**2 Kings 6:24–25; 7:3–10 24After these things, Ben Hadad king of Aram mobilized his whole army and went up and laid siege to Samaria. 25There was a severe famine in Samaria, because the siege lasted until a donkey head sold for eighty shekels of silver and a cup of dove’s droppings for five shekels of silver... 3Now four lepers were at the entrance to the gate. They said to each other, “Why should we sit here until we die? 4If we say, ‘Let’s go into the city,’ there is famine in the city and we will die there. But if we stay here, we will die. So let’s go over to the camp of the Arameans. If they let us live, we will live. If they kill us, we will die.” 5So they got up at twilight to go to the camp of the Arameans. When they reached the edge of the camp of the Arameans, they saw that there was no one there! 6For the Lord had caused the Arameans to hear the sound of horses and chariots and the sound of a great army. They said to each other, “Listen! The king of Israel has hired the kings of the Hittites and the kings of Egypt to come against us!” 7Then they arose and fled at twilight. They left their tents, their horses, and their donkeys in the camp just as they were, and they fled for their lives. 8So when these lepers came to the edge of the camp, they went into a tent, and they ate and drank. They picked up silver, gold, and clothing and went and hid it. Then they returned and went to another tent. They took some of what was there and went and hid it. 9Then they said to each other, “We should not be doing this. Today is a day of good news, and we are keeping silent. If we wait until daylight, our sin will find us. So come on, let’s go and tell about this at the king’s palace.” 10So they went and called out to the city gatekeepers and told them, “We went into the camp of the Arameans, and we looked, but there was no one there! Not even the sound of a man! But the horses and the donkeys are tied there, and the tents are just as they were!”**

We Dare Not Hold Out Peace

1. Rediscover Christ’s redemption
2. Share Christ’s redemption as a matter of life and death

This is a day of great opportunity for the cause of Christ. It is also a day of grave danger, of mighty enemies. We can wage a war for the Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit that will be more telling hen anything done in our rich history. Of course, there is also the ever-present danger that we may fail to seize the opportunity to win the spiritual warfare against the powers of darkness, with the result that the church is set back by that much.

Whatever you intend to do for Christ and his kingdom, we have better do it soon, or it will be too late. Eastern religions with their corrupt thoughts are on the rise. They are energetic in reaching out to people. So is the push to remove God from everything and to make everyone believe that if God doesn’t exist at least to think that there might not be a god. Our nation is staggering under the blows given to it as discord and disunity abound. Our national debt grows at a rate of $45, 486 per second. The United States fiercely holds its title of the greatest debtor nation in the world. Our prosperity is built on a foundation of quicksand and insecurity.

The Bible abounds with encouragements to be good and faithful witnesses, mission minded, mission enthusiasts. Throughout the Bible, God says some much about living the new life found in Jesus Christ. It’s one of the top if not the top topics in all of the Bible.

But what is the emphasis in our church? What is the big thing that is the focus of our church? I mean where does most of the time in meetings, announcements in the bulletins, and general focus of our church fall? It is possible that we are spending first-rate energy on second-rate causes? Is it possible that we are majoring in minor—in side issues—even when the trumpets are blasting through the skies as God reminds us with sign after sign that the end is near? The no growth syndrome has been with us now for a couple generations. Our church may be growing internally; but externally, in comparison to population increase, we are growing smaller every day. Is it possible that the flame of allegiance is burning more brightly in the hearts of latest social issue follower than in the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ? Is it possible that there are multitudes at ease in the church, recoiling from self-sacrifice and self-giving and from being expendable in the army of the Lord?

Our mission focus today is designed to shake us out of our lethargy. We hear the four lepers say, **“We should not be doing this. Today is a day of good news, and we are keeping silent.** We dare not hold our peace. We are the instruments by which God makes churches little colonies of heaven right here on earth, whose one purpose is to lift up Christ that people may be drawn to him. We need to recover Christ’s glorious redemption and share Christ’s redemption as a matter of life and death.

