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Sermon Notes

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An Appeal for Evangelism

This past week I saw a new film from South Africa called “Faith Like Potatoes”

An odd title! It is about a simple South African farmer named Angus Buchan, of Scottish descent

He was a man characterized by racism, anger, frustration, brawling, smoking, drinking

A lost man, without hope and without God in the world

Then he heard the gospel clearly explained, and he gave his life to Christ

He began reading the Bible and praying, growing in his new faith

Angus was struggling to survive as a farmer in the wilderness of South Africa... soon he found himself in an absolutely desperate situation: while intentionally burning a grassy area to clear it for planting, the fire got away from him and began spreading at an alarming rate... they did everything they could to beat it back, but they had no water to stop it

He desperately drove to get help, but the fire was spreading more and more rapidly; he spoke to his Zulu foreman as they were beating the fire with sticks, and said “Simeon, we must pray for rain!!” The foreman called back over the roar of the fire, “It’s not the rainy season!” Angus kept repeating a verse he’d just read in the Bible—“If you believe, you’ll receive whatever you ask for in prayer.” We just studied it in Matthew 21:22. So he called on Jesus, “Please help us... send rain, Lord”.

The fire was out of control, and dangerously spreading toward the largest match factory in South Africa... but suddenly out of nowhere, rain clouds appeared and the miraculous downpour started. Soon, the fire was completely doused.

From this one moment, the farmer gained a reputation as a man of faith. A short time later, just as he and his wife were getting ready for bed, a large group of Zulus came to him, beating on his door desperately and asking for help. They said that one of their sisters, Portia, had been struck by lightning—could he come and pray for her? What else could he do but come... driving urgently to the house where they had laid her. When he arrived and went in, he found that she was dead. “I don’t know what to do! I don’t know what to do! O God what shall I do?” He stammered some prayer for this dead girl, and suddenly, she came to life. He immediately said to her, “God raised you up... I did nothing!” An older

Zulu woman pushed her way forward and fell at his feet, grabbing his leg. He said “I did nothing... nothing! God did everything!! All I did was ask!”

From that point on, Angus Buchan realized God was calling on him to tell people about Jesus... to spread the gospel to as many people as he could. There was a severe drought in South Africa, along with rising racial tensions. So he had the vision of renting the largest soccer stadium in South Africa, and calling on farmers to come together for a peace rally, and to pray for rain. His vision was blessed by God, and they got the stadium for almost nothing and were able to fill it with people praying. His message was simple, his faith simple... God answers prayer. God is powerful. Christ forgives sins.

The film gets its name from the climactic scene in the movie... as a farmer, Angus was desperate for rain; the soil was dry as powder. God had still not answered prayer for rain. But he felt led by God to invest all he had in a crop of potatoes. Against all the advice of his friends and his banker, he planted that in the dry, powdery soil. He knew that if the crop failed, he would be ruined. But by faith, he planted, prayed and waited. Unlike corn or wheat in which you could see the progress from beginning to end, potatoes were completely hidden from his eyes... he just had to wait on God.

When it was time, Angus and Simeon went out to see whether there was a crop or financial ruin. They reached below the soil and pulled up a beautiful, huge, succulent potato! Thousands more came out of the ground as well!! After the harvest was taken in, Angus was explaining faith to some that were listening. “Faith has to be real... a real-world faith! A real as... as... potatoes! Something you can hold in your hand!”

God has used Angus Buchan to start a men’s ministry in South Africa that has grown and grown. It’s called “Mighty Men Conference” and his vision has grown stronger with every year. At first, 240 men came to his farm for prayer and Bible teaching. The next year, 2007, the number grew to 7000 men. Last year, 60,000 came, and they set up the world’s largest tent... the 16-pole Tensile 1, and it still wasn’t enough; this year close to 200,000 men came to his farm in Kwazulu, Natal, South Africa... one of the largest conferences in history

After the film was over, I started thinking about FBC... and my sermon from Matthew 21:21-22

Matthew 21:21-22 Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and it will be done. ²² If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer."

The next morning, as I was praying for FBC, I began to ask for the one thing I want the most here: that God would use FBC to lead hundreds of people to faith in Christ!

My thinking:

- Intending to preach on the parable of the two sons... will do so next week, God willing

- Convicted to the core of the image: a loving Father asking each of two sinful sons to work in the family vineyard... one of the sons says “I will not”... but later he changes his mind and goes to work in the vineyard; the other says “I will sir” but he doesn’t go
- I saw the father in the parable as our heavenly Father... and the family vineyard as representing the harvest of lost souls that surround us in this world... that we are sent out into to work... this parable spoke to me of our involvement in the harvest of souls

Matthew 9:36-38 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷ Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. ³⁸ Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.

