

“Becoming a Contagious Christian”

Date: April 3, 2011

Place: Lakewood UMC

Text: Romans 10:8-15; John 4:34-38 Theme: witnessing, faith sharing

Occasion: Introduce *Becoming a Contagious Christian* series

Last week we were inspired by the woman at the well, who had a life-changing encounter with the man, Jesus. As a result of her experience of the man “who told me everything I ever did,” she raced back to town to tell others. **She** was one of the first evangelists. She is an example to all of the rest of us. Because we are all expected to share our faith.

Romans 10:14 says, “How can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?” How easy it would be to say, “Well, that’s the job of the preacher. He’s supposed to convert the unbeliever.” But its not the sole responsibility of the person in the pulpit.

We are all called to share our faith. It is all of our responsibility to tell others the good news of Jesus Christ. Just like the woman at the well.

“But preacher,” you may say, “you don’t understand. I haven’t been to seminary. I haven’t been trained. I’m not sure what I’m supposed to say. I’m afraid that I may hurt my friends feelings by talking about religion too much. And what if they ask questions that I can’t answer? And what if we get into an argument? I’d really prefer to let somebody else do this “faith-sharing thing” that you’re talking about.

Believe me, friends, I understand. I’ve said all of those things myself. But no matter how often I argue with God, that he should find someone else to do this thing called “witnessing,” God keeps saying to me - “No, I want you to do it. I need you. I need you to tell your story. No one else can tell your story, but you.”

And you know what? I believe that God is saying *that* to each one of us. God

hears our excuses and tells us, “Don’t worry. I’ll be with you. Remember, I need you!”

Wow! Imagine that. God needs us. God needs us to share the good news of God’s love, revealed in Jesus. That kind of blows me away to think that God needs you and me.

Now, if we read on in Paul’s letter to the Romans, 10:15, it says, “How can they preach unless they are sent?” I would add to that phrase, “and how can they be sent, unless they are trained? I believe that an essential part of being sent out into the world to share our faith, is to be trained. It’s not fair to ask somebody to do a job, without training that person how to do it.

Now, it is true that some people have a God-given gift for evangelism. It just comes naturally to them. It’s their gift. The words come easily. They’re not afraid to speak out. They speak with enthusiasm and conviction. It seems to be easy for them. But for most of us, it is not so easy.

We have fears to overcome. We struggle in our minds with what to say. And we’re not even sure that want to do this. When we sit in church we *might* feel convinced that all of us are meant to share our faith in Christ. But walk out that door, and most of us completely forget about telling anyone else about our faith in Jesus.

In two weeks I plan to lead a new study group called *Becoming a Contagious Christian*. It’s a short, six-week course, designed to help the average person in the pew to become comfortable talking about their faith. I’m hoping that we have a good turn-out. The sign-up sheet is in the narthex. I’m hoping that there is such a demand for this class that I’ll have to teach it again, and maybe again, I hope.

This morning, though, I simply want to talk about our motivation for sharing

our faith. Why should we put ourselves in this uncomfortable position of trying to talk to other people about religion. Why should we push ourselves to get out of our comfort zones and talk to someone else about our faith in the Lord? I have three good reasons.

The first reason is: we have been blessed. The woman at the well was accepted unconditionally by Jesus. She had never been treated with that kind of love and dignity before in her life. She had to go tell someone. You and I, friends, have been blessed in so many ways. Our faith, our salvation, our church, answered prayers, our relationship with God. Our blessings just overflow. Our cups runneth over.

When mature Christians have a proper understanding of their spiritual inheritance, they can't stop themselves from spilling over into other people's lives. When you realize all that God has done for you in Jesus Christ, you can't help but want to tell others about it.

One of the most effective ways to develop a contagious faith, is to stay mindful of what Christ has done for us. To remember the character of the God whom we worship. And don't forget the magnitude of the miracle, of how God has transformed strangers, and converted them into sons and daughters of God.

So, one of the best forms of motivation is for you to have a sense of wonder and gratitude for all that God has done for you. Please, dear friends, protect your spiritual inheritance. Work on it. Preserve it all cost. And remember to be grateful to God for all that He has done for you.

The second motivation for developing a contagious faith, is the honor of being an agent of God. This comes out of the passage in Acts 1:8, where Jesus said, just before his ascension into Heaven: "You will receive power when the Holy

Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

As witnesses for God, we are God’s *Plan A* for his strategy for reaching the world. He chooses people like you and me to be His spokes-people. And God doesn’t have a *Plan B*. You and I are *Plan A*, and there is no *Plan B*. God is counting on you and me to spread the faith of Jesus Christ.

God has chosen to use your unique personality, *your* gifts, *your* talents, *your* personal life story - to reach the people who matter the most to God, the people who are lost and have not yet found God’s love. God needs agents like you, to be out there in the marketplace to reach lost souls.

I find that to be very motivating, because someday I want to stand before the Lord and hear Him say to me, “Well done, good and faithful servant of mine. I had people who desperately needed you. They needed your story to touch their heart. They needed your personality, your witness. They needed your age factor, your sense of humor, they needed you. I needed you. I filled you with my Holy Spirit and I commissioned you to be my spokesperson, and you were faithful. Well done.”

The third and final reason that I’ll share with you this morning is this: the reward of leading somebody to Christ. I guess all I want to say about this point is this: just *one* time, have *one* person look you in the eye and say, “You know, I was headed in the wrong direction. I was lost and God used you to bring me to himself.”

Just have somebody say, “You know, I needed a credible witness. I needed someone whose life matched his message, you were that person. Thank you. Thank you for being contagious with your faith. Thank you for reaching out to me. Thank you for helping to answer my questions. Thanks for putting up with my cynicism.

Thanks for loving me at a time in my life when I wasn't very lovable. Jesus saved me, but you led me to the cross where I found his grace."

I hope that everyone here has that opportunity, one time in their life. Why develop a contagious faith? Why share Christ with others? 1. Because we've been blessed. It's our joy to share the blessing. 2. What an honor it is to be an agent for God, and to have the Lord use us. 3. The reward of leading another person to faith in Jesus Christ. I hope you'll all begin to think about becoming a Contagious Christian. Amen?