

In Today's Famine for God's Word, Here's the One Sermon I Would Preach

I just gathered with family and friends to celebrate my 70th birthday. 100 days later, I anticipate commemorating my "Year of Jubilee" 50th spiritual birthday. I echo what Billy Graham said at a similar point, "How quickly it all goes by."

Have you found yourself thinking lately, *Seems like time is passing so quickly*? If so, you're part of multitudes experiencing a discovery initiated by God.

Scripture records, "There were four leprous men at the entry of the gate, and they said to one another, 'Why are we sitting here until we die? If we say, "Let us enter the city," the famine is in the city, and we shall die there. But if we sit here, we die also.' Then they said to each other, 'What we're doing is not right. This is a day of good news and we are keeping it to ourselves. If we wait until daylight, punishment will overtake us. Let's go at once and report this to the royal palace.'" (2 Kings 7:3-4, 9-10).

Considering our desperate times, the famine for the Word of God and the inevitability of death, do we identify with these men responding to a God-given stirring? As they did, will we go into our city and bring good news to hopeless and broken people?

Recognizing the Brevity of Life

Moses prayed in Psalm 90:10, "The years of our life are seventy, and if by reason of strength eighty; yet their length is toil and sorrow, for they soon end, and we fly away."

When John Wesley's brother, Charles, was 81 on his deathbed,

his wife recorded his final words. This poet who wrote over 6,500 hymns like “Hark the Herald Angels Sing” said: “In age and feebleness extreme, who shall a helpless soul redeem? Jesus, my only hope Thou art, strength of my failing flesh and heart. Oh could I catch one smile from Thee, and drop into eternity.”

What will you say passing through the “valley of the shadow of death”? Life is fragile and brief. David prayed, “Lord, make me to know my end, and what is the measure of my days, that I may know how transient I am.” (Ps. 39:4). If you’re in any capacity of ministry and you knew you would bring a message for the last time, what sermon or Bible study sharing would you bring?

Years ago Richard Bodey compiled 19 sermons from a “Hall of Fame” of senior leaders like John Piper, Sinclair Ferguson and Dr. James Kennedy for a book titled, *If I Had Only One Sermon to Preach*. It revealed their God-given passion and should inspire us to contemplate what we would do if asked the same question.

Last Words of Jesus

In these days when many Christians focus on the end times and prophetic mysteries, it’s fascinating that the disciples did the same thing engaging with Jesus before He departed. He told them, “It is not for you to know the times or the dates, which the Father has fixed by His own authority” (Acts 1:7). He then prioritized what really matters and pleases the heart of God.

Wouldn’t it be wise to align ourselves with what Jesus highlighted?

“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you shall be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (v. 8). That’s it. Then, proof, He was gone!

Jesus told them what He tells us today. It's not the "Great Suggestion," but the "Great Commission" to be consistently engaging in lifestyle evangelism as His ambassadors and then disciple converts in kingdom living.

For those still wondering when the end will come and His Return, in Matthew 24 He addressed the disciples who also wanted specificity. They asked, "What will be the sign of Your coming and of the end of the age?" (v. 3). Listing a number of general sign posts, He concluded with *the* ultimate sign. "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come" (v. 14).

When Jesus first called the disciples to be His followers, He told them they were to be "fishers of men" (Matt. 4:19). The same applies to us. It's been said, "If you're not fishing, it's doubtful if you're really following."

How about you?

Shocking Barna Study

We must face the sad state of many churches in America that are ignorant and complacent regarding the Great Commission Jesus gave at the end of Mathew's gospel (Matt. 28:18-20) and the cultural commission to "make disciples of all nations." The latter refers to us being "salt" and "light," fulfilling our civic responsibility in society given initially in the Garden (Gen. 1:28)

George Barna asked churchgoers across America, "Have you heard of the Great Commission?"

–6%: "I'm not sure."

–25%: "Yes, but I can't recall the exact meaning."

–17%: "Yes."

-51%: "No."

God Is Stirring Us to Reach the Lost

Recently about 10,000 people gathered in Pensacola, Florida, for what was called the "Light the Fire Again" conference. Teaching weekly over five years in the Brownsville Revival, I participated firsthand in the amazing move of God where masses came to Christ.

Watching the accelerating moral decline in our nation and waning of commitment to the Great Commission, Christians came to be reignited to reach the lost and be revived for the task.

A week ago in Nashville I attended a citywide gathering featuring a next generation of five young evangelists inspiring us to reconsecrate ourselves to sharing our faith consistently, not as a program but as a lifestyle. It was dynamic as we were convicted of drifting from intentionally and regularly sharing the gospel. When the main leader of the gathering asked us to contemplate when was the last time we led somebody to Christ, the silence was deafening, but so too was the resolve for a turnaround.

Charles Spurgeon once said, "If you *can* live without souls being converted, you *shall* live without their being converted." He prayed, "Oh! I would to God there should come upon us a divine hunger that cannot stay itself unless people yield themselves to Jesus."

Multitudes praying for revival in the church and that "heaven come down" are now praying that "heaven come out" of us as we take initiative connecting with people, telling them the transformative message of the gospel!

Everyone Evangelizing

Witnessing the phenomenal impact of the early church peacefully overthrowing the Roman Empire and experiencing explosive church growth was the direct result of everyone

involved in lifestyle evangelism. There was no internet, TV, mass communication or slick church growth marketing campaigns.

Yeah, but they had the mighty apostles doing the work of ministry when they were scattered, right?

Actually in Acts 8:1, it says, “On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem. And they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, *except the apostles* ... those who were scattered went everywhere preaching [Greek: evangelizing]...” (v. 4).

Here’s the deal: You’ve probably guessed it, but what you’ve just read is my “Only One Sermon” selection (though I sure hope it’s not my last!). If I could exchange my life for one truth to be established in the body of Christ it would be that every Christian shake off complacency and rise up to go into our cities with the good news that brings hope and redemption to those in spiritual famine.

Action Steps:

- Click on “Loving Lifestyle Evangelism” on YouTube and be inspired and equipped by the five free 20-minute video resources I’ve prepared for you.
- Watch for the debut in a week of my podcast *Here’s the Deal* on the Charisma Podcast Network. It’s free, 15 minutes daily and enables you and I to connect so I can encourage and equip you! {eo}