

## **We Evangelize**

Acts 1:6-8

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, August 26, 2018

Would you guys like to hear Mattie's testimony again? That was great, wasn't it? You're going to say the same thing about Paige's testimony here in a moment as well. I don't know what the average person hears in their job throughout the week, but I get to hear those kinds of things from time to time, and it's one of the reasons I got into the ministry. I love to hear what the Lord is doing in your lives, and it's such a blessing.

In fact, it was this time last year (some of you remember this) that I got to hear what the Lord was doing in all of your lives. Because on September 10th, 2017, we welcomed our first members into the church. Do you guys remember that? We had our first membership Sunday. And as part of that event, everyone who was joining the church wrote out their testimonies. And as part of the membership process, we went through those one at a time. The Advisory Council helped me with that and we went through those in about a three-month period of time.

I originally wanted to bring you all in at once to avoid all that effort, no offense, but I thought that'd be a lot of work. And so, I was talking to the Grace Advance guys and I said, "Let's just kind of shortcut this process, because they all know each other." They said, "You know what, if you do that, you're going to miss a great opportunity to get to know these people." And they were right.

I was so encouraged by what I read in your testimonies. And I've never done this before. I've never shared this with you, but I wanted to talk to you about a couple of patterns that popped up in your testimonies. Good patterns, great things that you talked about. Again, I was just getting to know everyone for the first time on this deep level.

A couple of things (I went back over some of these testimonies just last week) jumped out at me. One is that most of you, not everybody, but most of you came from a Christian background. Which means that you understand Chilliwack, right? Chilliwack is a very churched town. There's a church on every corner. Someone told me that at one time, Chilliwack had more churches per capita than any other town in Canada, and most of you were from a place like that. So, you can identify with the town. You knew Christian doctrine before you believed it, right? You talk the talk before you walk the walk. Which means that you also said this in your testimony - you came to a breaking point in your life. You came to a moment of decision where you had to ask yourself, "Am I going to follow Jesus or am I not? Am I going to make this real or am I going to keep pretending?" Some of you did that earlier in life. Some of you did it later on, but all of you did that in your testimonies. There came a point when things changed for you.

I loved what Maddie said in her testimony. She was actually telling me this a couple of weeks ago. She said, "I'm not going to go to heaven because I'm a sweet old lady." Right? You're not. No one gets into heaven by being a sweet old lady or a sweet old man or a sweet young person. You have to repent and trust in Christ. And that's another thing you said as well in your

testimonies. Over and over again, I heard you say that this was all of grace. All the glory goes to God, all the credit goes to Him, I didn't earn this.

I've lived in Chilliwack for about a year and a half now, a little over that. And one thing that strikes me as odd or interesting maybe, is that a lot of the Christian people here don't understand grace. It's the same way in the States, same problem. They understand the Bible to one degree or another, but they often think they're going to get into heaven on their own. They're going to earn it. "If I just go to church enough, if I just do good things enough, if I just pray enough, enough, enough, enough, enough, God will let me in." You know God doesn't do that. God doesn't operate on the merit system. "I do this much and I get this much back." He doesn't barter with us. "You know, I do good deeds and now I'll barter it and exchange it for eternity." Salvation is all of grace. He saves us when we least deserve it, not when we most deserve it, while we were sinners, not while we were saints. And you guys said that in your testimonies. Over and over again, I read those words. You understood that it's all of grace, and I want to commend you for that. It was such an honour to read that.

That brings us to our sermon this morning, because this morning we're looking at the vision statement of our church. And the first paragraph of our vision statement (it's up here on the screen, you can read with me). It says that,

Our vision is to proclaim grace upon grace to Chilliwack, British Columbia, and to the ends of the earth. John 1:16-17, says, "For of His fullness we've all received, and grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ."

It goes on and it says in the next slide there, it says,

At Grace Fellowship Chilliwack, we believe that salvation is all of grace and not of works. We believe it is something that God alone accomplishes in our lives and nothing we contribute to ourselves. We believe it is unmerited favour, where Jesus earns the Father's approval and, in His mercy, gives us the benefits of that through His shed blood on the cross and victorious resurrection from the tomb. Since we have received all of this, it is our vision as a church to proclaim grace upon grace in several ways.

