

Evangelism Series: You Shall Be My Witnesses

The Local Church and Evangelism

I. Introduction

- a. The concept and meaning of the church
- b. The culture of the church should be defined by the gospel of Christ

II. The fundamental calling of the church is to manifest Christ to the world

A. As God's _____, we manifest God's _____ on the earth (Eph. 2:19-22)

- 1) The "Household" of God
- 2) The "place" of God's power and glory
- 3) The "visible manifestation" of the invisible God
- 4) The place of corporate praise and worship

B. As Christ's _____, we demonstrate Christ's _____ to the earth

- 1) The extension or demonstration of the person of Christ, our glorious Head
- 2) The extension or demonstration of the work of Christ, our glorious Gospel
 - The growth of the "body" is only possible in its vital connection to its "Head" (Eph.4:15-16)
 - The church's fruitfulness is guaranteed in relation to abiding in Christ (John 15:1-18)
- 3) The church's fundamental purpose is for Christ not itself. We are called to display:
 - 1) His love (John 13:34-35; John 15:12-17)
 - 2) His unity (John 17:21-26; Eph. 4:1-2)
- 4) The church is to demonstrate the authority and power of Christ
 - His power over spiritual death and bondage to sin (Eph. 1:20; 2:1)
 - His power over spiritual forces (Eph. 1:21-23)
- 5) The church is to witness of Christ (John 15:26-17; Acts 1:8; Phil. 2:15-16)

C. As God's _____, we exist to _____ on the earth.

- 1) The church's election and existence is to the "praise of His glory, grace and wisdom" (Eph. 1:12, 14; 3:21)
- 2) The church's fruitfulness is for the glory of Christ and the Father (John 15:8)
- 3) The church's evangelism exists for the praise of God's power and grace in Christ. (Rev. 5:10-11; 15:3-4; Rom. 15:16)
- 4) The Gospel is not to be trifled with or seen as peripheral to all that we are and do; it is the appointed means to magnify the supreme glory of Christ (Rom. 1:16; 2 Cor. 4:4-6)

III. The responsibility of the church is to minister its Spirit-given spiritual gifts

A. A ministering body is the key to displaying the power of the Gospel.

B. Christ's church in its gathering and corporate display of the "one anothers" should never be juxtaposed with Christ's church in its going and evangelistic work (edification/discipleship is integral to mission).

C. The design of gifts is to minister Christ's presence through His church

- 1) Spiritual gifts extend Christ's ministry on the earth. We are Christ's body (1 Cor. 12:12, 27)
- 2) Spiritual gifts exhibit every aspect of Christ's person and glory (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:16; Col. 2:19)

The church is Christ's body, His fullness. It is designed to give a complete picture of Christ to the world. While certainly individuals can go forth with the Gospel and evangelism alone, God has so designed the body that each individual only displays a partial aspect of Christ. However, when the totality of gifts are functioning, there is a corresponding sense that Christ in His fullness is demonstrated. This is why the task of evangelism is only accomplished when believers are equipped for the work of ministry (Eph. 4:11-16)

- Each gift is a part of the total supply of Christ (Eph. 4:16)

- The totality of gifts manifest Christ's fullness (Eph. 1:23)

D. The deployment of gifts is crucial for the fulfillment of the Church's evangelistic mission

Paul Negrut of Emmanuel Univ. notices the tension between the need to balance the role of the individual and the role of the church in evangelism:

Another aspect of concern is the balance between the “priesthood of all believers” and those with special callings according to the gift(s) of the Spirit. Some may be inclined to downplay the role of the “many” priesthood believers in evangelism” in favor of the “one(s)” specially gifted evangelist; or alternatively to belittle the ministry of the gifted “one(s)” in favor of the ministry of the “many”. When such occurs, not only can there be tension in the church, but the witness of the whole body is often impacted in a negative way. In such cases, some gifted believers in the area of evangelism may consider taking an independent route as the best alternative, “going alone”, and leaving the Church behind. This can be a serious mistake.

However attractive such a model appears to be, it must be realized that the apostles did not abandon the churches in time of crises. To the contrary, they worked under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to correct the distorted theology that generated the crisis, in order to heal the Church.

Error must be corrected, because as seen, the Church plays an essential role in evangelism. Remember, Christ is the Head, the Holy Spirit indwells the corporate Body and imparts to it divine life. The Great Commission itself is given to the Church. Evangelists must, therefore, relate dynamically to the Church. Scripture demands it. Corporate accountability to Christ can be found only in the Church

Through the Christian community sharing life together and being involved in spiritual ministry and spiritual formation, the church demonstrates the beauty of holiness and becomes a “new and unprecedented social existence” in the world. Therefore evangelism cannot be merely about methods or techniques but a Christian practice done communally with other followers of Christ.

When the community of faith is present in the world in a distinctive way it allows the beauty of holiness to be touched, tasted and tried. This picture is portrayed in the Maori word for gospel, “Te Rongopai” which literally means good taste or good feeling. The gospel of Jesus Christ is not one that just targets the mind but one that allows the world to taste and experience the goodness of God.

For the church to be that beauty of holiness in the world, it needs to remember Christ’s defining identify of his disciples, His church, as the salt and light, not through coercive means, but through the shape of life that the church presents in and to the world. This shape is seen in and through the practices that show the world Christ’s way of life and the Gospel invites the world to share in that life.

3. Local church and evangelism

If the Church is simultaneously a divine-human organism and a historical-eschatological community, then evangelism is a central mode of being of the Church.

Functionally, the Church was not created to be an end in itself, but to perpetuate

Christ's ministry to the world.

Millard Erickson mentions three key functions of the church ...

_ First, evangelism which is an imperative of the Great Commission: the Church exists to make disciples of all peoples.

_ Second, to edify believers through fellowship, teaching and the practice of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

_ Third, worship – praise and exaltation of the triune God. Worship should always precede evangelism and edification.

These functions are not additional activities to the being of the Church, but the mode by which the Church exists. Consequently, all the aspects in which the Church expresses itself are simultaneously divine-human and historical-eschatological, and all leading to the extension of the Kingdom of God.

Not only is the Church the Body of Christ (personal and corporate), but believers are also called to be a kingdom of priests (1 Peter 2:9). In this kingdom the individual is not swallowed up by the crowd nor is the community threatened by individual members.