John 4:35 Do you not say, 'Four months more and then the harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest.

- I saw myself as the second son: saying “Yes, Lord” in the area of evangelism, but not following through as I should
- But then, with great hope in my heart, I then can also see myself as the first son... who had been saying “I will not!” but later changed my mind and went
- FBC at ten years
 - I’ve been here now for about 10 and a half years
 - God has done astonishing things here... to move us forward in the work of His Kingdom
 - The change of FBC to plurality of elders has been amazing... a delight to work with these guys
 - We now have our deacons in place and some excellent leadership is working carefully to get them ready for ministry
 - We have seen some remarkable baptisms and testimonies this year already... internationals, college students, youth, and others... all of them are worthy of celebration
 - I JUST WANT TO SEE FAR MORE OF THAT!!!
 - I want us to be more active in personal and corporate evangelism than ever before
 - I don’t want to become a numbers driven church... but I want 2009 to be a watershed year in the history of the church

- 2009: the year the church broke free of its shackles and started seeing a lavish harvest of souls brought in in large numbers through the faithful witness of church members
- I want to see FBC using its spiritual gifts, operating in harmony with each other resulting in a lavish harvest of souls
- I'd like to see senior adults leading people to Christ... our elders and our deacons leading people to Christ... our middle aged housewives, white collar professionals, homeschool parents, youth in public schools... all laborers in God's harvest field, leading people to Christ
- I want the harvest fields to be as wide and varied as the places God has put us: our workplaces (Duke Hospital, UNC Hospital, RTP hi-tech companies, public schools, fast food restaurants, etc.) ... our neighborhoods, our community here in Durham, etc.
- I'd like to hear incredible testimonies from people here saying "2009 was the year I led my first person to Christ"
- I'd like to see the baptismal waters stirred every single week...
- And I'd like to do it all for the glory of God and for the eternal joy of His chosen people... not giving up our standards of personal holiness, or regenerate church membership, etc.

So... I'd jumping out of the order of preaching this week to preach this winsome appeal for evangelism

I want to urge you to be a son of the Father who hears him say "So, go and work today in my vineyard" and who says "I will, Lord" and then GOES AND DOES IT

I want to be moved to tears week after week by sweet testimonies of lives transformed for Christ

I was reading about Mars Hill Church, led by Mark Driscoll in Seattle... one of the most amazing churches in America... Mark Driscoll is a young man with a powerful personality, whom God has used to build a church from a handful in his living room to over 10,000 in thirteen years...

This Easter, they baptized over 400 people... people from all walks of life... biker dudes with black leather jackets and chrome chains, punk and grunge types... and a lot of regular people too... people who will all stand before Christ on Judgment Day... and if their faith in Christ is genuine will live with Him eternally, totally forgiven of their sins...

I watched some of the baptisms on the internet

I know baptism isn't everything, and many there are that get dunked and there was no genuine faith

BUT STILL, I yearned that FBC would be far more fruitful than we are evangelistically
I believe you want this, for the most part... I think you yearn to lead someone to Christ

My desire here is to exhort FBC to make 2009 the greatest year we've ever had in Kingdom growth through courageous and creative evangelism, faithfully sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ and seeing God the Holy Spirit regenerate sinners

Outline: four M's

- Motivation
- Message
- Method
- Multiplication

I. Motivation

A. The Glory of God

***Isaiah 43:6-7 Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth--
7 everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.***

Ephesians 1:11-12 In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, ¹² in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.

1. We exist for the glory of God... that His glory might be put on display
2. The Advance of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ brings great glory to God...
3. Evangelism is the means to that end...
4. God calls sinners into His Kingdom for the praise of His glory
5. By living lives of self-sacrificial service to Christ, we show that we value

B. Obedience to Christ

John 14:15 If you love me, you will obey what I command.

John 20:21 As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.

Matthew 28:19-20 go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

C. The Joyful Rescue of Lost Sinners

1. Apart from the Gospel, they are doomed to eternity under the wrath of God

Revelation 14:10-11 he, too, will drink of the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. He will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. ¹¹ And the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever. There is no rest day or night

2. Instead, they will get to spend eternity seeing, savoring, and serving the glory of God

Revelation 22:3-4 No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. ⁴ They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.

3. JOY... the greatest joy in life

3 John 4 I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.

D. Eternally Satisfying Rewards

1 Thessalonians 2:19-20 For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? ²⁰ Indeed, you are our glory and joy.

II. Message

A. The Gospel of Jesus Christ

Romans 1:16-17 I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. ¹⁷ For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."

The Bible reveals plainly that human beings are naturally dead in their transgressions and sins, and actually need a spiritual resurrection in order to come alive

It is an act of SUPERNATURAL POWER... and the gospel message is that power

But what is the gospel?

