



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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May 16, 2010
7th Sunday of Easter
[Acts 16:6-10](#)
Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: [Acts 16:6-10](#)
Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 14](#)
Second Lesson: [Romans 15:14-20](#)
Gospel Lesson: [John 17:20-26](#)

God Guides the Sharing of the Gospel

Are you listening?
Are you speaking?

Maybe some of you have them in your vehicles...I don't, but two of my kids do...one of those neat GPS units you plug into the cigarette lighter. I got to use it once. When I went to Michigan, I got to take it along. It's kind of neat. It's really convenient that you can shut off that little beeping that tells you you're speeding. That's a nice feature. But it's kind of neat that it tells you ahead of time when to turn...500 yards, turn left, or whatever. Then when you miss the turn, it says rerouting and it tells you how to get to where you're going and all that stuff. It's kind of a really neat thing. I look at it and think it's pretty nice and I'd like to get one of those for my car.

You wonder when you read that paragraph I just read to you if Paul and his companions had some kind of spiritual GPS when they tried to turn right into Bithynia and he said "No, go left." Or when they tried to go into the province of Asia, where later they founded all those churches, the seven churches in Revelation. You wonder if God had some kind of spiritual GPS that said "No, don't go that way." We don't know how he did it, but an important truth for us to know as well today is that God guides the spread of his Gospel. He guides his Christians in various ways and into various places and to various people.

There's no doubt about that, that God is guiding us. The question is, are you listening and are you speaking when he gets you to where he wants you to be? That becomes completely another thing, doesn't it? We might want to sit around and complain, "I don't have a spiritual GPS unit or God telling me to go to Troas, don't go to Bithynia, don't go into the province of Asia." We say we don't have that. Well, don't we?

It says to go to Macedonia. God pretty much directly said to them, probably not in that computer voice you hear with your GPS, but God came to them and had this vision of these people of Macedonia saying "come help us," and Paul understood he was talking about "come help us with the spiritual problems we have, come show us our Savior, come teach us that the only way to heaven is through Jesus because we are sinners who are destined to hell." But for the first two, I don't know how God told them not to go into the province of Asia. He didn't tell us. I don't know how he told them not to go into Bithynia. Maybe he spoke to them directly. Maybe there was a creek that was flooded so they couldn't cross it and they couldn't go, so they decided that was God's way of telling them this isn't the time to go there. It can be as simple as that, that God works in

a lot of different ways, in different times, in different places to get us to be where we can proclaim the Gospel of Jesus to someone and the Law of God to someone. It doesn't have to be something grand. It doesn't have to be a voice from the sky. It doesn't have to be a vision at night. It might be that person sitting across from you over a cup of coffee that's telling you how much they are hurting, how much they are struggling with life. That might be God's GPS right above them with an arrow saying "share the Law and Gospel now."

So the question is, are you listening? Do you hear God bringing these people into your life so that you can share the good news of a Savior, so that you can direct them away from themselves and if they are too full of themselves, to knock them down with the Law and say, "You're not all that. You need a Savior. Here's who he is." Are you listening? Do your eyes open to see those opportunities that God brings to you each and every day? Because he does.

Or have we adopted the philosophy that, "That's why we hired someone else. That's why we call pastors and teachers, so we don't have to talk about God. Or that's why I give to missions so that the Gospel can be spread so I don't have to do it. It's not my job." It's your job. Weren't you listening at Ascension? How many times did Jesus say in those readings that we had, "You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." Do you really think those 120 people were going to get to Morrison, Wisconsin if someone else didn't speak? That's pretty much God saying that he expects his people of all time to share the Gospel where they are, where they are kind of comfortable, where they're not comfortable, and where they think it is impossible.

Where they think it is impossible...do you know anyone in your life that you are in regular contact with that you think will never ever listen to the Gospel of Jesus Christ? That would be your ends of the earth...what you think is impossible. What's impossible for you or for me is possible for God. God has done and will continue to do amazing things through people like you and like me, not because we are so good at talking, not because we speak good or speak well, but because his Gospel is powerful and it overcomes our weakness.

So are you listening? Do you see those opportunities every day? And when you see them, are you speaking? Are you ready to always give an answer for the hope that you have, which is what God has called you to do?

