

2014, Lent Wednesday 5
Matthew 28:16-20

Children of God, grace and peace to you from the one who was, who is, and who is to come. Amen.

The theme for tonight is why. Why do we share our faith? Another way to look at it is to ask what is the purpose of sharing our faith? What is our goal when we tell people what we believe?

Discussion....

From the book, *Unbinding the Gospel*: “Evangelism is anything we say or do that draws someone closer to a relationship with God or into Christian community.”

The primary purpose of evangelism is to bring people closer to God; it is not primarily to bring them to church. Not this specific church anyway. If my goal in sharing my faith was to bring people to PFLC then there would be no reason to do so outside of Kitsap County. No reason to go on mission trips to Centralia, or Romania, or China.... People in those places are not likely to become members of this church. But that is not the point. The point is to share the story of God and of his love for all creation.

So that’s the general purpose for the story to be told, but what is our individual motivation? One reason is that Jesus commanded us to. In his final words in the gospel according to Matthew Jesus told his disciples, and us, to go make disciples, baptize, and teach. In this passage we receive the command to baptize which we hold as one of our two sacraments, so I think we should also pay attention to the command to share our faith.

If being told by Jesus to share your faith is not enough how about we go back to the original law giver, Moses?

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 “Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise.”

All of Israel was commanded to teach their families the 10 commandments, to share with each other the basics of their faith, every day and everywhere. We share our faith because we were told to, because it is the law.

These are two of my favorite passages in scripture, but I don’t like when the bible is used as a club, when it is used to tell me I have to do something. I don’t know about you, but

as soon as someone tells me I have to do something, there is a part of me that does not want to.

It's really not that we HAVE to share our faith; it's more like we GET to share our faith. We get to share the good news of forgiveness, life, and salvation that comes to everyone through Jesus.

As my friend Michael says, the thing about the good news is that it is always GOOD news. If it doesn't sound like good news, then it's not THE GOOD NEWS. And since it is such good news, why wouldn't we want to share it?

This week I asked over 300 people if and why they shared their faith. Some of them did not seem to understand the question and instead told me how they shared their faith. There were a variety of answers to why, but my favorite one, and the one closest to my own answer to the question came from a friend of mine I met in Germany last summer.

“Yes, because, for better or for worse, faith is a part of who I am. The only way I could not share it would be to not share any part of myself with anyone.” Pastor Jamie Wallace

To share my faith is to share who I am. To share who I am is to share my faith.

We share what is important to us; we share what we are excited and passionate about. When we see a good movie, read a good book, fall in love, have a child, have a grandchild...we want to share it with anyone who will listen. Sometimes we cannot keep from sharing...want to see some pictures of my granddaughter?

We read about people in scripture who are filled with joy and wonder and they cannot keep from talking about the story of Jesus. The women who found the empty tomb, the men on the road to Emmaus who's hearts were burning as they talked to Jesus. At Pentecost the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in different languages.

These are all people who had heard, seen, or encountered the living God. They were so filled with joy and excitement they had to tell others about it. They had to tell others what they believed.

When we are filled with wondrous things we too will share. And so we come. We come to be filled through worship, prayer, bible study, singing, and silence.

Once we are filled with wondrous things we will not be able not to share.