

Halloween is now less than a week away.

Though it will likely feel
and look different this year,
given that it is 2020.

This week,
if you were at Vespers on Wednesday evening,
I shared the history of All Saints Day
and the Celtic celebration of Samhain (Sah win)
and how those got enmeshed together
and had a baby called Halloween.

It was my attempt at a Spooky Vespers,
since we are so close to that holiday
—is Halloween a true a holiday?
That's probably a sermon
for another Sunday.

But in the spirit of spooky vespers,
I want to approach the conversation
of something rather scary.

Some of us would call this
downright terrifying.

It comes from an old, old, tale—
there's a tomb,
a gory death,
a night when everything
went dark
and the dead rising from the grave
...0000000.

And that's not even the scary stuff.

So, brace yourselves,
here is the scariest thing
we will talk about in church...
sharing your faith—
otherwise known as, *Evangelism*.

This is where we find ourselves
in our sermon series,
on the topic of sharing our faith.
We've talked about worship,
prayer, study,
serving, giving,
and now we've reached the point of sharing.

Sharing our faith—
“The terrifying act
of sharing the good news
with those who desperately
need to hear it.”¹

Very scary indeed.

Evangelism makes some of us feel
all itchy and squirmy,
like a spider crawling on our neck.
Did you just shiver?

But sharing our faith
doesn't have to be scary at all.
A quote that has stuck with me for years says,
“Evangelism is just one beggar
telling another
where to find bread.”²

There's so much to unpack there.
I love how it evens the playing field
—we are all beggars.
We are all in search of meaning and purpose;
we all want to believe in the goodness
of the people and the world around us.
We are all beggars.

We are all beggars and yet,
some of us have found bread,
haven't we?
Some of us
have found meaning and purpose,

¹ Crazy Talk: A Not-So-Stuffey Dictionary of Theological Terms, Augsburg Books 2008

² D.T. Niles

some of us believe
in the goodness of others
and the world.

Some of us, beggars
have found bread.

Good bread.

Bread that doesn't go stale or mold.

Bread that comes to us
in so many forms and ways.

Some of us, beggars,
have found **the bread of life**—
and since we have found it,
how can we not tell others
about this bread?

My favorite bakery is Stick Boy Bread in Boone.

Next time you drive up the mountain,
stop there—I promise it is worth it.

They have our favorite baked goods.
Cookies, pies, cakes, pastries,
and yes, bread.

Every time we go to Boone,
we stop there and we always
get multiple things.

In fact, me telling you
how much we love their magic cookies,
their sourdough loaf
or their homemade everything bagels,
their dinner rolls
—well me telling you how good it is,
makes you more likely to consider going there,
for bread, right?

Hopefully our relationship is such,
that you trust my word about
Stick Boy Bread Company.

Me telling you about it—
that's me giving witness,
to Stick Boy.

It's me testifying to Stick Boy goodness.
It is me sharing something
I love with you all.
I am right now,
evangelizing for a bakery in Boone.

So, it isn't all that hard
to evangelize to something
that is important to us
or that we love.
If I asked some of you,
where is the best pizza in town
—some of you will
without hesitation
and full of certainty
tell me it's Dante's Pizza.
Others will passionately campaign
for Village Inn.
And maybe some of might love
Amalfi's or Mellow Mushroom
It *isn't hard* to give witness
to things we love.

But that Boone bakery
and Hickory's pizza joints
have not been transformative
in my life like Christ has.
So why am I,
why are we,
sometimes hesitant to witness and share
with the same passion and certainty
about what is
transformative and life giving?
Because we don't want to be pushy, right?
We don't want to be "those" type of Christians
who are judgmental if you aren't like us?

And maybe we really don't know
how to talk about our faith
without sounding—
well, too religious.

If we break down the word, evangelism,
we see it comes from the Greek word, *euangelion*.
Here's a quick moment
to nerd out and learn biblical Greek.

Euangelion, is the word for "good news."
The old English word
for good news or glad tidings,
is *god spel*, which developed
into our more modern word, **gospel**.

Just like the angels who proclaim to those shepherds
that they have good news
of great joy for all people
—the word the angels announce is *euangelion*
...sharing our faith means
we have that same good news
and glad tidings to tell.

When something important
happens in our lives,
what do we do?
We tell our family and friends,
right?

We post something on social media
or send it a group text.
All the goodness in our world,
comes from the goodness of God.
And it is in God's working through and in us,
and even in spite of us
that we live in goodness.

So, stop and think
about the good things in your life.
Do you still have a job in spite of the shutdowns?
Did your child score a soccer goal

at pee wee soccer?
Did you spouse finally retire?
Did you see an amazing sunset on the lake?

Lots of us are used
to posting about life on social media
—a quick weekend getaway,
an amazing dinner,
our first puppy as a couple.
We post about these things
on social media all time.

So why not use social media
as way to share our faith?
Some of you do this already.

I'll use Ty Poston as an example.
Every sunset picture that Ty posts,
he always mentions
that God's artistry in on display.
If you are Ty's friend on Facebook
you know what I mean.
And if you are Ty's friend
but didn't know whether he was a Christian or not,
all you'd have to do
is look at his sunset pictures.
You'd know he has a heart for God
because he is sharing his faith
in posting and talking about
God in those sunsets.

