

Daily Devotional Guide

Monday – Today read Matthew 28:16-20. This text from Matthew is called The Great Commission. It is Matthew's account of Jesus' last words to his disciples. We put a great amount of emphasis on people's last words. Well, these are Jesus' last words in Matthew, so it would be a good idea to pay attention. Jesus' last words do not contain some theological discourse; they are a charge to DO something. Jesus calls us to "make disciples." We are called to share our faith in Christ with others and guide them to also be followers of Christ. Compare Matthew's account with Mark and Luke: Mark 16:14-15 and Luke 24:36-49. How are they similar? How are they different?

Tuesday – Today read John 14:12-14. Jesus makes a remarkable statement to his disciples about what they will do when he returns to the Father. He says they will do greater works than him! Wow! How is that possible? It is all about the power of the Holy Spirit. Later in the 14th chapter Jesus goes on to talk about the promise of the Holy Spirit (verses 25 and 26). Today, the church is able to do greater works than Jesus because his Spirit dwells within each of his followers and therefore his influence multiplies. You will notice in Matthew, Mark, and Luke Jesus promises to be with his followers as they witness to the world. Jesus is with us through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Wednesday – Read Acts 1:1-11. The book of Acts is the second volume to the book of Luke, which tells of how the power of the Holy Spirit inaugurated the church and how that same power enabled them to make disciples. In the first chapter we see Jesus speaking of the power of the Holy Spirit that will give them strength to be his witnesses. What does it mean to be a witness? Would you say you are a witness to the love of Jesus Christ by the way you live your life and the way you speak to others?

Thursday – Read Acts 1:37-42. This is the tail end to the Pentecost story in Acts. After the fire of the Holy Spirit had penetrated the church and enabled everyone to hear the good news in their own language, Peter got up to preach. The result was 3,000 people giving their lives to Jesus Christ and being added to the church. What a day that must have been! The same Spirit that was available to the early church to share the good news is available to us. Are we yielding to that Spirit?

Friday – Read Matthew 4:18-22. Jesus called average fishermen to be his disciples and to be "fishers of men." This small group of simple men changed the world! What does that say about our ability to make a difference? How are you doing with our small step of "witness?" Have you invited anyone to worship? Whenever you doubt your ability to be a witness, remember the average fishermen who changed the world. How? They were given "sharing power" through the Holy Spirit. So are you!



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~ Fully Charged! ~ Sharing Power

Sunday, February 20, 2011

Sermon by: Dr. Charley Reeb, Senior Pastor

Scripture Lesson: John 14: 12

You will not find this story in the Bible, but one day Moses, Jesus and another guy were playing golf together. They came to a tee box with a big water hazard in front of it. Moses took out his new fangled driver, teed up his ball, and hooked his ball into the water. Jesus teed up his ball and also hooked his ball into the water. The other guy took out his driver, teed up his ball, and made a beautiful swing. But just as he hit the ball a big gust of wind came up and blew his ball into the water.

All three men walked to the water hazard. Moses took out his seven iron, struck the water with it and the water parted. He hit his ball right back into the fairway. Jesus took out his five iron and began to walk on the water. His ball came to the surface of the water and he hit a beautiful shot that landed in the middle of the green. The other guy just stood there and watched as an eagle came down and grabbed his ball out of the water. The eagle then flew to the green and dropped the ball right into the hole. Moses turned to Jesus and said, "This is the last time we play with your dad!"

The moral of that story is that God is all powerful. God can do amazing things. All we have to do is read through scripture to see God's powerful acts. Indeed, God gave Moses the power to part the waters. God gave Jesus the power to walk on water. When you read through the gospels you see God empowering Jesus to do incredible acts of ministry.

When you consider God's acts of power in the Bible and, specifically, God's acts of power

through Jesus, it makes our text for today that more astounding. Did you catch what Jesus said? "You will do greater works than me because I am going to the Father" (John 14:12). How is it possible that we can do greater works than Jesus? Well, Jesus has always been. In the first chapter of John we read, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." But when Jesus was on earth in human form his influence was limited. He could only heal one person at a time and teach to groups at a time. But when Jesus went back to the Father, his Holy Spirit came to live in each of his followers. In this way, Jesus' influence is multiplied through us and we can reach the whole world together!

This is what Jesus means by doing greater works than him. We have been given "sharing power" through the Holy Spirit. I don't know what you think being a Christian is, but, to me, being a Christian means being the hands of Christ in this world, the feet of Christ in this world, the arms of Christ in this world, the heart of Christ in this world, and the mind of Christ in this world.

Jesus not only spoke about this sharing power in John, but he makes reference to it in all three synoptic gospels – Matthew, Mark, and Luke. We give a lot of credence to last words. We believe what people say before they leave the earth is important. Have you ever paid attention to Jesus' last words to his disciples before he leaves the earth? In Matthew 28:16-20 Jesus' last words to his disciples are "Go and make disciples..." In Mark 16:14, Jesus' last words are "Go into all the

world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation.” In Luke 24, Jesus’ last words are “Repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed to all the nations...stay here...until you have been clothed with power from on high.”

It came to pass on the day of Pentecost when the disciples received that promised power and they shared it. Tongues of fire appeared and everyone heard the good news in their own language. Peter got up to preach and 3,000 people were added to the church that day.

