

EVANGELISM ON PURPOSE

This is our second sermon in our series called “On Purpose.”

We can choose from two options:

- If we aim for nothing we will probably hit it every time with an amazing amount of accuracy.
- If we shoot for the moon – even if we miss our target we will be among the stars.

Last week we introduced the idea of being God’s Church on purpose – instead of just letting things happen, we want to put forth some effort that will encourage growth in God’s church.

As I mentioned last Sunday – when Jesus Christ was born into the world He had a purpose – to save His people – us – from our sins.

As we commence stepping forward I believe we must put first things first.

Our main purpose is to lead people into a saved relationship with Jesus Christ.

Our main purpose is to evangelize the lost.

This morning’s Scripture was only 4 verses long but tells us a lot.

Paul had spent about 8 years on his first 2 missionary journeys. During that time he travelled from city to city preaching the gospel and starting churches. However, it wasn’t easy as he faced a lot of opposition.

He had been flogged with whips, beaten with rods and even stoned, all because he longed to share the saving grace of Jesus Christ with the world.

But this did not deter Paul because he embarked on his 3rd missionary journey to the city of Ephesus.

Ephesus was not a town where most Christians would want to settle – it was a little bit on the wild side. It was a happening place. It was a financial and commercial centre and there was a lot of money that went through the city.

It was home to one of the 7 wonders of the ancient world – the temple that was dedicated for the worship of the goddess Diana – the goddess of fertility.

How do you worship a goddess of fertility – through immoral practices. The temple was full of immorality and legalized prostitution.

The people believed in magic and were very superstitious. They were constantly looking for soothsayers and fortune tellers to guide their lives. It was a very wicked city.

There are two kinds of people in the world – pessimists who see a problem in every opportunity and optimists who see an opportunity in every problem.

Paul looked at all of the problems in the city – he saw the thousands of people who were lost and decided that there was a real opportunity there.

There were so many people who needed to hear about Jesus; so many lives that needed to be changed; so many people who needed to hear the Gospel message and Paul was determined to turn that city upside down for Jesus.

But he also saw another opportunity.

While many people profess to be Christians today there are still many who have never accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour – who are still lost.

Jesus said in John 4:35 – Open your eyes and look at the fields – they are ripe for harvest.

Beating people over the head with a Bible will not usually get you very far in winning someone to God's side but there will be opportunities to share – opportunities will come.

We just have to look for them!

Paul not only saw the open door, but he felt obligated to walk through it himself.

As Paul said in verse 9 – a great door has opened to me.

Now note that he didn't say a great door has opened to Timothy or Barnabas or anyone else.

Paul felt a personal responsibility to stay and preach the Word of God to them.

As Christians we need to take a personal responsibility for the ministry of this church.

And this door that has been opened – has been opened up to all of us, not just me as the Minister.

I want us all to understand that we have an obligation to share Jesus?

Now I know that this idea might scare some of you – you may say I am not gifted in this area of evangelism as others are, however you still have influence in the lives of people around you.

Let me ask you this – if one of your children or grandchildren, young niece or nephew were about to run out in front of a speeding car that has just come around the corner what would you do?

I suspect all of us would say – I would run out and protect them. You see, we all would do everything we could to protect them from harm.

People without Jesus Christ are lost – bound for an eternal hell.

There is a great old song by Benny Hester – how in the world will they ever know if we don't tell them.

Now you may come up against a Door of Opposition.

Paul said – there are many who oppose me.

There are always going to be people who oppose the advancement of the gospel.

One such person for Paul was a silversmith called Demetrius who didn't like Paul one bit.

Why? Because he made silver idols and sold them which had become quite a lucrative business.

When people started turning to Christ, they stopped buying his idols.

I can tell you, as Minister at this church I have come up against a few Doors of Opposition but you know what – these have not come from new people seeking Christ, they have come from people that have sat in this chapel.

And sadly, their messages of opposition to me have been quite upsetting.

However, as Paul says – we need to expect that.

So let's get back to where we started – Our purpose.

Is our purpose to be a social club?

Is our purpose to be a Neighbourhood house?

Or is our purpose to reach the lost?

How would Jesus answer that?

Sometimes a church will start to grow and changes are made and people become uncomfortable. For us to grow we have to embrace change.

This is not our church it is God's Church.

I hope that God blesses us so much this year and sends us so many new people that we will realize that this is not our church, but that it is the church of Jesus Christ.

So how do you share your faith?

Firstly, realize that people without Christ are lost. We can be blunt with this and say that people who have never made a commitment to Jesus Christ will spend their eternal lives in hell – away from a loving God.

Until we realise this, we will never be motivated to do anything about it.

If we simply believe that everyone is going to heaven – that all you have to do is be good – then we won't be motivated to encourage anyone to change.

We need to pray for opportunities; look for the open doors.

There are times when people are open to hearing about Jesus; every situation is different.

We need to be prepared.

In 1 Peter 3:15 we read: but in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.

Since we are wanting to be a church that is doing things on purpose, I am offering to spend some time in small groups to help you how to share your faith.

We will explore how you can be an instrument of God.

We will explore how to be a witness – a positive example.

We will proactively invite people to come and see.

Effort takes work. We need to be persistent and never give up.

Some of you who are Christians today because someone invited you, someone was not willing to give up on you.

Yes, some will reject Christ – that is their choice but very sad when we know their destiny to be in eternity without God.

Colossians 4:3 says: pray that God would open doors and windows and minds and eyes and hearts for the words so we can go on telling the mystery of the Anointed, for this is exactly why I am currently imprisoned.

Verse 5 says: be wise when you engage with those outside of the faith community; make the most of every moment and every encounter. When you speak the word, speak it gracefully so you will know how to respond to everyone rightly.