And I have those listed up here for you on the screen as well, we proclaim grace upon grace through the Bible. We proclaim it through worship. We proclaim God's grace through evangelism and service. We do it through counselling and leadership. And finally, on the board there, we proclaim grace upon grace through equipping the saints. And if you want to read more about that, those points are all listed on our website and filled out for you. There's also a pamphlet in the foyer that says "Our Vision" on it. You can read about that there.

But this is what we want to do as a church. This is our vision. We want to proclaim God's grace to people. We want to tell them that it is all of God. Salvation is something He accomplishes and nothing we contribute to our ourselves. And we do it several ways. The first two we've already talked about: through the Bible and through worship. And you can listen to that online, those messages are on our website.

But this morning I want to talk to you about the third point with you. The third point of our vision statement says, it goes on in the next slide and it says,

We proclaim grace upon grace through evangelism. Because Jesus Christ has commissioned us to proclaim His grace, it is our vision to evangelize the lost. Grace is best seen in evangelism. When you've experienced the unmerited favour of God, you cannot help but tell others about it. When you've had your sins forgiven and your iniquities pardoned, you cannot wait to tell others how to do the same. Evangelism has been described as one beggar telling another beggar how to find bread, and that's the passion of our church. We'd love to tell sinners about the bread of life, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. John 6:35 says, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst."

Just a few comments on this part of our vision statement. I've recently taught on John 6; I am the bread of life. But the word "evangelize" in Greek comes from the word *euangelion*, which means "the Gospel" or "the Good News". So, an evangelist is someone who tells people the Good News. He tells them the Gospel. That's what the word means. If you think about it, the world can't do that because all it seems to know is bad news. You just turn on the television, what do you see? You see fires, fires, and more fires, right? I mean it looks like British Columbia is burning – it's bad news - bad news upon bad news. Half the year it floods here, the other half of the year, it burns. And I'm trying to get to understand ... People told me about wildfires and I was like, "This is a rain forest, how in the world are you going to have wildfires in a rain forest?" There was another story this week about a shooting in Toronto. There was another one, I think it was something that happened in the last several weeks, but in Ontario, several police officers committed suicide. This world is full of stuff like that. It's full of bad news. But the hope that we have as a Christian is that we have Good News. And the Good News is that in spite of all this suffering, in the midst of all this pain, our sins have been forgiven through Jesus Christ. We've found the bread of life, and now we want to tell others about Him. Now we want to tell others the Good News that we've heard.

A friend of mine was at a wedding several years ago when he was witnessing to a lost friend of his. This buddy of his did not know the Lord. He didn't know all this stuff about God's grace that we're talking about this morning. And as my friend was telling him this, his buddy cut him off. My friend was telling him the Gospel, his buddy interrupted him and he said, "Jeff, you got to tell people about that." He said, "Look, if you believe that, that God sent His Son to die so you don't go to hell," he said, "You got to preach it." This guy wasn't even saved, but he's right. If you believe the Good News, you've got to tell people. If you believe God sent His Son so that we don't have to go to hell, you got to make it known.

We just had a new baby born in our church this week. David and Evelyn Scott just had a little one. And what do you do when that happens? You got to tell people, right? Facebook has to know, you know. I was bragging on you guys on Facebook. But that's what you do, because you have good news, amen? You can't hold it in. It's the same way with Jesus Christ.

This actually ties into the rest of our vision statement. These points aren't up here, but the first point, if you remember, says, "We proclaim grace upon grace through the Bible." The second

one says, “We do it through worship.” And the idea is that if your heart is full of the Bible and it's full of worship, then you will evangelize people. You can't help it. It's not a forced thing, it's just natural. If your heart is full of the Word of God and full of praise, then people are going to know it. I told you before, my wife doesn't drink coffee. I keep trying to encourage that because I think they throw you out of British Columbia if you don't drink coffee in the first two years, right? You got two years and then that's it. She drinks tea and when she makes the tea, she puts the water on the stove and she heats it up and it spills out of the kettle, right? It's the same way with your life as a Christian. If you put the Bible in your heart and you heat it up in worship, it's going to spill out. It's going to go everywhere. It's going to land on your family, going to land on your friends, it's going to land on your neighbours. That's how evangelism works. That's how the Gospel works.

