannot help but see your faith and be interested to hear where your strong root comes from.

May we, today, all pray for the Lord to mold us into this type of person. And from there – to provide us doors to give a witness to where our trust is found. Indeed, our trust is in the Lord, and our trust *is* the Lord. May we as a denomination seek to live this out!

September 23
Rev. David Vance
Mark 1:17

Jesus said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men."

What an unlikely group was made to be the ambassadors of the Son of God and to represent him to the world—some fishermen, a tax collector, a zealot. Had Jesus not called them that day on the lakeshore, we would never have heard of any of them. Let it sink in: *ours is a religion propagated by fishermen.*

The Bible makes no attempt whatsoever to hide from us how very ordinary these twelve men were in every way, thick-skulled, thin-skinned, and slow to believe. But the fact that the Son of God chose *them* and used *them* in such a magnificent way is very good news for us. We are very ordinary people, but we likewise have received the great call to follow the Lord and share in his great work.

Whenever God uses the weak things of this world to confound the strong, then to him is all the praise and glory. We may carry this treasure in earthen vessels, *but carry it we do*. So let us follow the Lord with His same passion to seek and save the lost. As Chrysostom said long ago, "Nothing is more frigid than a Christian, who cares not for the salvation of others."

"Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles," Homily XX. In *John Chrysostom. Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistle to the Romans*. Translated by J. B. Morris and W. H. Simcox. NPNF 1.11. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1889.

September 24
Dr. Alan Avera, D.Min.
Luke 7:9

When Jesus heard these things, he marveled at him, and turning to the crowd that followed him, said, "I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith."

While Jesus seldom strayed from the areas of Judea or Galilee, his impact wasn't limited to the narrow geography where he spent his earthly life. Jesus was good at noticing people, and he could see things that others would miss. As an example, in the Roman Centurion Jesus saw a man who had more faith than many who regarded themselves as God's chosen people. "I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith." The centurion is only one example. Even in a sinful Samaritan woman, Jesus saw not only the future believer he was about to make her, but he also saw a future evangelist (John 4:39). And he was willing to listen to the plea of a Syrophenician woman, even though she was a foreigner (Mark 7:24-30).

Today I call you to open your eyes to notice how God is making it possible for us to join evangelism with missions right here in North America. In a recent blog post, I used a video from the North Carolina Baptist Association that shows that many of the least reached places and people groups are here in North America. Maybe it's time to adopt a model of missions that no longer makes a distinction between domestic and foreign. As we notice people and share the gospel, we may find that our impact goes far beyond the narrow geography where we currently live.

To view the blogpost, use this link:

<https://tellingthegospel.wordpress.com/2017/08/28/did-you-know-the-great-commission-has-no-geographic-boundaries/>

September 25
Rev. Wayne Frazier
II Corinthians 3:2-3

"You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all. And you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tables of stone but on tablets of human hearts."

The sun lights up the iridescent green of a hummingbird. In the same way we are to reflect God's radiant glory. But on August 21, the sun was eclipsed by the moon in a path across the United States. The glory of the sun was darkened. That's what happens when we keep silent about the gospel.

Our purpose or “chief end” is to glorify God and enjoy him forever. Our lives and our churches are meant to reflect the glory, significance, or weightiness of God, our Creator and Rescuer. Telling God’s story of rescue, evangelism, is one way we reflect God’s glory. Our lives are “letters” that reflect the beauty of the Jesus’ story as those rescued from darkness.

What ways does your life reflect God’s glory? How do you reach out to those around you or make connections: call a waiter by name; look the grocery cashier in the eye; get to know the man who repairs your car; speak to neighbor when you walk; host a neighborhood block party? Recently a neighbor I have known for years mentioned eating lunch together. We did just that. His wife has died. He wanted to talk. He talked about how he has lost his faith and asked me to read a book that was a part of his journey. Now we are exchanging books and continuing our friendship and conversation.

Glory, reflecting the beauty of Christ in very small and large ways should be a way of life. This brings joy to our Father’s heart! And our neighbors may see for the first time what they were made for-- the Glory of God!

