

- Equip is a series of ongoing classes designed to address the topics and themes we encounter daily by looking in-depth at the teaching of the Bible. *How do I grow in my faith? And how does my faith connect to the issues of everyday life?*
- Each class will provide in-depth content, practical connection, and opportunities to build community through break-out discussions.
 - *How Do I Read the News? How Do I Practice Spiritual Disciplines? How Do I Think about Politics? How Do I Make Disciples? How Does Faith Connect to My Work?*
- Join us next **Sunday, February 28th** either “in person” here at the church and/or online for our first session: *How Do I Read the Bible? For more info and to REGISTER go to our Happenings Page on our website.*
- Today we continue our series called Kingdom Come through the book of Acts and we’ve been asking the question: What would Ventura County look like if Jesus were king?
- And today we are asking what would our *conversation* look like if Jesus were King? What is the message we will be most known for? And we do so from Acts 8:1-8

On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. ² Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. ³ But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off both men and women and put them in prison.

⁴ Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. ⁵ Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah there. ⁶ When the crowds heard Philip and saw the signs he performed, they all paid close attention to what he said. ⁷ For with shrieks, impure spirits came out of many, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. ⁸ So there was great joy in that city.

- Everyone preaches something. Everyone.
- A message which so convinces us and captivates us that it compels us to share with others. Sharing it becomes second nature and you look for opportunities to declare it!
 - Preaching sounds like this “If everyone would just _____”
- Another word for it is *evangelist*! **And there are all kinds...**
- There are fitness evangelists, economic evangelists, political evangelists, technology evangelists, fashion evangelists, home school evangelists... public school evangelists, organic food evangelists... essential oils evangelists, (thought that was 2017), coffee evangelist (I was converted), vegan evangelists, multi-marketing evangelists... even atheist evangelists...
- People with a message that will cure our ills, solve our problems, and meet our greatest needs.
- Everyone preaches something. And in short,
 - **What we preach reveals what we prize.**
 - What am I preaching with my life?
 - If you are a Christian, how are you going about doing it?
- This morning, I am not only referring to the public proclamation from a pastors pulpit, but also to the responsibility of every man and woman who follows Jesus. And this is highlighted in our text.
- The books of Acts gives us the early history of Christianity... it tells us what the church did and where it got its power from, what the kingdom of God looks like in and through the church.
- And today our text highlights preaching; what they preached, how they preached and why they preached.
- And what do we learn? I want to point out three things about Kingdom Preaching. First of all:

1. Preaching Is an Irreplaceable Practice (Acts 8:1-3)

- a. Until this point, the church remained in Jerusalem. A man named Stephen, who Billy reminded us last week, became a Deacon, a servant lead in that thriving community. But as he was being public about his faith in Jesus, he was challenged, tried and killed by the religious leaders of the day. And the opposition to the church didn't end there. The death of

Stephen sparked a persecution of Christians that spread out into another region, an important region! An area which is the focus of this chapter: **Samaria**

Acts 8:1 On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria

- b. And there is a great connection between the situation of Acts chapter 8 then and the need of our city today.
- c. Samaria, like every city, was a city in great need.
- d. Samaria was a melting pot, ethnically, religiously and economically. And like in most cities, there was a lot of tension, between people and groups of people. There is prejudice, crime, broken relationships. On top of that we read that there were many physical needs, many were sick, unwell and in need!
- e. Do we not see the same? There is an unrest around us that is always present, but really surfaces in times of crisis.
 - i. We see it from political, racial and economic tension all the way to marriages, families, friendships... *churches*.
 - ii. A leading divorce lawyer said in an article that this past year is "very likely" to lead to an increase in marriage break-ups because of people being confined together for long periods in self-isolation, along with the economic and financial strain!
- f. You might say "Yes, everybody recognizes that!" But here is what is distinct, the Christian view does not *first* ask "*What should we do about it*" but "***Why did this happen in the first place?***" Why do these things exist? What is the CAUSE??
- g. And the Bible's view is this: **There is unrest around us, because there is unrest within us.**
- h. A crisis does not cause the unrest, it reveals the unrest!
- i. We must admit that there is something beyond circumstances or physical needs. We need a change in our nature. **This is what the kingdom of God is all about.**
- j. The conflict in our cities always reveals a deeper conflict in our souls (water and ink analogy)