By the way, if you want to know some more about the Gospel, we just printed a pamphlet. You're going to see some pamphlets coming out from time to time in the life of our church. But we just printed one called “What is the Gospel?” It's in your bulletins. It looks like this, but it gives you a couple of points on the Gospel, and I'll say a little bit more about that in a moment. But those are also available for you in the foyer.

But with that said this morning, I want to take you to a passage that talks about this subject. It talks about evangelism. So, if you would, turn in your Bibles to the book of Acts chapter 1. If you're joining us for the first time this morning, we've been going through the Gospel of John. But to take a week off, we're going to look at the book of Acts. (We'll be back in John next week.)

As you're turning to the book of Acts, it's been said that this book has no ending, because the church didn't end in Acts. It carried on. Acts 28 is the last chapter, but the Lord could have put an Acts 29 and an Acts 30 and an Acts 31 in there, because the church didn't end with this book. The church is still with us today. In fact, we're the church. We're carrying on the work that started right here in the Scriptures. So, there's no ending to it, but there is a beginning right here in Acts chapter 1. There's a starting point.

Just to lead into this, if you remember your Bible history for a moment, you'll know that the church is the only institution that Jesus promised to build. It's the only one. Matthew 16:18 says, “I say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church.” And then the book of Acts shows us how He did that. It shows us how the Lord built His church. The disciples witness to people, baptize them and put them in churches. They didn't put them on a mountain top or in an ivory tower. They didn't put them in a cave where they could be all alone. They put them with other Christians. And as they did that, the church grew, it increased in size.

Just a couple of passages here, you don't have to turn there. But in Acts chapter 2, Peter preached the first Christian sermon ever recorded, and 3,000 people were saved. We know it was 3,000 because it says in Acts 2:41, it says, “So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls to the church.” That means somebody counted them. The numbers were typically recorded that way in the Bible. Somebody went around with a clipboard or a tablet and they counted everyone who joined the church, and it was 3,000 people. Quite a Sunday, right? You see the same thing happening in Acts 4:4, where it

says, "But many of those who heard the message believed; and the number of the men alone came to five thousand." So, now it's bigger. It goes from 3,000 to 5,000 were saved. 5,000 men, not counting women and children. Same thing in Acts 11:21. It says, "And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord." So, now, it's just a large number. Now, it's too many people to count.

But the point is that the church grew in the book of Acts. And it did it through the ministry of evangelism. That's the lesson you can learn from this book. The church grew as the people evangelized. The church had to grow in the book of Acts or it would have died. It had to get bigger or it would have disappeared with the 12 Apostles. So, it did that as people preached the Gospel to one another.

In his book, *Church History in Plain Language*, the author Bruce Shelley says that "First-Century Christianity was a spiritual explosion. Ignited by the teaching of Jesus, the church hurdled in all directions, geographic as well as social. It went all throughout the Roman empire and as far possibly East as India, a distance of over 4,000 miles." - without the Internet, without planes, trains and automobiles. One century, 4,000-mile explosion. And it did it in spite of pagan ridicule and persecution. It did it in spite of the fact that most of the Christians were poor, they didn't have anything.

What I want to talk to you about this morning is how all that got started. Like I said, the book doesn't tell you how the church ended, but it tells you how it started. So, how did this begin? How did the church grow at such an alarming rate? How did it get big so fast? Scholars have determined that there are basically three ways to grow a church; transfer growth where people transfer from other churches. There is biological growth where they come in biologically, they're born into Christian families. And then there's conversion growth where people are converted. And the scholars have said that the only way to grow the invisible church, the only way to grow the true church, the unseen church is conversion growth. So, how did that happen here? How did people get converted? I want to grow the church this way, do you? I want to see people lined up out the door getting baptized. I want to see people getting saved and I know you do as well. You want to hear testimony after testimony after testimony. So how does that work? How does the Lord do that? That's all of the Lord, but what does He do? And that brings us to our passage.

So, if you're taking notes, in Acts 1:6-8, Jesus gives the disciples five marching orders for evangelism. That's what I'm calling it any way. Five marching orders for evangelism. And Jesus doesn't say much in the book of Acts, He stops speaking in verse 8 because He ascends into heaven in verse 9. So, these are just some of the handful of words from the Lord we have here in the book of Acts. But before He leaves, He gives us some marching orders to follow.