1. Anyone who is engaged in evangelism and missions is living in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. The Christian witness has tasted the joy of salvation and wants to share it with others. That joy comes when one lives in repentance and trusts that salvation is by grace, through faith in Christ. His shed blood is the payment for all sin.

Along with this, anyone who is engaged in evangelism and mission sees the multitudes which are today distressed and perplexed, starving spiritual, when an abundance of the bread and water of life in Jesus Christ is readily available. This is portrayed in this lesson from 2 Kings 6 & 7.

The army of the powerful king of Aram under Ben-Hadad besieged the city of Samaria, the capital of Israel. So tightly did they seal up the city that their food supply was completely cut off. In the famine, a donkey’s head sold for 80 pieces of silver, a Warren Buffet like fortune in those days. Garbage was worth it’s weight in gold. Two mothers even made a pact to cook their own children and eat them (although only one did so).

Our attention is directed to four lepers sitting at the entrance of the city gate. If anyone approached, they had to cry out, “Unclean, unclean” to make sure others didn’t catch their rotting ailment. Desperately they said, **“Why should we sit here until we die? 4If we say, ‘Let’s go into the city,’ there is famine in the city and we will die there. But if we stay here, we will die. So let’s go over to the camp of the Arameans. If they let us live, we will live. If they kill us, we will die.”**

When the skinny, rotting, stinking lepers entered that camp, they found it deserted. Not one soldier was there. The Lord had frightened the army of the Arameans with the sound of chariots and horses. Thinking that they were under attack and outnumbered, the Aramean army had hastily retreated, leaving all their possessions in the camp.

The four lepers found food, silver, gold, and clothing in abundance. They ate and drink their fill. They carried and hid much of the plunder for themselves, going from tent to tent to make a pile for each of them. These four who were accustomed to living in the garbage dumps, were now wealthy beyond measure. They had more food, clothing, and wealth than they possibly could use. You can picture them taking off the clothes they were wearing and dropping them without a care to put of the best they could find. To be sliding rings on fingers and necklaces over their heads. To fill any bag or purse or pocket they might have had with more than it could hold. What a change. In the morning, poor beyond measure. In the evening, rich beyond their dreams.

An even more glorious change is experienced by those who trust Jesus as our Savior. The corrupt rotting of sin is healed because Jesus died to pay for all of them. By faith, God gives us healing. We are the children of God, bearing the fruits of the Spirit. We have a joy and a peace which all the world can’t give or take away. Poverty has gone, riches have come. We are new creations in Christ. We are created in Christ to do good works, which God lined out for us to walk in doing them. The supply of his grace is so boundless it is more than we can every use ourselves. There is so much of it that God is able to give it freely to all. We are clothed with the best of Christ, Christ’ robe of righteousness is ours. We stand before God and say, “Jesus, your blood and righteousness, my jewels are, my glorious dress.” God receives us sinners as clean, since there is no lack, famine, or death fort hose who are in Christ Jesus. Who God has made you shows that God wants to change people from being in constant need to be full of joy and peace.

2. Not only do we receive in our salvation, but we share the good news of Christ’s redemption with others. God wants to change people from being in constant need to be full of joy and peace. Like the lepers, we realize keeping our riches to ourselves is wrong. “**We should not be doing this. Today is a day of good news, and we are keeping silent…So come on, let’s go and tell about this at the king’s palace.”**

Think about those words. God has laid before us spiritual and even temporal blessings in abounding measure—way more than we could have dreamed. Have we selfishly accepted these gifts, enjoyed them, and hen forgotten to share them? Can we say we have given priority to evangelism and missions? Are we like the lepers doing wrong as we keep it to ourselves?

Many are basking in sheer luxury, with dozens of expensive gadgets, luxurious homes, and cars, while masses in the world go to bed hungry every night. Way worse, less than 1/3 of the 6.9 billion people in the world know Christ and his salvation. Can we honestly say we have done what is right? That we have shared the good news. Is our church actually on the move?