September 26
Rev. John Tucker
Romans 5:6-9

For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.

The Blues Brothers were on a mission from God. In the 1980’s film, *The Blues Brothers* “Joliet” Jake has just been released from the infamous Joliet prison and with his brother Elwood return back to the orphanage where they were raised. After talking with sister Mary they discover that the home will close if \$5,000 cannot be raised to pay back taxes. They accomplished their mission in many questionable, illegal and certainly despicable ways. Warning: This is not an endorsement of their methods.

The Church is on a mission from God to reach our communities with the gospel, but we cannot follow our own instincts, contemporary wisdom or expediency. The ministry of the Church and missionary outreach has fallen on hard times. One alarming cause is changing biblical beliefs that were the life breath of mission. Our text states three great doctrines that clarify and motivate God’s people to mission. The first is that people stand guilty before a holy God. He says in verse 6 that Christ did not die for righteous people but sinners who were alienated and antagonistic to God. The second is the great doctrine of justification by faith alone. The human problem of a lack of righteousness is solved only by the righteousness of Christ. The third is the wrath of God. We are saved

not just from ourselves, or our problems but from the wrath of God, which was poured out on Christ. Hell is real.

The doctrines of the Bible define how we fulfill God's mission. As the great missionary said, "God's mission, done God's way produces God's blessing.

September 27

Rev. Howard Wheeler

Nehemiah 2:18, 3:23, 4:6

And they said, "Let us rise up and build..." Benjamin and Hasshub repaired opposite their house. After them Azariah... repaired beside his own house. So we built the wall. And all the wall was joined together to half its height, for the people had a mind to work.

Alexander Maclaren, commenting on this, observed:

"We are ... tempted in the face of large challenges, to look for heroic and large remedies, and to invoke corporate action, which is easier for most of us than the personal effort that is required. Somebody should do something! Government should do something. This or that aggregate of men should do something. And the individual calmly and comfortably slips his neck out of the collar and leaves it on the shoulders of abstractions."

These words form a ringing indictment of our hesitancy to accept personal responsibility for evangelism.

The Kingdom of Heaven is like leaven....and every little bit of the dough as it received into itself the leaven and was transformed became a medium for transmitting the transformation to the next particle beyond it. All can preach who can say, 'We have found the Christ.'

Nehemiah gives a compelling picture of this. As the men of Jerusalem rebuild the wall, they do not seek bids from local contractors or short-term mission teams from Babylon. Each man accepts responsibility for the wall "beside his own house." Pastors and churches are to equip, but it is every Christian's commission to make disciples "as you go." All must preach who can say, "We have found the Christ."

Evangelism overflows from abiding in Christ. Like iron beside a magnet, abiding in him you become magnetic and draw men to Christ. How attractive is Christ in you? Are you repairing broken walls in your home, neighborhood and spheres of influence? Let me commend to you the pattern of Benjamin, Hasshub and Azariah who repaired, every one, beside his own house.

September 28
Rev. Ken Kunkel
Matthew 5:16

In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

Do you know that you are under constant surveillance? If you claim to follow Christ, be prepared because the world around you is watching. All of your actions, words, and responses are all being closely monitored.

The world wants to see if you're genuine in your faith or are you just another hypocrite. When you fall into sin they relish it because they can then justify their own. But more importantly the world wants to know if what you claim to believe is true. As Christians we claim hope for the here and now as well as the eternal. The world doesn't have that hope and they want to know if it's real.

The logical question then is what steps have you taken to protect your witness? It's often the little things in life that bear the greatest witness. It's your response to a crisis, how you honor your spouse when they're not around, the speech that comes forth from your lips, these are the things that can have a lasting impact on those around us. But none of these come natural to us. It takes a commitment to reading God's Word daily, living a life of prayer, and daily repentance and reliance upon the Spirit. But when our daily walk exemplifies Christ those around us see it and want to know more and then we are given opportunities to declare to them the good news of the gospel.