Here's the first one. The first order is this: you need to evangelize whether you have all the answers or not. You need to evangelize whether you have all the answers or not. Nothing keeps us from evangelizing more than the fact that we don't have all the answers, right? Than the fact that we don't have it all figured out and we're afraid somebody's going to find out. Am I the only person that struggles with that? You think you're going to get into a conversation, they're going to ask you a question and you're going to look stupid, right? The disciples had the same challenge as well, and Jesus tells them to evangelize anyway.

If you read in verses 6 through 7, it says, “So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, ‘Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel.?’ He said to them, ‘It’s not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority.’”

We’ll stop there, but let me explain it to you, the setting for this event is sometime after the resurrection. Verse 3, right above this, says that, “For a period of 40 days after the resurrection, Jesus taught the disciples about the things concerning the Kingdom of God.” And then in verse 4 says He gathered them together, commanded them not to leave Jerusalem. And verse 6 says, “At that time, when they were in Jerusalem, they were asking Jesus saying, ‘Lord, is it at this time You’re restoring the kingdom to Israel?’” In other words, “Is the kingdom coming now? This earthly reign that you’ve been talking about for the past month, Jesus, is it going to start now? You’ve done all the preparation for it. You’ve taught the people, You’ve done the miracles, You’ve died on a cross, risen from the grave, so, is it coming now?” Verse 3 says that they’ve been talking about this for quite some time and they wanted to know when it would begin.

Some background on that question - it’s a great question. The Old Testament did not say there would be a gap between the two appearances of the Messiah. It didn’t say that the Messiah would come and then come again, and so this is why they ask that. You can add to this, that the word “king” or “kingdom” appears more than 3,000 times in the Bible, most of it relating to the Messiah. If you do a little math on that, the word “love”, which is a very important word in the Bible, appears a thousand times. The word “king” or “kingdom” or “rule” or “reign” appears 3,000 times. One scholar even said you could call the Bible the book about the coming Kingdom of God, because it talks about this so much. So, this was their question here. They want to know when’s that going to start. And Jesus says in verse 7, He says, “The time is not for you to know. It’s not for you to know times and epochs, which the Father has fixed by His own authority.”

“Times and epochs” is another way of saying “times and seasons”, or one translation of the Bible says “times and dates”. “Only the Father knows that. Only the Father has the authority to determine that. That’s not your business,” Jesus says, “But it is your business ...” He goes on to say, “... to evangelize. It is your business to go into the world and tell them what you know about the kingdom. And you do it whether you have all the answers or not. You do it whether you know all the times and dates. I’ve told you enough,” He says, “Now go out and tell others what I’ve said.”

Evangelism is simple at the end of the day. You just need to tell people what you know about Jesus. I mean know the right things, right? Understand what the Scripture says, and then go tell people what you know. You don’t have to have all the answers. You don’t have to have it all figured out. Just have the Gospel figured out and tell people that.

When John Newton, the author of Amazing Grace was dying, he said, “I’m an old man now and my memory is fading, but I remember two things very clearly. I’m a great sinner and Jesus is a great Saviour.” That’s what you need to tell people. You’re a great sinner, Christ is a great Saviour. John MacArthur said, “Evangelism is pretty straightforward. You need to find someone who knows less about Jesus than you do, and tell them what you know.” And I don’t want to minimize the importance of doctrine in saying this. I don’t want to say the kingdom and end times don’t matter, because they do. If you notice, Jesus spent 40 days teaching about the

kingdom here; 40 days talking about end times. So, those things are important. I would have loved to sit in that class, wouldn't you - taking notes? But at the same time, Jesus does not let the disciples' ignorance keep them from evangelizing the lost. And He won't let your ignorance do it either. You need to tell people what you know.

The story is told of a woman in Africa who got saved but she couldn't read, and she was blind. So, she was very, very limited in what she could do for the Lord. So, what she decided to do is she sat outside of a local school and she had someone open her Bible to John 3:16, and as the students would walk by the school, she would ask them, "Young man, can you read this to me? Or young lady, do you know what this says?" And they would read, "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son." And after they finished reading that verse, the blind woman would ask them, "Do you know what this means?" And she would evangelize them. It can be as simple as that. You just open up your Bible and tell people what you know.

