

## **Live the New Life (6): Evangelism** (Subtitle: The Invitation to Eternal Life)

### **Matthew 4:19**

*Then He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." (NKJV)*

### **Romans 1:16**

<sup>16</sup> *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.*

### **Introduction:**

If you had to choose one person who has made a huge difference in your life, who would it be? If you had to name someone to whom you are most grateful, who would it be?

It could be your *parents* who gave life and raised you well. It could be a *friend* who helped you with finances. It could be your *first-grade teacher* who instilled the love of books in your heart. It could be your *boss* who guided you to a great job. The list goes on.

In my case, I would choose people to whom I owe my life, both temporal and eternal. First, for my life on earth, I would choose my high school friends. In the summer of 1973, we vacationed together at my friend's house whose father was an admiral of the Korean Navy. One afternoon, we all went swimming in the bay. I almost drowned that day. Without my friends' rescue, I would have been lost.

Next, for my eternal life, I would choose my older brother. If I am grateful to my two high school friends who added fifty years to my life, how much more should I be grateful to my brother who made an eternal difference in my life? How did he do it? One Sunday, he simply invited me to go to church with him. For that great invitation, I am forever grateful to him.

Question for you: wouldn't you like to be the one who makes the eternal difference in someone else's life? I would.

This morning, we will think about *evangelism*. Not the kind of *evangelism* that makes you cringe, roll your eyes, or run for cover. Sadly, in American politics, this *good* word 'evangelism' and its adjective 'evangelical' have been hijacked and misused by some Christian politicians, especially around election time. I am sure you heard someone who sarcastically say, "*Those evangelical Christians!*" It is time that we reclaimed this beautiful word in our faith.

The word 'evangelism' comes from the Greek word "εὐ-αγγελιον" which means the *good-news*, the *good-report*, the *good- announcement*, or simply called '*the gospel*.' The 'evangelism' that Jesus wants is *always* good for us. *Eternally* good for everybody. Please

keep that in mind as we think about the *good news* of Christ, the gospel. We will also think about how we share the *good news* with others.

## Content

What is ‘*evangelism*?’ Once again, it is the act of sharing with others the gospel, the good news, and the greatest news of all time. This brings us to Romans 1:16, where Paul the Apostle wrote: *For I am **not ashamed of the gospel**, for **it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes**, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.*

Paul was **not ashamed of the gospel**. *Not only the message but also sharing it.* Neither should we. I pray that none of us are ashamed either of the gospel or of Jesus. America today is not a gospel-friendly nation. External pressures from the government and companies, in the name of separation of church and state, make it hard to share the Gospel with others. For instance, the Gideons (a group of businessmen whose mission is to distribute the bibles) are forbidden to distribute pocket Bibles to students on school grounds. Sometimes we hide our faith from people in the name of privacy. Most of us rather keep our faith to ourselves. But we must not be ashamed of the gospel. During the Korean War, a boy faced the threat of execution from the communists but did not renounce his beliefs. He was saved from execution in an unexpected way.

As much as we believe and cling to Jesus’ promise that He will give us eternal life in heaven, we must heed His warning that if we are ashamed of Him in front of others, He too will be ashamed of us in the presence of angels (Mark 8:38).

**It is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith:** When it comes down to God’s power, we tend to think that it is something supernatural, some miracles and wonders. Of course, it is. However, here, Paul talks about the gospel as God’s power for salvation to everyone who believes. Get this. God doesn’t rely on angels to save people. Instead, He uses and relies on the gospel message to save people. And who’s carrying that gospel message to the world? We. God works with us and through us to take the gospel to the world. We carry God’s invitation letter for eternal life to people. This gospel message is foolishness to those don’t believe in Jesus and what He has done (1 Corinthians 2:14). To us, however, it is the power of God that sets us free from the bondage of sin and the power of death. We may not realize it now how blessed we are, but we will in the last day.

