
You and I have been chosen to be witnesses to Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. As you think about your situation in life right now, that might or might not be welcome news. Think of it this way. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is a story. What do we humans do to understand who we are and what life is all about? We tell stories. The Bible is one big story of God’s creation, and redemption and guidance of us, his people, his lambs. As we incorporate that story into our lives we are to invite others to come and see.

PRAYER

Bearing witness to our faith; inviting others to share in that faith; inviting someone to come to church. Those ideas are the focus of the texts from Isaiah and the Gospel of John. I would have to say they are not the favorite themes of Lutherans. We tend not to get too excited about evangelism, even though our church is Our Savior’s Evangelical Lutheran Church. There are several reasons for being reluctant to share our faith with others. One reason is cultural. We belong to a society that tolerates other religious views. We don’t want to look like we aren’t tolerant, so we don’t think its right to force our faith on anyone else.

Another reason we don’t go out of our way to witness to Jesus is ourselves. Who are we to tell others what to believe? Although the capital E Evangelicals don’t seem to have much trouble with it. (Note Mike Huckabee’s stump speech in South Carolina) Garrison Keillor describes us as shy people so it is difficult to tell someone else Jesus is our Lord. And Garrison says we have a good deal of guilt that says we aren’t good enough to be a Christian, let alone tell someone else they should be one also.

Another reason is the church. We are comfortable in it. But would others want to come? Would strangers be uncomfortable, or confused, or even bored? And if we had a bunch of strangers show up, they might start changing things. So you see, witnessing to our faith isn’t so easy for many Lutherans. To invite others to join us in church or share beliefs does take us out of our comfort zones. How can today’s readings make us feel more comfortable about sharing faith?

Let’s think of witnessing to the Gospel of Jesus the Christ as telling stories. The Bible is one big story of God creating the world, of his redeeming the world through Jesus, and guiding that world through his Holy Spirit (the doctrine of the Trinity). We all have a story that is our life unfolding in the midst of God’s story. We love to tell our story because it helps us understand
who we are and where we came from. Evangelism, witnessing is simply where God’s story and our story connect.

We are story tellers. Families gather around a holiday meal and generations share stories. When men go on fishing trips or to the deer shack, they tell stories that help define who they are and make sense of things. They keep going on those trips so there will always be new stories to tell. Grandmothers have stories they carry around in their purses, pictures of the grand kids.

Death brings out the story teller in us. As friends and relatives of the deceased gather together, whole chapters of their lives are revealed. When I went back to Owatonna for my Dad’s funeral, it was wonderful to hear the stories people were eager to share with me. Some stories I knew, with a different version, some I heard for the first time. Those stories were woven into a tapestry that revealed who my dad was to those people. As I reflected on that tapestry, I also understood a little more about who I am. Stories are essential to discover who we are, what we believe and where we are headed in the future.

Both Isaiah and the Gospel text are simply calling us to tell how God’s story and our story intertwine in the tapestry of our lives. It’s more natural than we might imagine. There are at least two reasons to tell of the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Isaiah reminds us of the first reason. “I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the Earth.” God wants to save his creation. Like it says in John Chapter 3, “For God so love the world that he gave his only son.” God has a purpose for creating and redeeming us. His desire is that we and all the world come to the knowledge of that truth.

The other reason we should be witnesses to the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world is that it is the answer to our deepest yearnings. It was in the first question Jesus asked when he turned to John the Baptist’s disciples and asked, “What are you looking for?” Or more to the point in the Greek, “What are you seeking?” That’s a much deeper question than, “what do you want?” It’s a question that gives us pause; not easily or quickly answered. It could take us to thoughts of the meaning of life, the end of life, or what is the heart and mind of God.

I don’t think the disciples knew what to do with that question either. Their response is to ask Jesus where he is staying. Again a loaded question. The Greek would be better read, “where are you abiding, or remaining?” “Come and see,” Jesus responds. Where I am you will be also. If you abide in me and me in you, you will have eternal life. Do we wish to abide in faith with
Jesus? Abiding with him brings the answers to what we are looking for. Notice how gentle and inviting Jesus was. He is the Lamb, not the lion, of God. He accepts us where we are at. His power is revealed in gentleness, and on the cross, not in armies or force. We are invited to come as we are. No pretending, no thinking we have to clean up our act first, no staying away out of fear. Just come and see if abiding in Jesus will give the answers we are seeking. We all have a story of who we are and what we are seeking in life. When Jesus came into the world as the Lamb, God wanted our story and his to be the same story. Once we realize His story is part of our story as well, it will be easy to tell the Gospel story by living our lives in that story. Amen.