You know in the "What is the Gospel?" pamphlet that we have up here, it says there are five key points to the Gospel. If you want to open it up, I can just tell them to you while you're looking at them. They go like this and they're very simple: You know, God is holy. We're not holy. God is angry at our sin, but God is love. He sent His son because God is love and we're responsible to that. Five key components to the Gospel. God is holy; He's up here and we're not there. We're down here in sin, and God will hold us accountable. He will punish our sins if we don't repent. But that's why He sent Jesus so that if we believe in Him, we'll be saved. Tell people that. Hand them one of these pamphlets.

But the first point here is that you're not supposed to let your ignorance keep you from evangelizing. You don't get off the hook because you didn't go to Bible college or you hadn't been in church for 20 years. Tell them what you know.

That leads to another marching order for evangelism that Jesus gives to the disciples. And that is that you need to evangelize with confidence. Not only do you need to evangelize whether you have all the answers or not, but you need to evangelize with confidence. You need to do it with boldness, knowing God will use what you say. If you think about the context for this verse, the disciples were probably nervous as Jesus said this because Jesus had just been crucified. You can put yourself in their shoes for a minute, but Jesus had just been nailed to a cross in Jerusalem, the place where they're standing, and now Jesus is saying, "Go back there and tell them about Me."

Now, I don't know about you, but I would be a little hesitant, right? I would take some polls maybe or some surveys first, see if they're still angry. It would certainly make me nervous. So, to comfort them, Jesus says in verse 7, if you read, He said, "It's not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority, but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you." "You can't do this on your own," Jesus says. "You're not strong enough, but you can do it with the power of the Holy Spirit." The Jews had just killed the Messiah. They had just rejected everything He had to say. "But now I'm sending you back, not alone, but with the Spirit." Adrian Rogers said, "You could sooner fly a broomstick to the moon than preach the Gospel without the Holy Spirit." That's what Jesus is saying here. And He says, "After I leave ..." (that's going to happen in verse nine, just below this), "you will receive this power."

The word “power” there in verse 8 (if you were with us in the Roman series, it's a very familiar term) it's the Greek word *dunamis* from which we get the word “dynamite”. You saw that in Romans 1:16. Where it says, “For I'm not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power [the dynamite] of God for salvation.” The Gospel is God's dynamite. It blows it all up. I told you before, you can't throw dynamite in a room and expect nothing to change. And you can't throw the Gospel in a room and expect nothing to change either. The Gospel will change things.

A man was once reading the Bible to his unsaved wife, because he had just gotten saved. He was blown away with the things he was reading and he said, “Honey, I got to read this to you.” And he just started reading out loud. And after a few minutes she said, “Stop it, stop it, I can't take it anymore! I feel so convicted!” That's because this is dynamite. This is the power of God. And the idea here is that when you preach the Gospel, you have power going out of you and you have power going into them. You have power on both sides. You have power when you speak, the power of the Holy Spirit, and you have power in what you say, for the Gospel is the power of God for salvation. It is power, power, power, power, strength, all the way around.

You want to know how to change Chilliwack? This is how you do it. You want to know how to change Canada? This is how you do it. You want to know how the Apostles turned the world upside down? This is how they did it. With the power of the Holy Spirit. They didn't do it. Read the Gospels and tell me how impressive the disciples are. They're just a bunch of failures, right? It was the Spirit in them that did this. If you want to read about that, Acts chapter 2:1-4. Let me just read what happened when the Spirit came upon them. This is what Jesus is describing in verse 8. But it says in chapter 2,

1 When the day of Pentecost had come, they were altogether in one place. 2 And suddenly there came from heaven and noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.

We don't have time to get into the gift of tongues here. We could do that another time, but the passage goes on to say as a result of this, as a result of the Spirit coming down on them, Peter stands up, preaches to the crowds at Pentecost and 3,000 are saved. That's the power it's talking about here. And the idea here is that the same power that filled him, fills you. The same Spirit that came upon him has come upon you. So, you need to be confident when you tell people the Gospel. You don't need to be afraid.