There are ways for us
to share our faith
that draw others in,
that draw others
to want to know **more**
—rather than sounding
as if we are a bunch of pious do-gooders
who have it all figured out?

What if we all posted
about how amazing
our roasted chicken dinner was
from WNS on social media
—bragging on our church's food and fellowship
in the process?
That Hickory Daily Record article won't hurt us at all
—it us sharing what we are doing in faith
with our community!

What if we bragged about Vacation Bible School
or the medical mission trip
in a way that made others want to join in?

What about the school supplies we collected?
Or if we really love one of those
Looking East devotions
or a prayer that someone
in the Zoom bible study offered
or Whit's upcoming Stewardship mini-sermon—
what if we were more intentional
about posting that on Facebook and Instagram?

What if tweeted
out an encouraging Bible verse
or our favorite CS Lewis or Mother Theresa quote?
Sharing our faith this way
is easier now,
than it ever has been.

Maybe this evangelism thing,
is really not all that scary.
Evangelism lets us talk about our church
and the people we love in it,
selflessly, with humility.
Because our church and its people
are an extension of Christ.
We are the living and breathing,
far from perfect,

sometimes cranky models
of how the radical generosity
of our God is worked out in creation
and in the person of Christ
We are the models of why this **is** life changing.

We think evangelism means
we have to be ready
to tell a complicated salvation story
and get all the details right.
That isn't sharing faith,
that is reciting doctrines and beliefs.
Most of us aren't moved by doctrines,
even though Dave Rowe
says he loves reading the Book of Order.

But who doesn't love to hear the story
of how a mother
with a child who had disabilities,
suddenly found herself widowed
and church members decided
to pull their finances together
and pay off her mortgage?
God is all in that story!

Or what about when a family's house
was unexpectedly flooded
and phone calls and texts went out
and people who were skilled builders
and those whose expertise
is carrying furniture
came to help?
Jesus' love is all in that story!

In Matthew's good news telling
of Jesus's story,
Jesus says that we
'are the light of the world.
A city on a hill cannot be hid.

No one after lighting a lamp
puts it under a bushel basket,
but on the lampstand,
and it gives light to all in the house.
In the same way,
let your light shine before others
so that they may see you good works
and give glory to your Father in heaven'
(Matt. 5:14-16).

Did you hear that?

Jesus says, no one lights a lamp
and then puts it under a basket,
but instead they put it
on a lampstand
so that the **whole house** can enjoy it.

That right there

should put you at ease.

Why?

Because who are the people
that come to your house?

Family.

Friends.

Neighbors.

Guests.

Not strangers.

At least I don't usually let strangers in my house

—you well-meaning Jehovah witnesses

can stay right there on my porch

and ask me about my relationship with Jesus.

Jesus explains to us

that we are to let our light

shine before others

so that they will see our good works

and give glory to God.

So, if he's talking about
lights and lamps in houses
and the people in our houses

seeing who we really are,
then it means we don't have to make
cold calls for Jesus.

But we are called to share the good news
with the others
—sharing good news and drawing others in,
is making disciples.

Evangelism does mean
we are called to be “lights”
in our cities and communities—
and that may reach the people we know
and some we don't know yet.

Evangelism does mean
We are called to be “lights”
in our families and our neighborhoods.
We are to share our faith
with our children and grandchildren,
our colleagues and friends.

If we are living lives that are evangelical,
in the sense of being framed
around living out the *euangelion*,
living out the good news
of Jesus's liberating way to live a life
for God and others—
then our friends and their friends,
and their friends
will talk to other friends,
and what we'll have is a whole lot of people
talking about Christ
and wanting to learn how to find bread.

Romans 10:12-14 says,
“For there is no distinction between
Jew and Greek;
the same Lord is Lord of all
and is generous to all who call on him. (*See? I told we are all beggars*)
For 'everyone who calls on the name of the Lord

shall be saved.'

But how are they to call on one
whom they have not believed?

And how are they to believe in of whom
they have never heard?

And how are they to hear
without someone to proclaim him?"

And how are they to proclaim him
unless they are sent?

Ahhh...here's one more tip
on sharing your faith.
Get out the toenail polish.

We are charged
with being sent into the world.
Because how are we to proclaim,
how are we to share our faith,
how are we to shine our light...
unless we are a city on a hill,
unless we are sent out from a place like this?

Paul quotes Isaiah when he says,
As it is written,
"How beautiful are the feet
of those who bring the good news!"

Who's gonna see your feet?
Your toes all pretty and painted,
why the people in your house,
that's who.

And the friends and neighbors
who go with you to the pool?

And the ones you invite
to go to the mtns with you
for a getaway from the kids,
that's who.

Sharing our faith
is about feeding each other
good bread.
Evangelism isn't a scary word
about approaching strangers
and making them think
and believe like you do.

It's about becoming
what you believe—
that in Jesus Christ
there is new life.

You are the light of the world,
the story you share
of the goodness in your life
—and where that wellspring of goodness comes from—
that is the *euangelion*,
the good news of Jesus Christ.
The story of how the goodness of God
overflows in your life,
is your gift to the world.
No one else can share
your story of good news.
No one else can be an evangelist like you.

So, live the good news,
be the light,
maybe get a good pedicure.
Let everyone know about what you love.
And tell others where you
are getting the best bread in town.