That prayer of Jesus that we read in the Gospel today, praying that we may be one, that we may be united in our faith just like Jesus and the Father are one. Did you notice that it had a very special purpose, so that others might see and believe? Like we talked about in Bible Class this morning, we don't pull ourselves up to the banquet of God's Word simply to feast for ourselves and then walk away satisfied. But we are not the only ones who should be at that table. We are there to share the Gospel with others. We are there to speak it, to speak Law and Gospel. Sometimes Satan gets pretty good at reasons why we should keep our mouth shut, whether we think it's someone else's

job like I just talked about, or we say it doesn't work. "I tried it once. It was uncomfortable. It didn't work. I'm not doing that ever again because I put myself out there and I don't want to put myself out there. I want to stay comfortable. I don't want to have to put myself on the line and have to go through that hurt of being rejected."

It's a great thing that God's not like us. It's a great thing that he didn't say, "I don't want to put myself out there because I might be rejected." If any of us buy into that lie of Satan, we are sinning. First of all, we are giving ourselves way too much credit as though we could bring someone else to faith. That's not going to happen. It's God's power. He does it. Jesus said over and over in the Gospels that "If they hated me, they are going to hate you. They are going to reject you, so expect it. Recognize it so that Satan can't mislead you with that lie." I'm not going to tell you it's fun to be rejected. I'm not going to tell you that you are going to enjoy it. But I am going to tell you that is what God has called you to do.

He has called you to speak just as certainly as he called Paul and Luke and his other companions to go to Macedonia and to speak. And they did. They found Lydia out by the river, outside of Philippi. They went down to Thessalonica and spent some time there. They went down to Berea, where the Bereans dug into God's Word day and night to see if what he was saying is true. That had to be a cool reception to get. They went down to Athens where they were kind of laughed off the acropolis. But they kept going. They kept speaking. They kept preaching. And God blessed their efforts. God brought people to faith through people that are not that much different than you and me.

This is the Second Missionary Journey. Do you remember what happened with Paul right before the Second Missionary Journey started? He got into an argument about whether or not they should take John Mark along. John Mark had deserted them in the First Missionary Journey, so they were butting heads over whether or not he should go along. So Silas went one way and Paul went the other way. They aren't much different than you and me. They weren't perfect and walking on water all the time. They could butt heads and be sinners just like you and I can. But they rose above their differences to see that the Gospel is what was important. Sharing Christ with those who believe and with those who don't yet believe is what we are called to do. So they went and did it. And they thanked God for each other that were able to go and do it even if they didn't go to the same place at the same time. They were still serving the same God.

We are going to fail. We are going to keep our mouth shut when we should speak. We are going to not listen to God because sometimes we are just so focused on looking in the mirror and seeing all our problems we don't hear the problems of the person across the table. We are going to fail our God, probably more often than we succeed. Our failures of our God are called "sin." And this is the thing that just boggles my mind...I think of all the times I have failed God and afterwards I think about how he brought that person and I should have and I could have and I wish I would have said this, that or done this or that, and I didn't. I sinned because I didn't see it, the sin of omission. Or I saw it and I just said I'm not comfortable enough to talk today. Someone else do it.

Think of all these times that you and I have done this to our God. We loved ourselves more than we loved our God. We loved our comfort and our convenience more than we loved our God, and the fact that our God still loves us completely, perfectly and absolutely...it just boggles the mind, doesn't it? Then he gives us an opportunity the next day to see a hurting soul who needs to be reminded that God loves them perfectly, absolutely and forever. You and I get to be God's voice, God's hands, God's arms, to reach out with the Gospel and share it with them. Sure, sometimes we are going to fail. Sometimes we are going to say things not in the best way, but God still loves us and forgives us.

This is the other thing God does for us. Sometimes we think, "I can't do that because I don't know every answer." For Pete's sake, we are never going to know every answer. I can't know the mind of God fully and neither can you. We are called to be witnesses who tell what they know to be true. So if you don't know a lot to be true, you'll be able to say it quicker, but you know it, so speak it. Don't hide behind, "They might ask me something I don't know." If that happens, that's great. Then you can go find out the answer and go back and talk to them about their Savior again. Then, Satan trying to convince you that if you don't know something you can't talk becomes another place where he is defeated. Then what happens is that you grow, and you have the second opportunity to share Christ with that person.

God is going to guide. Let's just perk our ears up and let's speak in the love of Christ.