

Luke 10:1-11
The Five Faces of Jesus: evangelists
Sunday September 4th, 2016

How many of you are golfers? How many know a golfer? Here is a fun way of thinking about evangelism as invitation.

ROLL “Awkward Invites: Golf Buddies”

Did you know that 80% of the people who join church do so because of the invitation and their connection with a member of the church? And that only about 20% join a church because of the pastor?

And the amazing thing is that studies show that 80% of people in America would respond to a friend’s invitation to church. And *“over 90% of new church members said they attended church the first time because a friend invited them.”* SundayResources.net 11/12/12

Today is the 4th in the series of the “Five Faces of Jesus”. The 5 faces of Jesus are the 5 ways that we see Jesus expressing his ministry while here on earth. These are also the 5 ways that Jesus continues his ministry here on earth through us, his followers.

The purpose for each having different gifts is that we truly can’t be all things to all people and we need all of the gifts of every person to be a healthy church, to be able to build up the body of Christ. Today I am talking about the gift of being an evangelist.

Now as you know Jesus was the premier Evangelist. His entire message is summarized in Mark 1:15, **“The time has come,” he said, “The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news.”**

All throughout the Gospels we see Jesus sharing the Good News in word and deed. Jesus embodied the Good News. Jesus was the Good News. In fact, wherever Jesus was the Kingdom of God was present. The face of Jesus as The Evangelist is how the “12”, the “70 others”, and “the crowds” experienced Jesus.

Evangelists today carry on Jesus' ministry of evangelism. An evangelist is *“one who brings good news and shares the message readily.”*

Evangelists love spending time with non-Christians and often remind other Christians that there are non- (or pre) Christians still out there in the world. They are not all like Billy Graham or John Wesley; they may be “people gatherers”. Evangelists know the Word and can make it relevant to non-Christians.”

Yes, many think to be an evangelist you have to be a Billy Graham or John Wesley. No, you simply have to be one thirsty person showing another thirsty person how to drink from the living water of Jesus Christ. In fact on a questioner as to what type of evangelist you are, most of us would simply mark the category, “other” as in the **“70 others”** in our scripture today.

Now some of us have met highly gifted evangelists. I know a man called Coach Heath. He has lead 1000s of people to Jesus Christ. He is a retired high school basketball coach. If you talked with him for 2 minutes he would bring up Jesus in the most natural and non-threatening manner. He is gifted beyond measure. I have only met one person like him in 35 years of ministry. Now for the rest of us we fit in the “other” not as successful category, which I will get too.

“Mature evangelists enjoy discussion and sharing their point of view.

*Wherever they go they seem to draw others into a discussion about Jesus. They are passionate about sharing the Gospel. They are not timid about their faith and seem to easily share with others. Their core question in life is: **Are people entering the Kingdom of God?”***

“Everyday examples of evangelists are salesmen, politicians, public relations reps etc.” They are people who want to tell you about the latest greatest restaurant, movie, shoes, phone or computer.

Now here is where we have all been burned and why to some the word “evangelist” and “evangelism” have such a negative connotation and that is immature evangelists.

Immature evangelists present a reductionist Gospel that’s all about getting people out of hell and into heaven. That is important, **but it doesn’t include Jesus’ invitation to discipleship and the availability of the Kingdom of God right now.** That was Jesus’ main and central message entering the Kingdom of God even while here on earth summarized in Mark 1:15. And in the Lord’s Prayer, **“Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”**

Immature evangelists make it all about what happens when we die and nothing much about what happens here on earth and what we need to do here on earth. It is terribly destructive. They tend to catch a fish for God and throw it up on the bank where it rots. It’s the 4 or 14 laws and then they move on with no attempt at relationship or discipleship.

Being a disciple of Jesus is about relationships and immature evangelists can make a bad first impression when it comes to Christians and relationships. So today, I am going to present a model for evangelism as a team sport that begins and continues always in terms of relationships. Not the fearful, on your own, telling a person if they don’t know Jesus they are going to hell. I am going to present a model based on relationship that is indeed a team/community sport.

