

Sermon for Sunday, July 27, 2025
Campaign for Kindness: Ambassadors of Kindness

Isaiah 52:2-7 Psalm 34:9-14
2 Corinthians 5:16-21 Matthew 13:44-53

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all of our hearts be acceptable to you Oh Lord, our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

Today we complete our first summer sermon series: the Campaign for Kindness. Today's theme is: Ambassadors for Kindness.

I want to remind you of two points from previous sermons. Sometimes preachers write a sermon that they themselves need to hear. The more I have sat with and thought about the idea of forgiveness/kindness in the aftermath of hurt and/or cruelty, the more important I feel it to be. We must strive to shed the burdens of hurt that we carry and the best way to do that is through expressions of forgiveness. This is the first point.

The second point is this: a couple of weeks ago I talked about the story of Ruth from the Old Testament and how she went out gleaning. She picked up stalks of grain here and there in the field in order to gather enough to feed herself and her mother-in-law Naomi. Today's sermon consists of gleanings from our Bible readings: Gleanings to feed us and encourage us in our calling as God's ambassadors.

The passage from Isaiah opens up the topic of being an ambassador or messenger. In the last verse the prophet says, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, 'Your God reigns.'" The prophet knows that are messenger who brings good news is welcomed. If you watch the evening news you may have noticed that the broadcast often ends with a good news story; a story of people making a positive difference in the world. Everyone recognizes that we need to know about the hard and difficult things that happen in our world so that we are informed citizens, but if that's all we pay attention to we will end up mightily depressed with the state of the world. Good news makes a difference. The gleaning from Isaiah is that there exists a good news messenger or ambassador and that this ambassador announces peace and proclaims that our God is the almighty one who reigns over heaven and earth. For those of us who are living in deep sorrow or darkness to hear words of good

news and salvation—now that is powerful. (And who might that ambassador be? JESUS, of course!)

But just what is an ambassador? The dictionary defines an ambassador as "an authorized representative or messenger." Jesus was God's authorized representative. BUT Jesus named us as ambassadors in several places in the gospels. One of those places is in Matthew 28 where he said, "Go therefore and make disciples" Like it or not, he is "commanding" us to go. How do you make disciples? By acting as a messenger. By talking about Jesus: about his life here on earth, about the example of love and acceptance of all people that he set, about his death on a cross, and most importantly: his resurrection. The core of the message has always been that Jesus was raised from the dead. All who believe in him shall not perish but have eternal life. Because he lives we too shall live. Because he forgives we are forgiven. And because we are forgiven we are free to be ambassadors: to bring the message of God's forgiveness to the people we meet. These are the messages of God's ambassadors.

There are two gleanings from the passage in 2 Corinthians. The first supports the idea that we are ambassadors. You see, it's human nature to claim that we are not able to be ambassadors because we aren't qualified or trained or we won't know what to say. But Paul reminds us "if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God," We are new creations in and through our baptisms into the family of God. We are empowered through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to bring the good news message of forgiveness to the people God brings across our path.

The second gleaning is the reminder that it is through the work of Jesus that we are reconciled with God. "in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us." Sin is that which separates us from God and all of us are separated from God because of the sin that exists within us. BUT, Jesus is the bridge that spans the chasm separating us from God. Jesus brings us back into relationship with God.

Still grappling with the command to go and make disciples? There is a saying attributed to Francis of Assisi, "Preach the gospel at all times, and if necessary, use words." This saying is often attributed to him but to be candid, there is no historical evidence that he actually said these words. Whether he did or not, doesn't diminish the power of this saying. Go and share the message of kindness

and compassion with the people who come across your path. Don't worry about what you will say, just act with kindness. Remember another saying: actions speak louder than words!

My friends, the gospel reading is pointing us toward a precious idea: that of the treasure hidden in a field or the pearl of great price. What is our treasure? What is our pearl of great price? How would you answer these questions? Think carefully now; not just because you are here sitting in the pews, but because the answer is really important. Is your treasure of such great value that you are willing to sell all that you have in order to obtain it? That's a mighty big ask isn't it? Our final gleaning for today is a reminder that we have this treasure, this pearl of great price and it's not an enormous savings account or acres of land or a big house. It's not even good health or a healthy family situation. No, the pearl of great price that we own is the assurance of eternal life because of the saving actions of Jesus. The pearl of great price is the promise given to us by Jesus: the promise of the resurrection.

Now my friends, we need to pause here and think about whether our behavior can be interpreted as being a good ambassador for Jesus. Are we ambassadors of kindness, acceptance, compassion, and forgiveness?

Father Greg Boyle wrote in *Barking to the Choir* "When we label folks scum, it makes it alright to do anything we want to them. Who doesn't belong? We try and imagine Jesus and God compiling a list of who should not make the cut, but we come up short. We can't think of anybody. The minute we accept this to be true, we will see racism, demonizing and scapegoating dissipate in the wind like sand on a blustery day. The great Jesuit Howard Gray said: "God has no enemies, and neither should I."

It's mighty easy to stand in judgment of another person, especially someone who thinks exactly the opposite of the way we do. It's mighty easy to decide that God cannot possibly love them. But is it possible that that other person is looking at us and deciding that God cannot possibly love us? Yes, it is possible, maybe even probable. Standing in judgment of another person is sin my friends. It is exactly what we need to confess and turn away from, every moment of every day.

Our world is very fractured right now. There are tragedies occurring here at home, and around the world. It can feel utterly overwhelming. It's easy to make statements like: "I'm only one

person, how can I make a difference?" But I'm reminded of an old fable:

For lack of a nail, a shoe was lost,
For lack of a shoe, a horse was lost,
For lack of a horse, a soldier was lost,
For lack of a soldier a battle was lost,
For lack of a battle a kingdom was lost.

You may be only one person, but you can make a difference. In making a difference, whether you speak words or not, you are sharing the gospel. In sharing the gospel you are an ambassador: a messenger for Christ and for the good news of forgiveness and salvation he brings to everyone in the world.

The gleanings for today:

- Messengers bringing news of peace and salvation are important and welcomed.
- We are God's ambassadors because we are new creations through Christ.
- God uses us to reconcile the entire world back into relationship with God.
- We have a pearl of price: the message of salvation.

Let us pray: help us Oh Lord to be ambassadors for you. Help us to share the message of forgiveness and salvation with the people around us. We ask this in your name, amen.