You guys know what it's like to evangelize to someone, right? You get to talking with them, sharing with them, and you find out they're not a Christian and you say, “Oh boy, I got one,” right? I'm the only one? Okay. “This is my opportunity, I've been praying for this.” And so, you start telling them all the things we're talking about, right? You tell them, God is holy, we're not holy. God is angry ... and somewhere right there you stop, right? You freeze up. Why? Because you forget about the power that lives in those words. You forget about the Spirit that is within you. You forget that you're not alone. When you preach Christ and Him crucified, you don't do it alone. And while they may not have ears to hear what you have to say, they will hear what He

has to say if it's His will. And while they may not listen to you, they will listen to Him. This is spiritual dynamite. This is TNT. Donald Grey Barnhouse said that, "When I preach, I look at my audience as kegs of gunpowder and I'm just throwing sparks at them, and wondering which ones going to light up." We do the same thing when we speak for the Lord.

That leads to the rest of these marching orders, because if you have this kind of confidence, you can do this anywhere. If you have this kind of power, there's no limit to what you can do or where you can go for the Lord, and that's what Jesus goes on to say. (And we're going to go through the rest of these pretty quickly.) But the third marching order for evangelism is that you need to evangelize your town. If you don't have to have all the answers and the Holy Spirit lives inside of you and you can be confident in that, then you need to evangelize your town. You need to start where you're planted. Start where the Lord has placed you. If you look in verse 8, that's exactly what it says. It says, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem ..." Jerusalem is the place where this conversation is taking place.

Verse 12, if you look on down, it says that after Jesus said this and ascended into heaven, "Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away." That phrase "a Sabbath day's journey" is another way of saying "a very short distance". You weren't supposed to walk very long on the Sabbath. So, this is a couple of hundred yards here. In fact, the mount called Olivet or the Mount of Olives (it's another way of saying the Mount of Olives) today, it's actually located in the city of Jerusalem because the city has grown. But in the first century, it was just outside the walls. This is where the Garden of Gethsemane was. This was where Jesus was arrested before He was crucified. And it was as if Jesus was saying, "Do you see that city over there? Start evangelizing there. You see the place where you're standing? Tell people there. Don't go far away first, start here. Don't go overseas yet, start where you're planted." And that's what they did. In chapter 2, the Spirit came down, rested on the Apostles, and they go right outside their front door and start evangelizing people.

And the idea here is that there's no point in reaching people far away if you're not reaching them nearby, amen? Does that make sense? There's no point in going into someone else's backyard, someone else's country if you're not doing it in your own. Start in your country first. Start in your own backyard first. I meet young people all the time who say that they want to be missionaries. They want to tell people the Gospel in India or China, which is great. We want young people like that. We pray for people like that. But I always ask them when they tell me that, "Are you doing that here? Are you doing that in Chilliwack? Because if you're not doing it here, there's no reason to think you're going to do it there. If you can't witness to people in your own language, there's no reason to think you're going to be able to witness to people in Chinese or Indian or another language. You have to do it here." H A. Ironside said that no one is fit to be a missionary abroad who is not a missionary at home. He said, "An ocean voyage never made a missionary out of anyone."

You know, just a real quick comment on that. I think it's interesting in the study of the history of missions, one thing that you'll learn is especially in the 1700s, 1800s, you didn't just get on a plane and go to another country and come back. You had to get on a ship and you were on that ship for months. And a matter of fact, if you had a big group of people, say you have 30

missionaries that were going into another country, they would split you up on ships, because they didn't know if one of those ships was going to sink or not. And they didn't want to lose all their investment.

So, I think it's a very fair thing Jesus is telling the disciples here. "Look, you're in Jerusalem, start there." And then He says, "Then spread out." Which leads to another marching order for evangelism. And that is you should evangelize your area or your community; province - maybe that's the word we could use here. You should evangelize your town, the place where you live, and then you should evangelize your province. Verse 8 says, "And you shall be witnesses, both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria." Judea and Samaria are references to the area, the provinces surrounding Jerusalem. The province that Jerusalem was in. At the time this book was written, Israel was divided into three provinces. You had Galilee in the north and you had Samaria in the middle. And then you had Judea in the south where Jerusalem was. And what Jesus is saying here is that, "You should start where you are, be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and then spread out into Judea." Simple, simple strategy. Go to your neighbour next door and then go to the neighbour next door and then go to the neighbour next door. And when you run out of those guys, go into the next town, and the next town, and the next town. Keep going.

