

Opening Scripture

Psalm 66:16-20 (Message)

Opening Prayer

Scripture

Psalm 34

Message

Telling Your Story

Is your Faith visible to others? How do others know about your relationship with God? Last weekend, we looked at a passage of Scripture from the book of James, where James talked about the relationship of faith and good works. James offers this challenge: **“Show me your faith without deeds and I will show you my faith by what I do.” (James 2:18)**. James says that others ought to be able to know that we are people of faith by what we do. He gives an example about encountering someone who is in need of clothes or daily food. Just saying to them, **“Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed”** is not good enough. It will be evident that we are people of faith if we demonstrate kindness and mercy to that person by taking care of their physical needs.

Now, in the passage that we are looking at today, we learn that others will know that we are people of faith by our witness and testimony. We need to communicate to others verbally about our relationship with God. Many followers of Jesus have a hard time talking about their faith. They say they don't know how. They are not pastors or evangelists. But I believe this Psalm gives us a pattern that we can easily follow to talk to others about our faith, and how to encourage others to believe in Jesus. It is a lesson in personal evangelism.

The Joy of the Lord (vs 1-3): The heading that is included in our Bibles tells us that the author of the Psalm is David. Early in his life, David had been a shepherd. He spent many hours alone in the fields, where he could meditate on the Lord. He then became a successful soldier in the army of Israel. Eventually he rises to the position of King. He was a poet, a musician. He composed many songs and poems that grew out of his life experiences. David loved the Lord. These Psalms express his faith, his love, and trust in the Lord. Many of them are songs of worship and praise. The people of Israel used David's songs in their worship of the Lord.

As this Psalm begins, we see David in an attitude of worship. His heart is overflowing with praise to the Lord. And he expresses the desire that others would join him in Worshiping the Lord. David's worship is sincere and authentic. That is a quality that we may not see or experience in worship. And this lack of authenticity or sincerity, may be a turn off to those who are on the outside of our faith. People, particularly young people are looking to Christians for evidence that their faith in God is real. When they detect that people are just going through the motions, they will not be persuaded to become believers.

So the first lesson in becoming an evangelist is to let others know about our faith is that there is evidence that we love the Lord.

Tells his story (vs. 4-7): As we observe and listen to David's expressions of worship, we want to know why. Why are you so exuberant in your praise of the Lord? So David tells his story. (Vs. 4, 6). The heading to this Psalm tells us the circumstances that led to the writing of this Psalm. **“Of David. When he pretended to be insane before Abimelek who drove him away and he left.”** This story comes from a time in David's life when he was fleeing for his life from his enemy, King Saul. Saul was aware that the prophet Samuel had anointed David to become King after Saul died. While David lived in submission to the King, he vowed not to harm him because at the time Saul was the anointed one. But Saul saw David as a constant threat. He attempted on several occasions to kill him, he hunted him down. David lived on the run. On one occasion, Saul was closing in on David, and David escaped to the Philistine city of Gath. The Philistines were the enemies of Israel. The king of Gath was Abimilek. When Abimilek's men discovered that David was living in their city, they alerted the king. They informed him that this was the Israelite David, who was a mighty soldier. He had defeated the Philistine giant Goliath. Abimelek's men feared that David might try to wage war with them, and take over their city. So they recommended that David be eliminated. David was brought before

Abimilek. When David discovered that his cover was blown, he was fearful that he would be put to death. So, to prove that he was not a threat to Abimilek, David pretended to be insane. Apparently he was quite persuasive, and Abimilek scoffed and let him go, realizing that this crazy man was certainly no threat. So that is the story behind David's song. David recognized that the Lord, had delivered him from death. **Vs. 7 – "The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him and he delivers them."** As David writes this song, he tells his story.

So as we are interacting with people that we are trying to bring to faith, we need to be able to tell them our story. **"Here is what the LORD did for me!"** If you are a believer in Jesus, you have a story. It may not be as spectacular as David's, but you can recount to others what God has done for you. Learn your story. Practice telling that story. Get others to listen to your story and help you tell it. Your story may be the one thing that will persuade someone else to become a believer in God.

Teach others what they must do (vs. 8-14). After we have told our story, we must be able to tell others what they must do. This section of the Psalm is filled with challenges to present to others.

- **Taste and see for yourselves....**
- **Fear the Lord** – To fear the Lord is to honor Him, to revere Him. That is what we are calling others to do – become worshipers of God

We must not be reluctant to challenge people to turn from their current lifestyle and become a worshiper of God.

Remind others of the benefits of serving the Lord (15-20). David mentions several benefits that unbelievers will gain if they turn to the Lord. **The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are attentive to their cry.**

The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. I have mentioned before that our mission statement at Germantown Church of God, goes like this: ***Germantown Church of God exists to move people who are broken spiritually, physically, emotionally, or relationally toward Jesus where they can find healing and be transformed into His image.*** In our lives we may experience brokenness in many different forms. Perhaps you have experienced brokenness because of your own choices. May that brokenness has come through the actions of others. Someone you trusted, betrayed you, or broke your heart, or broke your spirit. That kind of trauma can affect our outlook on the world. But we want people to know that whatever brokenness they have experienced, there is a place of healing. But there is a place, a person who can bring healing. When we are giving witness to others, to persuade them to become a person of faith, we must offer them the hope of redemption.

Perhaps we have heard people witness from a negative position. "If you don't change your ways and believe in Jesus, you will go to hell." Now of course we do believe there are consequences for those who do not believe, but our witness may be more effective if we let people know that following Jesus is a safe choice, it is a way of healing.

David is careful not to over-promise. Often times we may hear someone say, Come to Jesus and all your problems will go away. But David warns that even righteous people may have trouble. But He assures his listeners that God will not abandon us. He will protect us in those times.

A final promise: Those who resist, who rebel against the Lord will face condemnation. They will not be forgiven or pardoned. But those who turn to the Lord for salvation will never be condemned. The apostle Paul promises in Romans 8:1 – **"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death."** What a wonderful promise. Not matter what our past looks like; no matter how bad we may have messed up, it is possible to face the future without fear of condemnation.

So, how are you giving witness to others. We must live lives that are Righteous. That is one way of witnessing. We must be kind and merciful to others, especially those in need. BUT there are times when we must use our words to witness to others. David gives us a wonderful example and pattern to follow as we seek

to make others aware of our faith and as we try to persuade others to turn to the Lord. I pray that God will open your eyes to opportunities to tell others about Him.