In one congregation, 30 members met once each month for a Sunday evening supper. 15 sit at one table and are assigned to check in on delinquent members (not a very glorious task). 15 sit at the other table where calls are assigned to visit the unchurched. In one year, 125 people came back to Christ and his church, and nearly all were kept. Can we be satisfied with the evangelism program in operation in our congregation?

Has our congregation plateaued into being satisfied with its no-growth syndrome? Is it because there are so few unchurched in our area, or is it because we just don’t care? Have we grown so cold that Christ hold less value than other things in life? Is the robe of Christ’s redemption that we wear so common for us that we forget how costly it is? Are we only concerned about ourselves? **We should not be doing this.**

The solution starts on our knees, asking for mercy for our indifference and lack of concern for the lost. Only as the Spirit fills us with the joy of our salvation as we taste the good food and try on the new garments—will we say with the lepers, **Today is a day of good news** and share it with those who are dying.

I never said the task would be easy. Our nation has reached new lows. Loss of reverence for human life is apparent in the number abortions and murders. Misguided thought processes had led to a steep decline in moral values. The idea of God being at the center of our nation is gone. The underlying philosophy that there is no God has replaced it. People are determined to keep God out of our national life. The typical American family is now a broken record of divorce, substance abuse, and increased crime. The belief that there are no absolute right and wrong but that each individual and each situation must be judged by what each person things and feels without regard to what God’s says is the prevailing attitude of multitudes today.

But let’s not spend time and energy on what is wrong, but rather on him who can make it right and who can transform lives. Let us not become so problem-conscious that we underestimate our resources. The Gospel is the power of God for salvation to all who believe. As we share the story of God’s love in Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit will perform that great miracle called the new birth. Let us be mobilized for witness by allowing the Spirit to fill our lives through Word and Sacrament. The Spirit gives us eyes to see how God is working in strange and marvelous ways. Great things are happening in many parts of the world. Souls are being reached and won. The Holy Spirit’s power is available for our assigned tasks to make this “a day of good news.” We must not keep it to ourselves as the four lepers did at first, especially not since we have all that the starving world needs. We must go to the city and report. We dare not be smug and complacent—the world is teetering on the brink of destruction.

It’s almost impossible to illustrate the unspeakable glory, the height and depth, the length and breadth of God’s love as revealed by the cross on which the prince of glory died for the sins of the whole world. Perhaps this true story can help.

A young man was sitting dejectedly in the coach of a speeding train. One could tell he was distraught and nervous. A minister, sitting across the aisle, sensed there was something radically wrong. He moved over and engaged the young man in conversation: Finally, the young man shared his story.

Years before he had quarreled with his father and left home in a rage. He broke the heart of his mother and trampled ruthlessly on her hopes and prayers.

Years passed, and like the prodigal son, he “hit bottom.” He thought of home, not knowing if his parents were dead or alive. In desperation, he wrote a letter that went something like this: “I hope this letter reaches you while you are still alive. I’m really sorry for what I did to you and how I grieved you with my ingratitude and disobedience. After the way I treated you, I don’t see how you could ever forgive me. I’ll be coming by our home on the train next Tuesday afternoon at two o’clock. If you are still there, if you can forgive me, and if you want me to come home, please tie a white rag on the branch of the cherry tree by the railroad tracks.”

The young man told the minister they were now approaching the town where his home was located. “I can’t stand it,” he said. “I’m sure there’ll be no sign as we go by.” And he sobbed, with tears rolling down his cheeks.

Suddenly, the minister pointed and cried out: “Look, son!”

The young man looked out the window as they passed the farmhouse. On the cherry tree there was a white rag tied on every branch! There were dishtowels on the clothesline. The father was there waving two large handkerchiefs, and the mother was waving a white dish towel. What were they saying? “Welcome home, son! Welcome home! You are forgiven.”

There is joy in heaven over every sinner who repents and believes the gospel. You and I are God’s messengers. This is a day of good tidings, and we dare not keep it to ourselves!

Points to consider as an individual or with a small group:

What does it take to live a life engaged in evangelism and missions?

1.

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God wants to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ people from \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

to being \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

A plateaued congregation is one that does not…

The solution for a plateaued congregation is…