

February 9, 2019 Florida Hospital Seventh-day Adventist Church
Matthew 28:19-20 My Salvation Isn't Just for Me by Andy McDonald

I'm really glad that my friend and colleague, Jeff Cinquemani, is alive today. Most all of you know by now that he miraculously survived what they call the widow maker heart attack. We've been friends for a long time and it would have been devastating to have lost him.

Jeff is a guy who quickly and easily loves to share good news with others. He's a bit of a foody. When he and Tami, and Vicki and I were in Italy together I think for Jeff more than seeing Mount Vesuvius or Pompeii, more important than touring Naples, the Amalfi Coast, or even Rome, was Jeff's pursuit of the perfect pizza! Jeff loves finding a great new restaurant whether in Italy or Orlando. But when he discovers some culinary delight it is just too good of news not to share, and I just love it when he gets this little twinkle in his eye and a certain smile comes across his face as he excitedly begins to tell me about a new place I have to check out. Sometimes he's so excited it makes me wonder if he might have invested in the place! But no, he just has found something really good and it demands sharing. His joy in eating there the next time will be enhanced knowing some of us have tried it and found the joy of that food because he shared it! Of course we may want to limit our full consumption of that favorite pizza, we don't want to follow in the footsteps of his heart attack!

A number of years ago circumstances came about that two of my very best friends in the world ended up living in the same town. When I realized that they were both just minutes apart I began to work on both of them. I told them they had to meet. I knew that the joy that I found in each of their friendships was highly likely to be the opportunity for each of them and their families to have their lives enriched by getting acquainted. I hammered on both of them. Finally threatening to come across the country to their city, track each of them down, and make personal introductions. But my badgering of them finally worked, they met, it clicked, today they are very much involved in each other's lives, and are in business ventures together, and I've now had the joy

on many occasions for the three of us to be together working on some project.

What is news' you love to share? Something good that comes to your attention or mind or interest that seems to just demand that you pass it along to others?

What is it that even if you don't regularly post on Facebook is so good that it demands you share?

This week I read the blogging of Aela Mass in a post entitled, "After Three Years, I'm Finally Pregnant." Her post was preceded by these words in italics: "*After three years, multiple IVF cycles, a devastating miscarriage, and countless setbacks...Aela's road to motherhood has been anything but easy.*"

She writes: "I'm in awe that I'm even writing this post. I think I had started to believe that it would never happen for us. I stopped expecting success; I stopped expecting a positive. But I'm pregnant!"

Whether it is difficult journey or a simple surprise, a baby on the way is news we love to share.

From a new job to a promotion

From a restaurant recommendation to a new recipe

From a stock pick that did you well to a great day at the beach

From acceptance into the school of your choice to announcing graduation

From a quiet morning sitting with your love to attending that play you always wanted to see

From a drive down a quiet country road to a weekend in NYC

From finding that perfect antique to spotting some creature in the wild

From reading a great book to completing the writing of your own

What is the hobby, or thing you do, that you so enjoy that you attempt to recruit others to join you, to become a fellow participator in that which brings you satisfaction.

I love trying new things. Starting something. I'm not nearly so good at finishing as I am at starting. But I love trying new stuff. I've talked about not going back to the same restaurant until we've tried all the ones in our area. But some I enjoy so much that I find myself back again. But in the vein of trying new things my daughter has a love or knitting. And so I let her show me some rudimentary first steps and while I haven't fallen in love with knitting, I enjoyed taking a stab at it because she and my daughter-in-law both love it so much.

What's the subject, that given enough time, will surface in your conversation? What is it that you love to think and talk about?

The text attached to our message today is one with which most Christians are familiar. In fact it is such a key text in Christianity it is one of those we've given a name. Do you know what I mean? We don't refer to Exodus 20:2-17 instead we say in the "Ten Commandments". We may not refer to Genesis 1-3 but instead discuss the Creation Story. Rather than reading Leviticus 24:19-21 about eye for eye and tooth for tooth and life for life we might just refer to the lex talionis. Matthew 6:9-13 we call "The Lord's Prayer"

Our text for today is called "The Great Commission"
Jesus said, "I have been given complete authority in heaven on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teaching them to observe all things I have commanded. And I am with you always even to the end of the age."

When you invite someone to join you in a pursuit, hobby, activity, or interest, you are seeking to make that person a disciple of whatever it is of which you are a disciple.

The dictionary says a disciple is a convinced adherent of a school or individual; a follower or student of a teacher, leader, or philosopher.

