

'Evangelism is the overflow'

'Evangelism is the overflow', that is quote from the evangelist Michael Green. In other word when something good happens we want to share it – birth of a child, wedding, good movie and so on. We tend to speak about them with a joyful boldness assuming that people will be interested to hear. We have enjoyed something and others benefit from our overflow from it.

Now already I think most of us feel guilty. In my present experience of Christ I am not overflowing. We'll come to that later but set these thoughts aside and let God speak to us through his word and the example of Paul and Peter. Again I just want the narrative to lead us. Luke is painting pictures for us and our job is to look at them and reflect and as we reflect on the broad brushstrokes and the fine detail, as we take the series of pictures as a whole hopefully different things will emerge that we can take away, prayerfully reflect on and put into practice.

Last week we looked at, in our minds eye, the picture of Paul in the Damascus road surrounded by light, blinded and given a revelation of the Lord.

Today Luke's canvas has Saul out in the synagogues preaching that, well

## Paul - Proclamation

**Acts 9:19-20** Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus. <sup>20</sup> At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God.

There he is. It is almost comical. This destroyer of the church suddenly trying to expand it. The man who in vs one was breathing out murderous threats is now encouraging others to believe in Christ as Messiah. In the heat of the battle Saul who was leading the charge against the people of God is now leading the charge in the opposite direction! No wonder folks are confused

**Acts 9:21** <sup>1</sup> All those who heard him were astonished and asked, "Isn't he the man who caused havoc in Jerusalem among those who call on this name? And hasn't he come here to take them as prisoners to the chief priests?"

Here is Paul full of the Lord and he can't but help tell others about it. Here is the overflow but also here is a gifting. When we come to church we may be given new gifts and we will be given new service for natural gifts. Paul has clearly been given the gift do the evangelist. We are not all called to be evangelists but we are all called to be witnesses.

The Spirit of God has enabled Paul to get with the programme. What is the programme for the church?

**Acts 1:8** <sup>8</sup> But 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."

The last words Jesus spoke before he returned to heaven. Here is the programme

"you will be my witnesses"

Starting in "Jerusalem... to the ends of the earth"

You will receive the power to do that – the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

**Acts 9:22** <sup>22</sup> Yet Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Christ.

He was receiving the power, enabling and gifting of the promised Holy Spirit. God keeps his promises!

That is what the book of acts is about. The Holy Spirit comes upon folks, it fills, gifts them and indwells them and they are enabled to be witness and take their part in the building up of the kingdom and the church. God is raising up communities of lights, communities of faith. And that is, to quote a film and song title, 'A never ending story'. That has been happening for 2000 years. Why because the same Jesus that brought Saul to faith, has brought us to faith and asks us to get with his programme.

And boy does he go for it. Vs 20 preaching, vs 22 proving. These are words we are going to see often in relation to Paul. Proclamation in various ways – preaching, discussing, listening, getting out the scrolls and explaining and proving that Christ is the Messiah.

Now be careful to look at who he is speaking to. He is reaching out to his own people the Jews who had a tremendous knowledge of the scriptures. Paul is trying to piece them together for him. But we will see that in a culture where there is not so much bible knowledge Paul employs a different methodology.

The other week I was sharing with the folks at powerhouse- the church prayer meeting. I had been troubled in the days before over the lack of folks coming to faith, coming to church. As I laid it before the Lord the words of God to Paul when he was in Corinth came

**Acts 18:9-11** <sup>9</sup> One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision: "Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. <sup>10</sup> For I am with you, and no-one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city." <sup>11</sup> So Paul stayed for a year and a half, teaching them the word of God.

I used it as a prayer asking the Lord if he had many people in this city. The following Sunday a new guy

turned up at the morning service, I caught him at the door and he said I have not been to church for a very long time. I do not know if he will be back but I took it as an answer from the Lord – Yes I do have many people in this city. I shared that story with other 11 other pastors and ministers I meet with for lunch monthly. The thing that came there was Yes he has many people in the city but we, we are to keep on speaking, do not be silent and do not be afraid. We have to be ensuring that the gospel is getting out there and we have committed to working together to that end. First thing going to do is have a back to church Sunday for Stirling and Clackmannan in the Spring.

The church will not grow, our faith will not grow exponentially, the kingdom of God will not expand if we remain silent and do not keep on speaking. I think the Lord is going to challenge us on this but also equip and encourage us for this in the coming weeks and months as we meet together and study Matthews Gospel, Acts, pray, look at faith sharing in the house groups and put into practice what we learn. And the Lord says ‘Do not be afraid, keep on speaking, do not be silent’.

