



SERMON OF THE WEEK

First Presbyterian Church of Honolulu at Ko'olau

August 23, 2015

"Shoes of Peace" (WORTHY Sermon Series)

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Eph. 6:10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power.

Eph. 6:11 Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

Eph. 6:12 For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

Eph. 6:13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.

Eph. 6:14 Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness.

Eph. 6:15 As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace.

Eph. 6:16 With all of these, take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

Eph. 6:17 Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Eph. 6:18 Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints.

Eph. 6:19 Pray also for me, so that

when I speak, a message may be given to me to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel,

Eph. 6:20 for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it boldly, as I must speak.

Today, I want to talk about evangelism – how we spread the peace of God (through the salvation He offers) to others.

The basis of evangelism is this: Each of us has come to a point where we realize that Jesus is really God, our Lord, and that He wants to be our friend, and that He died on a cross for us because of our sin. Jesus took the bullet for us so that we might have joy here on earth as well as in heaven.

When we realize how much we have been forgiven, that the burden of shame and guilt has been lifted, and hope is in our hearts, then we can't wait to tell others. That is the basis of evangelism. It comes out of a deep, deep gratitude of what God has done for us.

I know many of us have doubts or even cynicism about Christianity. Check out this video. (The video "Reverse Thinking" was shown.)

When we get to know Jesus personally, not as a God who's way up there who doesn't care, but as someone real, who's fully human but also fully God, then things REVERSE. We want to tell a lot of people about this. And we want to put on the so-called "armor of God" to tell others.

What is this armor? Let me run through and explain all of the

pieces of the Armor that was described to us by our Scripture today.

First of all, it is NOT your armor. Yes, you wear it, but the text says it is the armor OF God. It's His Armor. He forged it. It is supernatural. It is real. And it works.

Second, the passage says that you are to put on the BELT OF TRUTH and the BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. When we read this we can think, "Darn, that means I have to be truthful all the time. I have to work on being righteous all the time, but I am not righteous. I am not always truthful."

No, it is not about your being truthful. It is not about your righteousness. It is about God's righteousness and God's truth that protect you.

As I said last week, when you hear the voices of the Evil One saying you are not smart enough, pretty enough, accomplished enough, good enough, or pure enough, the BELT OF TRUTH says, "No, God never says those things. The truth is that God loves me as I am and He doesn't make any junk. He made me. And it is His righteousness, not my righteousness, that covers me. He made me holy and blameless because He died for my sins. His righteousness protects me. I am WORTHY of the calling to which we have been called."

Third, when the Bible says to pick up the SHIELD OF FAITH, we may think, "My faith is weak. I have got to have more faith. I have got to have more faith to protect me from the arrows of Satan." No, it's the faithfulness of God that ultimately protects us.

We sing “Great is THY Faithfulness,” and not “Great is MY Faithfulness.” It’s God’s armor after all. It is because God is faithful to hold us, protect us, and to never let us go that no satanic arrow will ultimately hurt us.

Fourth, when the Bible says we need to have THE SWORD OF TRUTH, it’s referring to the Word of God and how we need to know God’s Word—The Bible, not your word or the secular society’s word.

Fifth: the HELMET OF SALVATION. One of the most critical parts of our body is our head which houses our brain, so we need to protect it. No brain waves, no life. So protect it. The HELMET OF SALVATION is key. If you have indeed accepted Jesus as your Lord, Savior, and Friend, then know and be assured that God has saved you. Whether you feel it or not, you’ve been given eternal life in heaven because of Jesus. And you know this. You can’t lose it

And then finally I want to talk about the SHOES OF PEACE. *“As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you READY to proclaim the gospel of peace.” (Eph. 6:15)*

These shoes were sandals but not like the ones you or I may wear in Hawaii. These were first-century soldier sandals. They had to have traction to move fast. Back then they had cleats on the bottom to move quickly. The sandals also provided protection so toes don’t get stubbed. The sandals had to be hard and tough on the bottom and finally the shoe had to be nimble and light enough so soldiers could change course and pivot easily while in battle.