Romans 8:7 “The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so”

- k. This is what we see in Acts 8 and we see it today. Opposition to God. Whether that is shown through a daily *indifference* or a concentrated effort, there is great spiritual conflict. It is sin, a toxic self-focus that poisons everything and opens the door to supernatural evil, which we see in this text!
- l. The Bible speaks to a variety of needs, and the greatest is spiritual! Eternal! We need salvation from the inside out! And that is why preaching is essential and *irreplaceable*!
- m. It is essential that we see the depth of our need to understand why the practice of preaching is irreplaceable.
 - i. If you don't... you will settle for wrong solutions!
 - ii. So, when people talk about all the tension, what is your first response? What is it that you are putting forth as the greatest solution? (Martyn Lloyd-Jones)
- n. There is spiritual unrest in this city. This is true of every city. Everyone needs to hear the one message that can change all that. But how can they? Who is going to tell them? Well...

2. Preaching Is a Community Project (Acts 8:4-7)

- a. What should the church be doing? How does a kingdom community respond to such a need?
- b. What this text makes absolutely clear, is that change in the city is not random... it is the result of a community mission
- c. “All were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria” v 1
- d. In the earliest days of the church, recorded in the first few chapters of Acts, we see men and women gathered in Jerusalem, where the crucified, yet risen Jesus commissioned them to tell the world of what has happened.
- e. ***Yet they remained in Jerusalem.*** Until this point, we've seen some great community moments. But it took the events of Acts 8 to push the church out to further its mission
- f. Like a dandelion kicked in the meadow spreading the seed, the events of Acts 8 caused the message of the church to

spread. Persecution can actually promote preaching! The church went from being localized to mobilized.

- g. You don't get this idea that early Christians were thinking "Oh the city of Samaria is a nice place to settled down..." there was a strategic nature! So, how do we respond to the spiritual need of our county? And how is it a community project? We share the gospel together and show...

h. We share the gospel together

- i. V 4 "went about preaching the word"
- ii. Since man's greatest need is only met by God's action in the gospel, the church's mission is, most importantly, a Word mission! And everyone is involved! Notice the way the text describes evangelism

Acts 8:4-5 Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. ⁵ Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah there

- iii. When Phillip preaches it's the word used for a herald, a public proclamation!
- iv. But a different word is used for the whole church, they are simply going everywhere talking about Jesus. Some scholars have suggested that you could translate the word "gossip".
 - 1. Gossip has pretty much a negative connotation to us today. We usually use it to refer to talking about people behind their backs or spreading hurtful rumors about other people.
 - 2. And this kind of gossip is called a sin in the Bible.
- v. Originally, however the word simply meant casual chatter between family members. And sadly, some of the thing we most naturally and eagerly share with neighbors is often bad. **But what if it was good??**
- vi. **What if the thing we most naturally and eagerly chatted about was the gospel???**
- vii. Imagine... in a county in which our words have done so much damage...that words could bring healing!

- viii. **See, Evangelism is not about *changing* the topic, it's about bringing Jesus *into* the topic!**
- ix. What a balance we see here! public preaching and personal testimony! Gossiping the gospel and proclaiming the gospel.
- x. One error is to think that on leaders do all the work.
- xi. Both leaders and lay-people! Not just sages on stages
- xii. People of different intellectual caliber, people holding different jobs, people of different age and gender
- xiii. These people went throughout the city, they arrived among strangers and were welcomed into their homes. They sat down, they shared a meal, and they began to tell the people in ordinary conversation about this wonderful message that they had believed and that now meant so much to them. (Examples! My Wife)
- xiv. But here in Acts and elsewhere you find a wonderful balance including all of our gifts and personalities!
- xv. We share together. But there is more!

i. We Also show the gospel together

- i. The works that the church does can be a powerful demonstration of the message we preach.