Bethlehem, Jericho and Bethel, were all cities located in the province of Judea. As a matter of fact, it's pretty interesting, you can almost see Bethlehem from Jerusalem. So, Jesus was born and died almost with an eyesight of each other. Hebron and Bethpage and Emmaus, they were all in Judea. Gezer was there. Bethany, the home of Mary and Martha and Lazarus, which we'll talk about next week. That was in this province. Jesus says, "Start there. And then go into Samaria, where I evangelized the woman at the well." I couldn't pronounce all the names of the towns in Samaria, so, I'm not even going to try. "But go there," He says. The Jews considered Samaritans half-bloods, dirty race, part Jew, part Gentile - dirty people. "Go there and tell them the Gospel." And the disciples did that.

Later on, in Acts chapter 8, you find Phillip baptizing an Ethiopian Eunuch in Samaria. So, not only is he witnessing in Samaria, but Philip is witnessing to an Ethiopian, a full-blooded Gentile and a Eunuch. Someone they would have considered to be repulsive. And he leads the man to the Lord, baptizes him. And some believe that man took the Gospel back to Ethiopia and planted a church there.

That leads to one more marching order for the church. You need to evangelize to the remotest ends of the earth. You need to evangelize even though you don't know all the answers. You need to evangelize with confidence. Evangelize your town and your province, and finally, you need to evangelize to the remotest part of the earth. You need to evangelize, Jesus says, until you have no place left to go. Until you have reached the end of the earth.

If you look in verse 8, and the entire verse, it says, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

The word "remote" there is *eschatos* from which we get the word eschatology. It means "the end with the final part". Jesus says, "You need to evangelize until you reach the final part of the

earth. You need to evangelize until you get to the end of it.” The English Standard Version says, “the end of the earth.” King James says, “the outermost part.” But the idea here is that you go everywhere.

It's kind of an interesting thing to say to these disciples. If you remember the story of the disciples, they were simple fishermen, tax collectors. They had ordinary jobs, which means that most of these guys had probably never been outside of Israel before. The remotest part of the earth for them probably would be Samaria or Galilee. We would say Hope, right? Hope is the remotest part of the earth, down Highway 1 there, you know. Some of you don't know, Canada goes past Hope. It goes further than that. That's how these guys would have thought. But if you read the book of Acts, the interesting thing is they got on board real quickly and they went everywhere. A few of them, as a matter of fact, a few of them died in Israel, but most of them died all over the globe. They died in places as far away as Armenia, Greece and Patmos. Some of them died in present day Iran and Syria. Some say the Apostle Matthew died in Ethiopia. Where that Eunuch was from. The book of Acts even closes in the city of Rome, which was 2,500 miles from Jerusalem at this time. The book starts here in this city, Jerusalem, and it ends in Rome with Paul under house arrest, because the Gospel made it that far. In two or three decades, with no planes, trains and automobiles, no Internet, no cell phones, it travelled 2,500 miles or more.

But I say all that to say, this is what we're trying to do as a church. This is our vision. We want to proclaim grace upon grace through evangelism. We want to tell people about Jesus and we want to do it like Jesus tells us to right here, by being His witnesses, both in Jerusalem and in Judea and Samaria and to the remotest parts of the earth. And we want to do it in the power of the Spirit and we want to do it even though we don't have all the answers. And we don't know everything. We don't have it all figured out, but we know Who saved us and we can tell people that. We know the Good News and we want to share that with others.

Let me say it this way, do you want to see the church grow? I know you do. I do. It's not about numbers, it's about people, right? And we want to impact people. Do you want to experience the power of the Holy Spirit? Jesus says, “Here's the way you do that - you need to evangelize your neighbour.” You need to share the Gospel with the people God's put in your life. God has put you in the job you're in, God has put you in the neighbourhood you're in, God has put you in the school you're in, for a very simple reason - to be His witnesses. That's the way it works. That's the way God operates. That's what worked then and that's what will work now. That's what the Apostles did in the first century, that's what we're supposed to do in the 21st. The plan hasn't changed. It's still the same.