With these kinds of shoes the verse said you are READY to proclaim the gospel of peace. You are READY to move out and share the faith. You are READY with traction to go long distances. It is this last piece of armor equipment that I want to talk about in terms of evangelism.

The joy we have, the salvation we have, the blessings we have from

God, was never for us to hoard or keep to ourselves. We were always supposed to MOVE OUT and share with others the peace God offers. As followers of Christ, we should have the passion and joy to share with others the great news that Jesus offers us a new life, a forgiven life, a life with meaning, purpose, and fulfillment.

But let me hit something head on. To be honest, why don’t we share our faith with others? Here are some of the hurdles in sharing our faith:

1) We may not care about others that much.

Imagine you are in a developing world. You, a well-fed American, are standing near an airstrip. Behind you is a huge plane with a full cargo of food. In front of you are thousands of starving children in long lines with empty bowls and plates in their hands. If we really cared about them, we would order our crew to start getting the food from the plane. We would do everything we could to help them, feed them, and give them hope.

When we don’t share the good news of Jesus with others, it is as if we are not sharing our cargo of food with starving children who are in front of us. There are thousands of spiritually starving people we come in contact with, but by not sharing the good news, we choose not to offload the hope and joy we have found in Jesus to help others. It is like we have the armor of God, but we don’t want OTHER PEOPLE to wear that same armor that protects us to protect them.

But I don’t believe Christians are cold-hearted. So why don’t we want to evangelize and share the gospel? Why can we be lethargic in leading others to Christ? Two words: Kitty Genovese. Do you know the story of 28-year old Kitty Genovese of Queens, New York? It’s a case of good people doing little to help people in need of saving.

One night in March 1964 Kitty

Genovese was walking from her car to her home in Queens that was just 100 feet away when she was chased by an assailant and attacked two times. She was stabbed to death over the course of about 30 minutes.

At least six people and one report says even more as high as 38, all HER NEIGHBORS, heard her screams and saw from their apartment windows her being assaulted. But no one came to her aid, and no one called the police in time. Even though people reportedly HEARD her scream, “He stabbed me. Please help me! Please help!”

The killer then walked away and then came back to her since no one helped her, and stabbed her again. Windows and door opened. Neighbors watched. They saw each other. One yelled out. Several said they didn’t want to get involved. One neighbor thought about getting his baseball bat to go out and help but instead took a nap. Another called other neighbors and then other friends to ask what to do. By the time he called police it was too late. He said, and I quote, the famous line: “I didn’t want to get involved.” Kitty died 30 minutes after being assaulted.

Now you might think, “Aw, that’s New York, and that was back in 1964. It’s different now.” But that’s where WE would be wrong in thinking that.

Psychologists John Darley and Bibb Latané decided to do some behavioral research on that horrible night. They wanted to know what went wrong. They discovered what is today referred to as the “bystander apathy effect.”

These psychologists set up a series of fake emergencies to see who would come and help. They discovered that ONE SINGLE element determined whether people would activate and respond to someone in need. It had nothing to do with the seriousness or severity of the situation or even the degree to which the person yelled for help.

It didn't even have to do with the demographics of the people – whether they were young or old, male or female, black, Caucasian, or Asian.

One constant factor stood out in the research. Ready for this? What mattered was HOW MANY witnessed the event. The MORE people who were around, the LESS people tended to respond.

In one of the experiments they set, they had a student – by himself in a room – stage an epileptic fit. When there was just ONE person next door, listening, that person ran to the student's side 85 PERCENT of the time. But get this. When subjects thought that there were as few as FOUR others who *also* overheard the person having the seizure, they rushed to the student's aid only 31 PERCENT of the time. From 85 percent response to 31 percent response – just because they thought, maybe the other person would take care of it! The sense of personal responsibility had been spread out to not me, but to the others.