In our vernacular today it is sort of a bit like being a fan but more. A fan may like a person or a school of thought while a disciple doesn't just like them but sort of seeks to be like, or be mentored, or be around that person or school of thought that it might fully be embedded in them.

So this week I've wrestled with why we aren't, and when I say we it's a very inclusive we. I mean we as in all who profess to be followers of Jesus Christ, why aren't we better sharers of our faith, what keeps us from being not just fans but Raving Fans. What holds us back from going and getting more to join us as disciples?

I mean if this is the big end of Jesus ministry to commission us as ambassadors, good news sharers, at least facebook followers, why aren't we more zealous.

And I'm afraid that it may be for two reasons. The first reason is related to our American individualistic culture. There are many cultures in our world that are more communal. Where the family unit, the tribe isn't just a place individuals belong, but that communal group may eclipse the individual. The family, the tribe, the group supersedes the individual.

But here we have elevated the individual. We quickly move to my privileges, my rights, my understanding, my truth, my perception, my way.

We seem to want every individual to have every individual right regardless of inconvenience or even infringement of one individual's right on that of another.

And in a culture of individual success and individual failure we may have been influenced to think of salvation in this same way. It is an

individual's choice to receive. It is between the individual and God and it is part of our personal spirituality and that's a very personal and even private thing. So we don't talk about it and we fear that it will compete with someone else's spiritual journey so I'll let them have their journey and I'll have mine and I'll try and find some people who have a spiritual journey similar to mine and we'll hang out maybe even worship together.

This may contribute to a little of our lack of zeal as disciple makers. As raving fans who are all about expanding the fan base.

But second, what I really think may be behind any of our hesitancy to make disciples is some lack of understanding about how good the good news really is.

If, in our Christian journey it has felt like our faith is some heavy burden we have to carry. If we feel like walking with Jesus is somehow diminishing our life, holding us back from joy and life why would we ever want to share it?

So I want to ask us, Is the gospel we hold good news?

I'm pretty sure the pure gold of the amazing news of God's grace has been contaminated by well meaning followers of Christ, not trying to do damage but doing so nonetheless.

Is the gospel you hold good news? Does it carry you or must you carry it?

Is the concept of measuring up good news?

Is Jesus being your example good news?

Is living in fear of losing your salvation good news?

Is the pressure of needing to make people agree with you in order for them to have good news, is that good news to you?

Is believing that some part of salvation is your responsibility good news?

Is an invitation to say the “sinners” prayer using only just the right words, goodnews?

A few weeks ago Terry Owen taught the lesson in the Character’s Class on Adam and Eve and the fall. It was amazing as Terry unpacked the first three chapters of Genesis, the Creation Story. What struck me was that post the fall of Adam and Eve, they do nothing to get back with God. All the actions of coming back together are the actions of God.

Because salvation is always the work of the savior and not the saved.

Today I want to stretch us. To stretch our understanding of how good the gospel is using some of the writings of Oswald Chambers. In his classic devotional, “My Utmost for His Highest” here’s what it says for October 28:

“I am not saved by believing—I simply realize I am saved by believing. And it is not repentance that saves me—repentance is only the sign that I realized what God has done through Christ Jesus. The danger here is putting the emphasis on the effect, instead of on the cause. Is it my obedience, consecration, and dedication that make me right with God? It is never that! I am made right with God because, prior to all of that, Christ died. When I turn to God and by belief accept what God reveals, the miraculous atonement by the Cross of Christ INSTANTLY places me into a right relationship with God. And as a result of the supernatural miracle of God’s grace I stand justified, not because I am sorry for my sin, or because I have repented, but because of what Jesus has done. The Spirit of God brings justification with a shattering, radiant light, and I know that I am saved, even though I don’t know how it was accomplished.

“The salvation that comes from God is not based on human logic, but on the sacrificial death of Jesus. We can be born again solely because of the atonement of our Lord. Sinful men and women can be changed into new creatures, not through their repentance or their belief, but through the wonderful work of God in Christ Jesus which preceded all

of our experience. The unconquerable safety of justification and sanctification is God Himself. We do not have to accomplish these things ourselves—they have been accomplished through the atonement of the Cross of Christ.

This is news worth sharing! This is news worth dominating our thinking and worth being the thing that surfaces if you talk with us very long.

Jesus Christ's words to the Colossians delivered by Paul are the reality of the good news place we live. "For God in all his fullness was pleased to live in Christ, and by him God reconciled EVERYTHING to himself. He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of his blood on the cross. This includes you!!!