There are several ways we're doing this as a church, just to mention some of the ways that we're doing this. We want to grow in it and we want to do more, but there's several ways that we're doing it right now. And one way is through some of the ministries that we're involved in. Some of the regular outreaches that we participate in. Like some you have been to the Ruth and Naomi's Homeless Shelter. Some of you know on the third Sunday of the month, people from our church go to downtown Chilliwack to serve in a homeless shelter there. And we cook meals and give a message and we evangelize that way. Just one opportunity we have for you to do that.

If you've been there before, you'll know they're very receptive to that. The last time I preached, after I finished, I had a guy shout at me, "Keep going, keep going!" I said, "I'm out of my notes, I'm done. I don't have any ..." But he said that because he wanted to hear more. I mean he wanted to hear the Gospel. And that's one way to get involved. Find out ministries like that we're involved in and get on board.

We also have several outreach events every year that we do where we go into Judea and Samaria, so to speak. One of them we did a couple of weeks ago, a couple months ago, was the Canada Day Outreach at Harrison Hot Springs. And at that event, several of us went out and we passed out tracks to the people who came to celebrate Canada Day. And we talked to them about the Lord and we witnessed to them. I don't know if we ever got a count of how many tracks we passed out, but we talked to a lot of people that day.

We do the same thing at the Abbotsford bus stop several times a year. Some of our people even go into Vancouver, although that's pushing the boundaries of Samaria a little bit. Vancouver's a long way away. Just kidding, but you guys can get involved in that, serve in that way. When you see that in the bulletin, get on board.

Some of our people, this is a very, very new thing and it doesn't happen a whole lot, but a little bit at this point. We do a little bit of outreach counselling here. Where people will call the church office or they'll contact one of our people and ask for counselling. They'll tell us about their marriage problems. They'll tell us about family problems, personal problems, and we counsel them and tell them about Jesus that way.

But let me say this, the greatest way you can evangelize right now is one on one, with your family, with your friends, co-workers. The greatest impact you can make for Christ is to tell people what you know about Jesus. Let me say it this way, the two testimonies you're going to hear this morning, this is how they came to the Lord. Mattie and Paige came to the Lord because one of you shared the Gospel with them. And that's the way it works. That's the way the Lord saves people. Eventually, I think we would like to have a missions program to send people overseas, but we're going to start here first in our own backyard.

On May 16th, 1998, Christopher Searcy was playing basketball with his friends in Chicago, when he was wounded by a drive-by shooting. The bullet was not intended for him, it was intended for someone else. But it struck him by accident in the chest. And immediately, his friends rushed him to the hospital where he was denied entrance because the staff said it was against their policy to go outside the hospital to help someone. Eventually, a policeman brought him in, but by that time it was too late. Christopher Searcy died on the operating table.

I mention that story because I think there can be a temptation to do that in the church. There can be a temptation to let people die outside of our doors. To let them die in the street. And we can be so focused on what is going on in here that we forget what's going on out there. And can I just say this, may that never be said of us. May we never forget why we're here. We're here to give people the Good News. We're here to go out in the streets with the Gospel and to proclaim grace. Let's pray and thank the Lord for the grace He's given us in His Word.

Father, we thank you Lord, for salvation, for the eternal life we have in Your Son. For the way Jesus has died on the cross for our sins, risen from the grave and done all the things we've talked about this morning to show us Your grace. Lord, we don't deserve it, but that's what makes it grace. We haven't earned it, and Father may we be humbled by the reflection on that this morning.

Lord, I do pray if there's any of you any here this morning who are not familiar with the Good News of Jesus Christ, if they have not trusted in that alone, that You would save them today. That they would be evangelized just sitting in this room. And Lord, for those who are believers, who have trusted in Christ and believe in Him and hope in Him, completely, hope in Him alone, Lord, I pray this would be a call to action. That they would go out into their towns and communities and tell them what Jesus has done for sinners.

Lord, may You be glorified and honoured in the remainder of our service. May these baptisms please You and remind us of the new life we have in Christ. We pray this in Jesus' name, amen.