The more people there, the more we think, “Oh, the others will take care of the emergency. They will make the call or run to give aid.” And the research showed that if no one else is acting, then it must not be a problem because if it were, the OTHERS would be responding.

So in the case of Kitty Genovese, it wasn't that no one called DESPITE that many people hearing her scream. The research showed it was BECAUSE there were so many people who heard her scream that no one called.

If Kitty Genovese had been attacked on that street that night and only one person heard her scream, then that one person would most likely have felt the need to respond and help immediately. That one person would know, it's up to me to save her.

Here's my point, and it doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure

out where I am going: When it comes to evangelism, is it possible that we might need to confess that I don't share about Jesus because I figure someone else will? Why me? Someone else will share the faith with my friends. And they can do it, while I nap.

But the deal is someone might have 10 Christian friends but none of them will intentionally try to lead that person to faith because the assumption is that one of the other 9 will, or maybe some televangelist will do it.

It's not that the ten are cold-hearted, busy people. It may be because they just don't feel a personal responsibility to act, and so the Christian “bystander apathy effect” happens in evangelism.

The fact of the matter is YOU may be the only one, the only one from whom your friend will hear a clear, HEALTHY presentation of the gospel. You may be the ONLY ONE who will think of inviting him to a worship service, an Alpha course, or a Christmas Eve service. You may be the only lifeline because no one else is doing it.

You may be the only Bible some people read so we better watch how we live because maybe we are telegraphing a lot about the Christian life to others. How appealing or offending Christianity is to them may be dependent on us.

At this point in the service you may be thinking, “Oh, good one, Dan. Now I feel really guilty. And worse yet, I don't think I know what to do.”

Hang on, hope is on the way. And you know me. I believe guilt is a bad motivator. Instead, hopefully we will be moved by joy because of the joy we feel with Christ we want others to know this joy and peace.

But don't worry I am not saying you have to know how to start a conversation, explain the gospel, pray and lead them to Christ all within 3 months. I am not saying that.

But I am talking about point number two:

2) We think leading people Christ means WE have to do everything.

No, you don't have to do everything. You may not feel you are skilled in everything about sharing the gospel. And there is the Holy Spirit with you. All we need to do is to consciously, intentionally, continually help people move down the field. What do I mean by that?

In a football analogy, our job is not to get someone from the goal line to run all the way 100 yards to the other side to score a touch down. Our job might be only to move them ten yards down the field and then maybe someone else takes over. But we must be willing to at least help people down the road as the goal that someday they might know what it means to have a personal relationship with Christ. In the final end zone we want our friends in heaven and not in hell.

The reality is if we don't share the gospel with our friends or family then guess what? Heaven for you is to be spending eternity with strangers because none of your friends are there. That's fun.

Seriously, what does it mean to move our friendships just ten yards down the field and not having to think we have to take them all the way? What would ten yards mean? It might mean, as I mentioned earlier, INTENTIONALLY inviting friends to the Alpha Course where trained people will host your friends.

Each session starts with a meal, followed by a video presentation of the basics of Christianity that is crisp, fun and relevant, and then there's discussion in a safe environment where our leaders are trained to listen and not preach at them. Alpha starts in a few weeks. So invite them now. Use the invite cards we made, or forward to your friends the email invite you got from the church last Friday.

Going ten yards might mean just inviting them to a worship service. Research shows that 50% of our friends would come to a worship service or church event if just asked. Fifty percent! I find that true for me.

It might also mean inviting them to a Life in the Spirit conference (“When Darkness Falls”) if they are going through a hard time. Or to a DivorceCare or GriefShare session, or a church Fun Day picnic next month. Just ten yards. You don’t have to feel responsible to go all the way down the football field with them.

In the case of Kitty Genovese, the neighbors didn’t have to run outside, fight the assailant, apply first aid, then go to the emergency room with her and do surgery to save her. They just had to go ten yards, which was to pick up the phone.