We have also been given that sharing power. But here is the key to sharing power. We must SHARE the power. When Jesus said, “Go and make disciples...” he was giving the Great Commission. It was not the Great Suggestion or the Great Option. It was the Great Commission. It is a mandate from Jesus Christ. Jesus made no distinction between his followers and his witnesses. Discipleship and evangelism cannot be separated. A faith worth having is a faith worth sharing.

This is the rub of the faith, isn’t it? It is easy to come to worship and Bible study. It is even easy to serve the church in some way. But sharing our faith? That is another matter. Many want to leave that job to someone else.

A while back Brandy and I were having dinner with some friends at a new restaurant. The food and service were fantastic, but there were not many people at the restaurant. A friend of mine spoke up and said, “We have got to tell more people about this place. It is great and nobody is here. It would be a shame if they went out of business.”

Well, I am a preacher and I am always thinking. How quick we are to share something good. We will tell everyone about a good restaurant or a good book. When we see a good movie we will tell the whole world to go see it. When we find a good deal somewhere we will sky write it. Yet, when it comes to sharing the greatest news in the universe, mum is the word for many Christians. If you were on trial for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?

I love the story found in the first chapter of Acts. Jesus is ascending into heaven and Jesus’ followers are looking up in awe. As Jesus is ascending he is telling his followers to “go and be

witnesses...” And his followers just keep looking up. When Jesus disappears, two men appear and basically say, “Stop looking up into heaven. Did you hear what Jesus said? Go and be witnesses!”

I know many Christians who are looking up instead of looking out. Jesus is telling us today, “Stop looking up; look out! I’m out there, waiting on you to help me change people with my love. Be my witnesses.”

The United Methodist Church has finally embraced this idea. For so long we have asked people who joined our church to vow to support the church with their “prayers, presence, gifts, and service.” Recently, the UMC has told us to add “witness” to these vows. Amen! Over the years, many have wondered why the UMC has been declining. It does not take a rocket scientist to figure it out. For too long, we have been looking up instead of looking out!

Perhaps, you are thinking, “Yeah, Charley, but sharing faith is so personal.” You bet it is. The consequences of sin are personal. Living with no hope is personal. Living life with no meaning or purpose is personal. It is a personal tragedy. We have been given the power to transform people. We have the source of hope and strength. Will we share it? If you found the cure for cancer, would you keep it to yourself? Of course not! But we have something better than the cure to cancer. For if cancer does not kill you, something else will. Yet, we have the key to everlasting life, and are we going to keep that to ourselves?

I know that the word “witness” conjures up many negative images. I know that many people have given the word “witness” a bad name. We think of people passing out tracks, holding up signs, grabbing people by the lapels and screaming about Jesus. Now, I am not against passing out tracks, going door to door, and holding up signs as long as these things are done in love and gentleness. Unfortunately, it is not always done with love and gentleness.

Witnessing is a lot more pedestrian than we realize. It flows from the ordinariness of life. Being a witness simply means telling those who wonder why we live our lives the way we do, why we do the things we do and say the things we say. 1st Peter 3:15 says it well: “Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from

you an accounting for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and reverence.” It is so simple. When you are filled with the hope of Christ, people will want to know about it. We live in a world filled with hopeless people and so when many see others with hope, they are drawn to them. When we are living out the love of Christ, we will not need to seek out people to share our faith with. They will seek us out!

Sara Kaplan, a member of our church, told me recently that she was in Publix the other day to pick up a prescription. She goes in there a lot and has gotten to know the pharmacist real well. Well, on this day the pharmacist asked her why she is so happy all the time. He said, “Every time you are in here you are so happy. Why?” And Sara thought for a moment and said, “It is because of my relationship with God. It makes all the difference.” Right there in line at the pharmacy there was an opportunity to witness. “Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you.” There are so many out there who want to know and need to know why you have hope.

Take a few minutes today and write down 5 people you know that you have reason to believe don’t have a relationship with God in Jesus Christ and/or don’t have a church home. Pray for them and then invite them to worship. If you are having trouble listing five, use the power of F.R.A.N. Think of Friends, Relatives, Acquaintances, and Neighbors.

Now, I’m going to answer a question that is on many of your minds. How do you lead someone to Jesus Christ? It is like the dog that finally catches the car. What does he do with it? If a friend approached you and said that they were impressed with your love for Jesus and others and wanted to know Jesus personally too, would you know how to lead them to Christ? It is very simple. Just remember three words: Repent, Relinquish, Receive. Ask them if they are ready to repent, which means to turn their lives around. Ask them if they are ready to relinquish their lives to Jesus, to give their lives to Jesus for his purposes. Then ask them if they are ready to receive and accept the forgiveness of their sins and the power of the Holy Spirit. If they are, then simply ask them to pray with you a prayer that includes a willingness to do those things above.

Once they have done that, tell them that Jesus now lives in their hearts and they need to find a community of faith with other believers where they can grow in their faith. If they have never been baptized then they need to be baptized. That’s it! That is all you need to know. Jesus said, “The harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few (Matthew 5).”

So, what is our motivation? Our motivation is found in that last chapter of John. Jesus is eating breakfast with Peter and Jesus asks him, “Peter, do you love me?” Peter, somewhat surprised by the question, replies, “Of course, I love you, Lord.” Jesus says, “Then feed my sheep.” Jesus asks Peter this question a second and a third time and his response is always the same, “Feed my sheep.” If we love Jesus, then we will feed his sheep. Do you love Jesus? For goodness sake, don’t keep it to yourself. Share the love and the power. Can I get a witness? Amen.