In the world today many have turned negative towards organized religion and many of you have experienced that. The reality is that it is very hard to invite people into “religious space” like sanctuaries and worship services. This is especially so for younger people who have no personal experience with Christians, except for the caricatures that they see on TV and at the movies, and some of them experiences with immature evangelists. It is hard to believe but about only 4% of those 35 and younger go to church and for children and youth it is about 1 1/2%.

Can you imagine how challenging it would be to be our new Pastoral Assistant facing those statistics having to do invitation and discipleship on her own? No, today we need a team/community all church approach.

And there is a difference between “religious” and “spiritual” space that I believe we can use very naturally to bring people into the Kingdom of God. Spiritual space is where two or three are gathered together who are Christians.

Where two or three are gathered Jesus is present through the Holy Spirit. And two or three of us will gather today and throughout this week in restaurants, stores, clubs, groups etc. etc.

Spiritual space can be a variety of social settings where relationships can be built to draw people into a relationship with Jesus Christ. Spiritual space can be BBQS, swim parties, hikes, golfing, lunch, dinner, bowling, etc. It is spiritual space when the 4 fs are present, “**Fun, food, fellowship and faith**”.

We may think that evangelism is for only Jesus or the 12 or the Billy Grahams. How about the “others”; the “**70 others**” who were never named? They were just called “others”. I would be content with that. How about you? All of us are gifted in all of the 5 areas it’s only a matter of degree including evangelism. And we can have the gift and not use it. I am encouraging people to use it in the following manner.

I am proposing evangelism as a team sport like Jesus did it. He sent people out by 2s or 12s or communities of 70. We witness individually by our lives and our words, but to do effective evangelism today, **we need to do it as a team sport inviting people into an extended family of faith.** If you have ever attended our Game Night, or potlucks you know what I am talking about.

What I am proposing is to do church and evangelism like the early church did. The 12 often went out on their own to start new churches, but they were never, for more than a moment, doing that on their own.

Church communities rapidly gathered around them and it was the church community as a whole, **living in love with one another**, which drew the people in.

Sunday mornings many of you eagerly gather early and talk and talk and talk and fellowship with everyone around. It is a beautiful thing to see and to hear. It's attractive. It makes our visitors want to belong. It is deeply spiritual.

Most of the Apostles went out in groups or twos like Paul and Barnabus. But again they were never in just pairs for long. They were people gatherers and it was begun one on one, a person at a time.

To fight the idea that evangelists only preach to hundreds and thousands I picked the picture for the face of Jesus as Evangelist as Jesus sitting talking with the woman at the well one to one.



Through Jesus' need for a drink of water he began to establish a relationship with this one woman. This woman was a person of peace to Jesus. Jesus formed a relationship with her one to one and then she invited people she knew to meet Jesus. They came, heard, believed on their own and formed a community of believers commonly called a church. The key concept here is **People of Peace**.

We need to be looking for **"People of Peace"** to invite them in. Luke 10:1-11 shows how Jesus formed the early church community by looking for 'persons of peace' to draw them into the Kingdom. Luke 10:5-6 says, **"When you enter a house, first say, 'Peace to this house.' If a PERSON OF PEACE is there, your peace will rest on them; if not, it will return to you."**

A person of peace is a man or woman whom the Spirit of God has prepared their heart to be open to the Good News of Jesus Christ. They

will be open to your invitation to respond on the most elemental level to a social invitation, to spiritual space. And eventually, if you know how to disciple someone, you can invite them to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

A person of peace: Likes you,
Welcomes you
Serves you
Receives you

And for evangelism's sake eventually opens up to you a network of relationships to you that you can also invite in, which we see in the story of the woman at the well.

This is a highly relational way of making disciples and it will work in today's world where many will not go into 'religious space,' but will accept an invitation to 'spiritual space' because as you know when you invite people to worship or church you often hear, "I am spiritual, but not religious."

When we invite people into our spiritual space they will see the love of God in action between us and that eventually is the door that they will open to find Jesus.

I was going to tackle this concept of the role of Evangelist in just one week but I would need 30 to 45 minutes to do so. So instead this week I will close with another video of a person of peace crying out to be invited in. Next week I will continue this topic.

ROLL "INVITE ME IN"

The Holy Spirit will bring People of Peace into your life. Be open to the whisper of the Holy Spirit to recognize them.

What is God saying to you? What are you going to do?
In Jesus Name, Amen!!!!