Yes you will blow it, much it up but these are learning experiences not reason to stop speaking. I spoke to a guy at a party recently who told me he wasn’t religious. I quickly interjected that I wasn’t either. That he let his conscience lead him. I did not have a

easy quick answer though I have thought of several things to say after but I did manage to say why I said I wasn’t religious – not about rules but relationship with God. It wasn’t a perfect encounter but I planted a seed and I have had another encounter to learn where folks are at from. It will be the same for you.

As folks reminded me at Powerhouse – we are in it for the long haul. After two years of playing football only now sitting down to do bible study with football boys. None come to church yet!

Heard recently of man who heard the great revival preacher George Whitfield preach when he was 4 years old. When he was 104 he remembered the sermon and came to Christ 100 years later! We are in it for the long haul. Planting seeds, watering and waiting on the Lord who alone brings the increase! And it can be hard work!

But beware!

**Acts 9:23-25** <sup>23</sup> After many days had gone by, the Jews conspired to kill him, <sup>24</sup> but Saul learned of their plan. Day and night they kept close watch on the city gates in order to kill him. <sup>25</sup> But his followers took him by night and lowered him in a basket through an opening in the wall.

In this country people may not try to kill you though we must not forget that that is a reality for our

brothers and sisters abroad. I have mentioned this before but when the Taleban were in control in Afghanistan any Muslim who converted to Christianity had an average lifespan of 8 days. That was on average how long it took for them to be found out and executed!

It is amazing though how people will talk about anything else but when it comes to faith some people can take real exception.. Saw it at the football. End of football for the night talk about the faith and most sit and listen but two (a lad and a lassie) when they were there would just go off on one! Perfectly nice to me on other occasion but when spoke about the gospel woof they would go off on one! You might be cold shouldered by your class mates, kept at a slight distance by your work colleagues, disowned by your family, physically assaulted by them, derided for committing intellectual suicide, tolerated but asked not to speak about your faith...All these I know of people for whom these have been a reality.

**Matthew 10:16** <sup>16</sup> Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.

**Matthew 10:16** <sup>16</sup> I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves.

We need to be wide and discerning about when to speak and when to listen. When not to speak and

even then what we say – not getting into slanging matches or loosing our temper and so on.

Paul - proclamation

## Part 2

### Peter Imitation

Look at Peter – what is he doing? Do these miracles seem familiar?

**Acts 1:1** In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach

This is the continuing ministry of Jesus through his church.

This is exemplified by the fact of the similarities between the miracles of Jesus healing the paralytic and raising Jairus's daughter.

What did Jesus say to the man lowered through the roof? Mk 2:11 "I tell you. Get up, take your mat and go home"

What does Peter say? Vs 34 "Jesus Christ heals you. Get up and tidy your mat"

Jesus raised Jairus's daughter from the dead – what did he say?

**Mark 5:41** <sup>41</sup> He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha koum!" (which means, "Little girl, I say to you, get up!").

Peter raises Dorcas from the dead what did he do and say?

**Acts 9:40-41** <sup>40</sup> Peter sent them all out of the room; then he got down on his knees and prayed. Turning towards the dead woman, he said, "Tabitha, get up." She opened her eyes, and seeing Peter she sat up. <sup>41</sup> He took her by the hand and helped her to her feet. Then he called the believers and the widows and presented her to them alive.

He is only the channel for Christ's work but he copied what he saw.

Love delights in imitation. I have this habit of standing in front of a long mirror to brush my teeth with my hand in my pocket. Cameron stands in front of me brushing his teeth hand in his pocket.

Peter had unconsciously caught the intonation, the awkwardness of his looking at the thing and his peculiarities. And it had been noted that he had been with Jesus.

When we pick up Lucy from the crèche you can tell which crèche helper has been cuddling her. How? The scent of their perfume has rubbed off on her.

We are to be the fragrance of Christ, that spreads knowledge of him 2 Cor 2:14. We are to be the imitation of Christ

“Live in the light, and you will become light. Keep near Christ, and you will be Christlike. Love Him, and love will do to you what it does to many a wedded pair, and to many kindred hearts: it will transfuse into you something of the characteristics of the object of your love. It is impossible to trust Christ, to obey Christ, to hold communion with Him, and to live beside Him, without becoming like Him. And if such be our inward experience, so will be our outward appearance.”

Evangelism is the overflow. It is proclamation. We need to keep speaking. It is imitation. We need to know Christ, be Christ like, abide in him. And it will be noted we have been with Jesus. And as we give ourselves to him in surrender and give ourselves to his programme for our lives. As we gradually live less for self and more for him. As we believe more and more that Christ is risen and alive today and will work through us. May we too see souls dead to Christ by sin raise to new life in Christ and where God wills it the lame walk.