Let me tell you how ten yards really works. You may think you can’t lead a person to Christ. Well, you need to know that this thing called evangelism, or sharing the faith, is a team sport.

Imagine a scale. It’s the kind if you put more and more weight on one side that eventually one side falls and the other side goes up. Let’s say that each weight represents a prayer or an invite to a Christian event where someone might experience the love of God.

Evangelism is someone putting a little weight one year, and then someone else putting a little weight in another year until finally one day someone shares something and that person converts. There is a full-on conversion to accept Christ in his life and the scale drops, and the person gets closer to heaven by accepting Christ.

When you used to see Billy Graham giving an appeal for people to follow Christ and thousands upon thousands come forward to commit their lives, you need to know at that point Dr. Graham says he is just the one

who put the final weight on the scale when the scale goes down and the person converts.

Prior to that when that convert’s mom prayed for her when she was a child that was one weight, and when the grandparents gave her a Bible that was another weight. And one day when a friend invited her to a youth camp that was another weight or a mission trip that was another weight. In college, someone invited this person to a Navigators Bible Study. And one day someone invited him or her to church and that was another weight. Another time someone had a significant coffee talk about Jesus, and that was another weight. Until finally, in this illustration, she went to a Billy Graham crusade and that was what flipped the scale to go down, and she prayed to receive Christ in her heart.

Billy Graham may get the credit but Dr. Graham said it was a team effort where many people did their parts in helping someone get into the end zone on the other side. So the pressure is off of us, which leads to the final and third hurdle to evangelism:

3) We don’t know what to do.

Well, I gave you a list of things we could do in terms of coffee talks or invites to events or prayer. But you say, but Dan, how do I start? I say “Just walk across the room,” which is also the title of a book by Bill Hybels, which I encourage all of you to read. That book will give you some simple steps to point people to faith. What does that title mean?

Bill Hybels shares a story early in his book of how a man was a Muslim for most of his life. One night at a cocktail part he was by himself. People seemed to ignore him but then a man who was in a conversation with other people looked his way and noticed the Muslim man standing by himself. So he left his group and walked clear across the room and stuck out his hand and introduced himself.

They talked about their families, business, and sports, and at one point, the Muslim man admitted he was indeed a follower of Islam. The man who walked across the room said he was a Christ-follower but truth be told he knew almost nothing about Islam. So he asked him if he would do the courtesy of

explaining the basics of Islam over a cup of coffee sometime. He showed interest. No judgment. He just wanted to learn.

Well, one coffee time led to another and they began to meet again and again. The Muslim shared that he didn’t want any part of that Christian-ity that showed prejudice towards him. But at one point the Christ-follower shared about his faith and the Muslim learned that it was a different picture of this person named Jesus Christ.

Sometimes the Muslim would ask questions and the Christ-follower humbly said he didn’t know the answer but asked to give him a few days to find out. Finally one night, the Muslim knelt by his bedside and prayed to this Jesus who truly loved him and forgave him of his sins.

It all started because someone walked across the room. And that’s how the journey starts. Sometimes we just need to walk across the room and talk normally to people (not hyper-spiritually) about life, family, business, or sports.

Sometimes we might be taking out the garbage, and we see a neighbor we hardly know taking out his garbage and we walk across the street and eventually some day we ask them to come to an event here at the church.

I’ve talked to several of my neighbors about church, which can be even scarier because I’m a pastor. But as the research shows, half of them have come to our church to try it out.

I asked my doctor to come and then she started coming to church. My kids were on a tennis team and I would talk to the parents of the teammates and today at least one parent of each of those teammates comes to our church.

It just takes a moment to walk across the room. If each of our 1000 attenders in worship would bring one person to church that would be 1000 new people.

But you might say, “I don’t want 1,000 more people. I like it as it is.” But remember, it’s not about you. It’s about them. We exist for you but we also exist for people like you. Do you want to share the food you have from God with others? Then each one, reach one. Amen!