

The Opportunistic Witness

Text: II Kings 5:1-19

A couple of months before China's Tiananmen Square student revolt on April 27, 1989, Joyce and I had the opportunity to hold a short worship service in Shanghai. It was a Three Self Church. Those churches are called the Three Self Churches: (1) self-governing, (2) self-propagating and (3) self-supporting, i.e. indigenous.

They are registered as patriotic to the People's Republic of China. They are prohibited from preaching the resurrection and the second coming of Jesus. They have an agreement with the government that in essence says, "You can do your own thing as long as your thing does not include sharing your message with someone else."

The Underground or as they are known "house churches" number fifty million believers who refuse to identify with the Three self churches because they are not allowed to evangelize or make disciples. They call the three self churches false churches because they do not evangelize. The cell churches meet in house churches or underground churches at the peril of their jobs, career, houses, education and even their lives.

When I was a boy I rode a mule. He was big, tall and solid black. A mule is an offspring of a donkey and a horse. A mule makes a good plough horse. They are steady, patient and calm. But they cannot reproduce another mule. One writer claims that the typical church is raising a generation of mules. The members know how to sweat, work hard, but cannot reproduce themselves. Presently in America it takes 44 members to produce a Christian convert.

This church is called to be a Great Commission Church. In Matthew 28:19-20 we have in the Greek language one imperative or command. It is "make disciples." There are three participles. The first one is as you go, while going, wherever you are going make disciples. Then as disciples are made the second participle is baptizing, and the third is teaching. So the real command is to make disciples. Take every opportunity to give a witness and invite people to become a follower of Jesus. The young girl in our reading provides the qualities for an opportunistic witness.

AN OPPORTUNISTIC WITNESS WILL OVERCOME FEAR.

A. She was young, v.2 When I was in the sixth grade I invited my friend Dickey C. to have Sunday dinner with us. As the meal was being prepared we threw and kicked the football in front of the house. The idea came to me that Dickey should receive Jesus. I hesitantly asked him, "would you like to be saved?" He said, "Yes." So I took him in the house to speak to my father and after the explanation of the gospel he prayed and acknowledged Jesus as his one and only Savior. There were many times as a young teenager that I hesitated to speak up and introduce Jesus to my classmates and friends. I had the fear of rejection or saying the wrong thing

That kind of fear is addressed in II Tim. 1:7. There it shows that the source of that fear is not from God. We can track it down to the weakness of our nature or from the evil one. With little effort the communicator can locate the story of the Sunday

School teacher who led D.L. Moody to Christ. It shows the fearfulness that almost kept him from going into the shoe store to speak to Mr. Moody. The young woman had another barrier to break.

B. She was a slave, v. 2 She had to be captured and brought to a foreign country. For years I have worked in a cross cultural field. I recognize how emigrants and refugees are very hesitant to speak. You can describe the loss of rights that went with slave hood. But this witness courageously spoke because of her concern for Naaman. She shows us that:

2. AN OPPORTUNISTIC WITNESS WILL SHOW COMPASSION.

Here the communicator might imagine what the ramifications of her silence would be for her master were he not healed. Explain the spread of the disease and the quarantine he would experience. Identify the physical and social costs he would suffer..

Then the communicator will show the compassion of Jesus toward those outside the fold of saving grace. When Jesus saw the city of Jerusalem he wept. When Paul thought of the Jewish people he offered himself to be separated from God. Rom. 9:1 and 10:1

Illustration: Years ago in Sidney Australia a man was saved. He had been a derelict considered hopelessly lost. He heard the message about Jesus who could bring healing to his life and in childlike faith he acknowledged Jesus and the Savior's work at Calvary. Although he could barely read or write he began in exquisite print to write the word "Eternity" wherever he went. Early in the morning before the foot traffic would commence he would take his chalk and write eternity on the sidewalks of Sidney. In the years that followed he wrote the word Eternity on every sidewalk in Sidney. He printed this word on historical markers, banks, and buildings. Before he died the city honored him with the title, Mr. Eternity.

A wealthy man had built a study for me in one of the towers of FBC/SF. To get to it you needed to climb three flights of stairs. It was designed to allow me a place and time to study and pray. After this sermon someone went up there and wrote on the door ETERNITY. I think it might have been one of my critics, but I didn't erase it because I thought that word described the awesomeness of preaching with eternity in view. This young slave girl demonstrates a quality that is need as we give witness to the gospel.

3. AN OPPORTUNISTIC WITNESS WILL EXPRESS CONVICTION. She had faith in the power of God. That faith was bolstered by the power of God in the prophet. Here the communicator will read the following episodes:

- The widow's oil that was depleted, 4; 1-7
- The dead son raised to life, 4: 18-37
- The stew that had poison was purified, 4: 38-41

Not only did our heroin have courage, compassion and conviction, but she offered an opportunity to the great soldier.

4. AN OPPORTUNISTIC WITNESS MAY HAVE BEEN THE 1ST VOICE OF HOPE TO NAAMAN, V.3

Here the communicator will draw a picture of hopelessness expressed by the king of the country, v.7. Then describe the confirmation from the prophet, v.8. There was the voice of encouraging grace, v.13

When Joyce and I ministered in Anacortes WA two years ago I chose to preach three sermons on the subject of being a personal witness. Before beginning the series I asked the evangelism chairperson to order some gospel tracts and place one in each bulletin. He responded that he didn't feel that was a very effective way to evangelize. I asked him to do it anyway. Later in the week I was talking to man who worked for the State named James B. He was charged with the mobilization of workers in case of snow storms, wind storms or flooding. He was a quiet person. For some reason I asked him, "How did you come to receive Christ?" He said, "You know some stranger on the street here in Anacortes handed me a little pamphlet. It was a cold day and I was in a hurry so I stuffed it in my coat pocket. I had forgotten all about it, but during the evening I remembered and I took it out and read it. It was so clear to me and I prayed the prayer of faith." With his permission I share this story.

Again with a little effort one can find a story that occurred this past week. It is a story of a 92 year old lady. She had been grocery shopping and as she got into her car a man jumped into the passenger seat. He demanded money or he would harm her. She said that she was not going to give in to him, she explained that she was a Christian and that if he killed her she would be with her Savior. Then she calmly described that Jesus forgives sin and that he loved this man. As she talked the man began to cry and tell her that he was sorry. She said, I want to give you ten dollars. He bent over and kissed her on the cheek and left. This story enjoyed national attention. Look for it as an event publicized during the third week in October, 2009.