Not just the Colossians but this includes you right now right here sitting in this room, right here in 2019. God has reconciled everything to himself and this includes YOU! That's some really good news.

Paul writes, "This includes you who were once so far away from God. You were his enemies, separated from him by your evil thoughts and actions, yet now HE HAS BROUGHT YOU BACK AS HIS FRIENDS! He has done this through his death on the cross in his own human body. As a result, he has brought you into the very presence of God and you are holy and blameless as you stand before him without a single fault."

Then he says keep believing this. Stand firmly in this truth. Don't drift away from this assurance. This is what the good news is all about.

This is the good news. God saves.

If you were raised with it or even if you taught a Christianity that you have to carry as a heavy load, let it go. Don't just let it go throw it away throw it far from you. Jesus way is an easy yoke and a light burden.

He won't put any ill fitting miserable yoke on you. He wants you to find rest for your soul.

Things were bad in the city of Samaria the capital city of the kingdom of Israel. Ben-hadad of Aram had brought his entire army and besieged the city. No one could come in or go out and the result was eventually a great famine in the city.

One day the king of Israel was walking along the wall of the city and a woman called to him, "Please help me, my lord the king!"

He replied, "If the Lord doesn't help you, what can I do? I have neither food nor wine to give you. What's the matter?"

After the fact I'm sure he wished he had never asked.

She replied, "This woman proposed that we eat my son one day and her son the next. So we cooked my son and ate him. Then the next day I said, 'Kill your son so we can eat him, but she had hidden him.'"

The king tore his clothes in despair. And he vowed, "May God kill me if I don't execute Elisha this very day! The king arrives at Elisha the prophet's house and he hollers into Elisha, "It is the Lord who has brought this trouble on us! Why should I wait any longer for the Lord!"

Elisha called out, "Hear the message from the Lord! This is what the Lord says: by this time tomorrow in the markets of Samaria, five quarts of fine flour will cost only half an ounce of silver, and ten quarts of barley grain will cost only half an ounce of silver."

This was crazy talk. There's no way.

That night just outside the wall of Samaria near the city gate four lepers were talking about their dilemma. One of them asked, "Why should we sit here waiting to die? We will starve if we stay here, and we will starve if we go back into the city. So we might as well go out and surrender to the Aramean army. If they let us live, so much the better.

But if they kill us, we would have died anyway.” So they headed out to surrender.

Earlier in the evening the Lord had caused the whole army of Aram to hear the clatter of speeding chariots and the galloping of horses and the sound of great army approaching. They were convinced by these sounds that the Hittites and Egyptians were coming to attack. They panicked and fled into the night abandoning tents, clothing, horses, donkeys and everything.

So when these leper arrived to surrender the camp was quiet and empty. They went into the first tent and found food and wine and silver and gold. They went tent to tent gorging themselves and grabbing loot.

Then it hit them. They said, “This is not right. This is wonderful news and we aren’t sharing it with anyone!” They go back share the news and the whole city eventually comes out and Elisha’s prophecy about cheap food in the city is real.

God has reconciled everything to himself. This is wonderful news that demands sharing. God has brought you back as his friends. This is good news for sharing. We are brought into the very presence of God and are holy and blameless in his eyes without a single fault. WOW!

In a world of alienation, and me this and me that self-grabbing of my rights, God has reconciled everything to himself.

God our savior showed us his kindness and love. He saved us, not because of the good things we did but because of his mercy. God washed away our sins and God gave us a new life through the Holy Spirit. God generously poured out the Spirit upon us because of what Jesus Christ our Savior did. God declares us not guilty because of his great kindness. And now we know that we will inherit eternal life.

And then God says. This isn't just for you to consume and enjoy and just for your benefit. Our salvation isn't just for us. So go, make disciples everywhere, go love people into a lifelong friendship with the God who saves. You have the best good news go share it, because it isn't just for you.



What was the best good news that was only yours to share?

If I talked to you long enough what's the one subject you know would be sure to come up with you?

What is something not spiritual of which you are a disciple or fan and which you try to have others join you with their devotion?

How tempted are you to pride of ownership and self-dependence and how does tithing help?

What are some ways that individualistic thinking is or has the potential to hurt some people?

How have you thought of your salvation in individualistic ways or as a burden?

What do you think about this Oswald Chambers quote: "Sinful people can be changed into new creatures, not through their repentance or their belief, but through the wonderful work of God in Christ which preceded all of our experience."

How do you resonate with Colossians 1:19-23 that says everything has been reconciled to God, and that includes you?

How can you best share good news and love someone into a lifelong friendship with God?



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