

Come and See!

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Introduction.

- A. I'd like to talk to you this morning about evangelism. I know, I know—as soon as a preacher utters those words at the start of a sermon, most minds in the congregation are filled with an earsplitting mental groan. “Oh, boy!” we're all thinking. “Another sermon on evangelism. Here comes the guilt trip!” The thing is, all of us know perfectly well that the Bible tells us to evangelize. Jesus tells us to in the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19. We see ordinary Christians preaching the gospel in Acts 8:4.
- B. Most of us also know that we aren't helping to spread the gospel the way that we should be. It's a really unpleasant thought, isn't it? We love God, we're committed to serving Him, we want to do everything He tells us to do, and yet there's this one thing that He plainly tells us to do that we aren't doing. Whenever we think about it, it doesn't take us long to start feeling REALLY guilty. We come up with excuses to explain why we aren't doing anything—we don't know what to say, the people in this part of the country don't care about the gospel, we're not any good at it, etc.,--but we still have to face this command of God that we're not obeying.
- C. And that right there is a big part of the problem. There are a whole lot of really good Christians out there who are scared to death about evangelism. We've let the devil build it up in our minds until it's this horrible impossible task that we can't do and that will tear us apart if we don't do it.
- D. Folks, here's what we need to do about evangelism. First of all, we need to relax. We need to take a deep breath and look at evangelism as it really is instead of through the lens of our fears. The fact of the matter is, at its most basic level, reaching out to the lost doesn't require that much from us, and it's not that hard.
- E. Let's look at an example of this—the Samaritan woman of John 4. She is not one of the more impressive characters of the Bible. Before her encounter with Jesus, her life has led her to take five different husbands. In America, we have a name for women like that. We call them movie stars. In any case, this woman with Hollywood-level morals has a conversation with Jesus by the well of Jacob in which He demonstrates that He knows all about her turbulent personal life and claims to be the Christ.
- F. We see her response in John 4:28-30. Literally everything she knows about Jesus at this point can fit in one page of our Bibles, but what does she do? She goes back to town, tells the men there what she knows, and urges them to come hear Jesus. This woman, the newest of new converts, who knows almost nothing about the truth, is able to do the Lord's work simply by inviting others to come hear Him. All of us—every last single one of us—can fulfill His command without doing anything more than she did. This is evangelism at its most basic, but it's still evangelism. Let's spend this morning learning how we can be most effective at simply saying “Come and see!”

I. Let Our Light Shine

- A. If we want to succeed at this type of evangelism, we first need to learn to let our light shine. Jesus Himself discusses this in Matthew 5:14-16. Here's what we need to take from this Scripture:
 1. First, as Christians, we need to resist the temptation—and it is an actual temptation—to blend in. This isn't something that we naturally want to do. All of us learned in junior high that we DON'T want to be different, because being different is “bad.” This life lesson runs head-on into the gospel of Christ. Jesus tells us that if we want to serve Him, we have to be as conspicuously different as He was. Our problem is that we want to be like Christ, but we also want to be like the world. To often, we solve the problem by finding ways to be inconspicuously different. We act like Jesus when other Christians are watching, but when we're out in public, we tone it down and hope to get by without having people notice our faith.
 2. We can't do that. As Jesus said, it's pointless to light a lamp and then put it under a basket. Indeed, it's worse than pointless. The only way we can really hide is by imitating the world so well we have ceased to imitate Christ. On the other hand, if we take Christ rather than the world for our standard, we will be noticed. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden, and neither can a Christian who is truly living like Jesus.
- B. If we're doing what we're supposed to, our good works will shine and cause others to glorify God. Let's look at three ways we can shine:
 1. First, we can shine in godly speech. Ephesians 5:3-4 gives us the baseline. We need to make sure that the foul language and dirty jokes that are becoming so common in today's world never appear in our conversation. This is true both for the sake of our souls and for the sake of our ability to shine. Everybody knows that real Christians don't cuss. If we do, 99 percent of the world is going to dismiss our efforts to spread the gospel out of hand—and they're probably right to do so.
 2. However, godly speech includes far more than just clean language. Philippians 2:14-15 tells us to do all things without grumbling or disputing. Real Christians don't just not cuss. They also don't whine. This means that if a bunch of our co-workers are standing around the water cooler complaining about how