B. God-Man-Christ-Response

1. God: God is Creator, King, Lawgiver and Judge
2. Man: Created in God's Image, Rebellious against God the King, under Judgment by God the Judge

3. Christ: God-Man, sinless life, miracles, atoning death, bodily resurrection
4. Response: Repent and Believe

We should be able to share God-Man-Christ-Response with anyone, anytime, with Scriptures to support each point

You should be able to share God-Man-Christ-Response in 1 minute, or in 1 hour

Get ready... share Jesus!!

BUT... are you ashamed of the gospel???? If you are not eager to share, you may be ashamed of the gospel!!!

ATTACK your SHAME... ATTACK IT WITH PRAYER... beg God to take away any shame you have toward Jesus and the Gospel

III. Method

A. Daily Lifestyle

1. Three-part prayer
 - a. God grant me an opportunity to share Christ with someone today
 - b. Give me the wisdom to recognize that opportunity when it comes
 - c. Give me the boldness to make the most of it.

D.L. Moody: resolved that he would never go to bed on any day without sharing the gospel with someone that day

2. George Whitefield

“God forbid that I should travel with anybody a quarter of an hour without speaking of Christ to them.”

3. Workplace evangelism
4. Neighborhood
5. Shopping, car repair, airport, waiting for a shuttle from the hotel, checking out watermelons in the store
6. Strike up conversations
 - a. BP Gas Station: Build an ongoing relationship with a specific clerk at a BP Gas station... go to the same place every week, and pay in cash... introduce yourself... little by little, get to know him better and better...

invite him to church or to study the Bible with you; you may get no real chance there in the convenience store, but you are building a relationship

- b. Workplace: pray for a chance to witness to everyone in your department... ask God every day for an opportunity to get to know them better; be intentional about reaching out; then watch how faithful God is to answer
- c. Neighborhood: again, begin with daily prayer; mark out people you'd like to get to know better; think of ways to have people over... hospitality; use holidays like Fourth of July, etc.

7. How to do it

- a. Be friendly, ask questions about their lives
- b. Make transitions to more serious issues: values, reasons for doing things, goals, etc.
- c. Make higher transition to spiritual things: "What is your spiritual background..."
- d. EE Question: "If you were to die tonight and God were to say, 'Why should I let you into heaven, what would you say?'" When they give the usual works-related answer, like "Because I'm basically a good person," be ready to share the gospel more fully: "That's what I thought, too... but the best news I've ever heard is that Jesus came to save us..."

B. Visitors

- 1. Every week, we have visitors to FBC... not all of them are converted
- 2. D. James Kennedy built up his church in Coral Ridge, FL, by simply visiting visitors and sharing the gospel... simple diagnostic question: "If you were to die tonight and God were to ask you 'Why should I let you into heaven, what would you say?'"
- 3. We need laborers for that harvest field... men and women who will commit themselves to visit the visitors that come to our church

C. Strategic Ministries

- 1. International Student Ministry: one of the most evangelistically fruitful ministries at FBC... we have seen a number of conversions and baptisms; but they need committed laborers now
- 2. Prison Ministry: for almost thirty years, men have been going to an area prison and leading a bible study; it has been remarkably fruitful, but they need laborers

3. Urban Ministry:

- a. Matthew Hodges runs our Jobs for Life program and needs workers to canvass the local neighborhood and share the gospel;
- b. we have a clothing ministry called “The Caring Center”... many of us believe this ministry could be greatly expanded to be more useful to the community and more fruitful evangelistically;
- c. Diana Lisle is an elementary school teacher with a tremendous heart for children... she has been active in Child Evangelism Fellowship; she could use laborers who will be willing to help CEF reach children for Christ, especially in the Liberty Street Apartments

4. Medical Ministry

- a. Every year we do the Health Fair, and it is fruitful
- b. Ron Halbrooks, one of our elders, has a vision for doing much more with the dental bus as a form of outreach here... such a ministry would be amazingly powerful in connecting us year round with Durham, but we need laborers!! Without that, we can see no great expansion of our medical outreach to Durham

IV. Multiplication

A. Building Up an Army of Laborers for the Harvest Field

B. A Rolling Multiplication

C. Evangelism and Discipleship Going Together

D. Needed

- 1. Commitment to outreach
- 2. A pattern of discipleship that teaches people how to witness
- 3. Prevailing prayer
- 4. Boldness!

RESPONSE CARD: If you want to be more involved in personal evangelism, and want some training, or accountability... or if you want to be involved in the church's organized outreaches, please fill out the card and put it on the pew... we'll collect 'em and work with you

ELDERS PRAYER