Acts 8:6 When the crowds heard Philip and saw the signs he performed, they all paid close attention to what he said.

- ii. They not only preached, but they *demonstrated* what they preached by the works they did. The church's activity was like signpost to the message they preached
- iii. The word *sign* means "an event which is regarded as having some special meaning". In this context, the signs were **Healing and Care**.
- iv. Are unclean spirits real? Yes. Is God's power greater? Yes. And also, physical care for the paralyzed and the lame. All of these drew attention to the message.
- v. Please note this: Good deeds are not the *cause* of new life they *confirm* the message that *brings* new life

- vi. Every ministry in the church helps the evangelistic ministry of the church. I like to think of it as an ecosystem! (I didn't learn much in science but...)
 - 1. Kids, youth, CGs, global, Sundays, prayer...
 - 2. Your life! Praying for your neighbor, building relationships, providing for those in need!
- vii. In listing out the reasons why the early church had such an impact in the Roman cities, historian

Rodney Stark, Cities of God "To cities filled with the homeless and impoverished, Christianity offered charity as well as hope. To cities filled with newcomers, and strangers, Christianity offered an immediate basis for attachments. To cities filled with orphans and widows, Christianity provided a new and expanded sense of family. To cities torn by violent ethnic strife, Christianity offered a new basis for social solidarity."

- j. We share and show the word together. And what happens when we do? We see that:

3. Preaching Is a Life-Changing Power (Acts 8:8)

- a. Why? Because the gospel is about Jesus. And he changes everything. Look at the result of sharing the gospel in verse 8

Acts 8:8 So there was great joy in that city.

b. Jesus is the power that brings life

- i. The church did not preach *a* word but *the* word! What was that? They did not teach a philosophy of life, or a mode of behavior, it was a declaration of what God has done about the problem of humanity. Acts is about facts. Though man is broken the story of Christianity is the story of God's activity to deliver us in Jesus Christ!
- ii. Ultimately, it was Jesus they responded to! The source of this joy was the very message itself! It is the power of this message that drove people like Phillip to the city in the first place! He had experienced the very power of the message he preached!
- iii. We need to be reminded of this! (not just binging...)
- iv. So powerful, that even the man responsible for causing the violence at the beginning of the chapter would become a changed person by the next chapter! Paul!

- v. See, the moment one believes, you are changed!
Forgiven! Heart made new! And changes relationships

c. Jesus is the power to break down barriers

- i. See, Phillip was the most unlikely person to reach the city of Samaria!
- ii. The Jews and the Samaritans had no dealings with each other, they were antagonistic! The Samaritans historically were viewed as half-breeds as Israelite inhabitants intermarried with foreigners and adopted strange views.
- iii. You didn't go there! But Phillip did! Why? Jesus breaks down barriers. Knowing that we are all in need of forgiveness, levels the playing field.
 - 1. Christian preaching is humble, because you didn't do anything to save yourself! (compare!)
- iv. Why did Phillip and the church go to these people? Because Christ had changed them! The living, Loving Jesus had so changed him. Christ came to us, went to the cross! Rose again!

d. Jesus is the power to bear joy in our souls and our city

- i. The gospel is this: We were separated from God and yet he sent his son Jesus to pursue us! And lay down his life as a sacrifice to pay the penalty that our sin deserves that we might be clean and forgiven!
- ii. Oh, that every person would know!!!
- iii. I'm afraid, intimidated, I feel powerless to share.
But the best thing I can do is treasure Jesus and reflect on how he has changed me. Joy fuels evangelism.
- e. Has Jesus changed you? Has Jesus changed us? Go and tell.
This is what happens when the kingdom of God, his gracious rule comes – *we tell everyone about it!*
- f. *How do I participate in the kingdom coming? Preach.*
- g. For the city to have joy it takes the gospel. And for the city to have the gospel it takes a church. And it's the joy of Christ sends us. That is news worth gossiping about.