- much they hate something the boss has just done, and we join in, we have just disobeyed God. We have taken an opportunity to shine and turned it into an opportunity to sin. On the other hand, if we resist that very natural impulse to grumble, look what this verse says we've done. We've proved ourselves to be blameless and innocent. We've proved ourselves to be above reproach. We've become lights in the world.
3. Second, we must shine in godly behavior. Peter explains in 1 Peter 2:11-12. This passage points out something we all need to understand. From the moment that other people become aware that we're Christians, we go on trial for Jesus. There are a lot of people out there who will look to our behavior for an excuse not to change their behavior. They're waiting for us to put a foot wrong so they can say, "All those Christians are just hypocrites. They're not any better than the rest of us." We must not give them the chance. We need to show the doubters that there really is something different about living for Jesus so that they will want to live for Him too. We need to be people of exemplary conduct.
 4. Finally, we need to shine in our love for others. Consider 1 John 3:10. This passage tells us that there are two things that make our Christianity obvious. First, we have to live righteously. Second, we have to love. We have to live our lives with a heart that genuinely seeks the good of others. If we have that heart, it will show up in our actions in a million different ways. In fact, it can't help but show up. If we are loving people, everyone around us will know it. Our light will shine in our love.

II. Make the Most of the Opportunity.

- A. As important as letting our light shine is to evangelism, we must recognize that merely being a good example is not evangelism by itself. It only provides us with an opportunity to evangelize. If we want to be effective workers in the kingdom, we must learn to make the most of our opportunities. This is what Paul tells us in Colossians 4:5-6. When our hard work in letting our light shine produces results, when someone asks us about our faith or we have an opportunity in conversation to talk to them, we need to be able to take that as far as it will go. Here are two things we need to think about to do what God wants:
 - B. First, we need to be people who have a plan for dealing with spiritual topics. Paul tells us in this passage that we should know how to respond to every outsider who talks to us about the Lord, and the only way we can do that is if we've thought about it first. Otherwise, no matter how good the opportunity is, we'll waste it. I have a Christian friend back in Missouri who is a successful businessman. One day about ten years back, one of his employees came up to him and asked him to teach him how to be a Christian. It was an evangelistic opportunity that most of us would die for, but it never went anywhere. The opportunity was wasted because my friend didn't know what to say. He'd never taken the time to think about it. We need to know how to respond to each person. We might respond by asking them to study the Bible with us. We might respond just by inviting them to services. Whatever our response is, though, we need to know what it's going to be. We need to have a plan, and we need to carry that plan out.
 - C. Second, once we have our plan and put our plan into action, just by issuing our invitation, we can't stop there. We need to follow up. This is true in a number of different ways.
 1. First, we need to follow up before the service by repeating our invitation. If we invite a co-worker two weeks beforehand, it really helps if we call him after a week has gone by, remind him of the invitation, and tell him we're really looking forward to seeing him there. Repetition helps so much. It reminds me of a story Max Dawson tells about the days when he had a radio program. After each program was over, he would mail a tape of the program to anyone who wanted one. If he mentioned that tapes were available once during the show, after the show was over, he might get a call or two asking for one. However, if he mentioned the tapes four or five times, he would be flooded by tape requests. Repetition works, and we need to use it.
 2. Second, if our prospect accepts our invitation and comes to the service, we need to follow up with him after the service is over. The fact is, simply by coming through the doors once, our friend has made it ten times more likely that he will be saved, and that makes him a high-quality prospect. We need to tell him that we're glad he came. We need to ask him what he thought of the service. Finally, the next time an opportunity arises, we need to invite him back to another service.
 - D. Of course, if we're going to practice this style of come-and-see evangelism, we need an occasion on which to practice it. The recent uproar about *The Da Vinci Code* has given us just such an opportunity. On May 21, three weeks from today, I'm going to preach a sermon called "The Bible, *The Da Vinci Code*, and the Truth," which explains why *The Da Vinci Code's* provocative claims about Christianity are false. People in the community need to hear this lesson, and they should be interested in hearing it. Let's all resolve to invite two people each to this special service. We can do this, and we can do the Lord's work by doing it.

Conclusion. If you have heard the Lord's call, come to Him today.