Please see here that **the gospel is for everyone**. Both for Jews and gentiles. For Buddhists and Hindus. Christ’s gospel covers all races, genders, and ages. It is for believers and non-believers. It invites law-abiding citizens and criminals. It is God’s power of salvation for all. God wants everyone to be saved. Everyone is invited to accept God’s salvation through the Gospel.

Let's go to Matthew 4:19 this time. Here, we see Jesus inviting Peter and his brother Andrew to follow Him. Peter and Andrew were full-time fishermen at the time. On Jesus' invitation, they left everything and followed Him. The same Christ invites us today to be the same: fishers of men.

**Fishers of men, not fishers of fish.** Do you know any professional fishermen? I believe we can learn a lesson or two from them. To my knowledge, none of them is casual about their vocation, but rather very dedicated. They work hard every day, no matter how bad the weather or season may be. Sometimes they have a good catch. Other times, they have none. However, they always go out to fish. Their minds and hearts are always out there where the fish are. They constantly think of the best ways to catch fish, too. So should every believer. So should every pastor. So should every church. Christ calls us to be fishers of men. As fishers of people, our hearts and minds ought to be with people, constantly thinking of the best ways to bring them to Christ. Not for our own sake, but theirs.

We are fishers of men. We don't fish people with hooks but with the gospel message. Christ sends us out with His gospel. So that people will come to Him through our message of the Good News. So that they too may find eternal life in Christ.

Imagine none of us take the gospel message to others. How, then, can anyone become a believer? How can people hear the gospel unless we share it with them? For example, consider a friend of mine from high school. He and I were best friends. He was a believer before me. One thing that bothered me the most, now that I am a believer, was the fact that he never said one single word to me about becoming a Christian (church, Jesus, salvation, eternal life, or Heaven). I thought to myself, *you had all the good things in Christ, but you never shared with me your best friend?!*

Let me ask. At the Heaven's gate, don't you want to hear your friend or family recognize you to God saying, "Lord, I am eternally grateful for (put your name here) because s/he shared the gospel with me and led me to Christ?" I would love to hear that from many! Folks, that is what evangelism is all about: standing beside someone to share the Gospel and eternal life together.

### **Action Points:**

Most of us find it challenging to share the good news with others. But, let me assure that we don't have to be like Paul or Peter. We can begin with someone whom we already know well: friends, family members, co-workers or neighbors. Let's start with someone whom we know well. Take the following two steps before you share the Gospel.

**Go to God in your friend's name:** Pray before you. This is the most crucial step in evangelism. Ask God to open the door of evangelism for you. Ask Him to provide you with the right opportunity to share the Gospel with your friend. Ask God to open your friend's

heart to listen to the gospel message. Remember: Jesus also prays for your friends that they too will believe in Him through your message (John 17:20). Next,

**Go to your friend in Christ's name:** After you have asked for God's help in prayer, then go to your friend in Jesus' name. Ask God to give you the right words to say to your friend. Remember, God relies on your message to bring them to Christ. How about inviting them to church like my brother did for me? As a matter of fact, Easter is coming, why don't we all invite our friends to our church next Sunday. Just say, "Would you like to come to church with me next Sunday?" You never know.

**Don't get discouraged on the first try.** Also, remember that believing in Jesus doesn't always start in a church. Some people have a negative image of the church, calling the church "organized religion," or "full of hypocrites." Don't get into an argument when you share the gospel. Just stick to the message of salvation. Tell them how much Jesus loves them. In time, they will join the church. Be friends first. Let them see your genuine interests and motives for their salvation. Be there for them whenever they need you. Let them see your light in Christ.

## Conclusion

In closing, I would like to share a passage from the Gospel according to Matthew. Chapter 9, verses 35-38:

*"<sup>35</sup> Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. <sup>36</sup> But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. <sup>37</sup> Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. <sup>38</sup> Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest." (Matthew 9:35-38, NKJV).*

Jesus commands us to earnestly pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest, which is the world. You and I are called to go out into the world, the harvest field, and bring people to Jesus the Good Shepherd. What is your answer? I hope and pray that we will all say, "Here I am, Lord. Send me."

Amen.