

## “Tell the Truth!”

**John 8:31,32**

### **Evangelism Sermon**

“Tell the truth!” When you heard those words as a child, it almost certainly meant things were not going your way. Those words usually went along with words like, “Who walked through the house with muddy shoes? Tell the truth!” “Who left the water running in the bathroom sink? Tell the truth!” “Who tried giving the dog a haircut? Tell the truth!” Telling the truth as a child almost always meant an undesirable outcome for you.

Well, this morning I am going to encourage you to tell the truth. But, unlike when you were a child, telling the truth in this case will mean the most desirable outcome possible – the salvation and eternal life of precious souls.

### **I. Truth That Gives Us Confidence**

What truth do I want you to tell? More importantly, what truth does Jesus want you to tell? The truth about Him. The truth about who He is and why He came and what His coming means for the people of this world.

Telling this truth will not be easy. But, you probably already know that. How many of you find it easy to talk about Jesus to friends and neighbors and coworkers? It certainly wasn't easy for me – not at first. In fact, I can probably count on one hand the number of unchurched people I told about Jesus before I became a pastor. I was a Christian since the day of my baptism as a baby. And yet, I mostly kept the good news about Jesus to myself until I was twenty-six years old and ordained as a pastor. And even then, when I began regularly talking to unchurched people about Jesus, it was not out of pure motives. Sure, I wanted those souls to be saved. But, to be honest, much of my motivation came from the simple fact that I was now a pastor and telling people about Jesus was what I was supposed to do.

So, I know how you feel. I know it is not easy. It has never been easy, actually. The devil has always placed obstacles in the way of the proclamation of the gospel. It was even difficult for Jesus to tell people about Jesus. In St. John's Gospel, we read about how Jesus was ridiculed and attacked time and time again for telling the truth about Himself. He was even accused of being possessed by a demon!

Telling the truth about Jesus did not get any easier in the decades after Jesus death and resurrection. The book of Acts tells us all about what the early Christians endured for telling the truth – arrests and beatings and stonings and beheadings.

You and I do not face those kinds of obstacles to telling the truth about Jesus. Instead, our enemy the devil has unleashed subtler, and in some ways more sinister, obstacles – one of which is his attack on truth itself.

You and I are living in a world in which people do not believe there is such a thing as absolute truth – especially in the area of religion or spirituality. You can have an *opinion*. But don't be so arrogant as to suggest that what you believe is the *truth* – especially in the arena of religion or spirituality.

Many people today – many people you know – think that spiritual beliefs are like flavors of ice cream. You like chocolate. I like vanilla. She likes strawberry. He likes rocky road. There is no right or wrong to it. They are just preferences.

But Jesus disagrees. Listen again to what Jesus said John, chapter eight: ***“If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”*** He insists that there is right and there is wrong. There is truth and there is error. And what He says is true. In other words, it corresponds to reality. That is what truth means. When Jesus says, “This is the way things are,” that is the way things are. It is not His opinion. It is not His best guess. It is truth.

Which means that when you tell someone what Jesus says, you are not sharing your opinion. You are not giving them your best guess. You are telling them the way things are.

Think of it this way: Imagine you are stranded with some people on a desert island. After a number of days with nothing to eat you are all starving. As you explore the other side of the island looking for food, you suddenly see a boat pulling up to the shore. The men in the boat shout that they have come to rescue you. You run back to your friends shouting the good news. You wouldn't be worried that they might not believe you. You wouldn't be concerned that you might be made to look foolish. Because you wouldn't be sharing an opinion with them. You would be sharing the truth – a truth that would save their lives. That is what Jesus has called us to do, brothers and sisters – tell the truth.

## **II. Truth That Saves Souls**

Because that truth is needed. It is needed even more than a boat for people on a desert island. The people you tell desperately need what you are telling them.

Jesus said, ***“I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin” (John 8:34).*** Those people out there, the people the Lord has brought into your life (your friends, your co-workers, your mechanic, your baby sitter) – those people are slaves to sin.

Of course, so were you. And so was I. Listen again to what Jesus says, ***“Everyone who sins...is a slave to sin.”*** Do you sin? Then you are a slave to sin. And, if you are honest, you know just what Jesus means. You keep saying those things. You keep thinking those thoughts – day after day, week after week. You just cannot escape. You are enslaved.

“No!” Jesus insists. “You are not! Not anymore. I have freed you. I paid the price to purchase your freedom with my holy, precious blood. You are no longer a slave to sin! You are a full-fledged citizen of my Father's kingdom with all of the rights and privileges that citizenship guarantees – including (but not limited to) an eternal life in the Paradise He promises to provide.”

And THAT, my friends, is the message you have to share with the people the Lord has brought into your life. “But, they don't know they are slaves to sin!” Of course, they don't know. At least, they don't know how serious the situation is. But, they know what a mess their life is. They know the pain they have caused others. They know the addictions that haunt them. They know the guilt that plagues them. They may not know the seriousness of their situation. But, they have a God-given conscience that tells them something is wrong.

“But, what if they don’t believe me? Or, what if they don’t like what I have to say?” They may not. People tend not to like hearing bad news. It doesn’t make the news any less true and it doesn’t make it OK not to tell them.

A year ago, my wife and I received the devastating news that our 12-year-old daughter had a brain tumor. We did not want to hear it. We did not want to believe it. And, I am sure Riley’s neurologist did not want to tell us. But, it was true. And, we needed to hear it. Or, my daughter would have died.

The unchurched people the Lord has brought into your life will die in their sins if they do not hear about their sin and need for a Savior. That is the truth.

But, it is also true that Jesus has freed them from their sins. So, tell them! I know, it’s not always easy. We talked about that. But, remember that the truth you are telling them is *good news!* Like announcing to the folks on the island that they have been saved and will not die, you are announcing to folks that they have been saved and will live forever in heaven.

But, you may still be wondering how exactly you go about telling this truth to those around you. Well, in a certain sense I would answer that question very simply by saying, “Just do it.” Just start. Experience is a fantastic teacher. Most of what I have learned about reaching out with the gospel I learned as I went. I often made mistakes. I often wished I had said something differently. I was often at a loss to answer someone’s question. But, I learned from those mistakes. When someone asked me a question and I didn’t know that answer I said, “That’s a great question. I’ve never thought about that before. Let me get back to you.” Then, I would study God’s Word or ask pastor friends of mine, find an answer and get back to them. You can do the same. And, I am certain that, as you have more and more of these conversations, you will become more and more comfortable having these conversations. Just do it...and see how the Lord blesses those efforts.

But, in addition to just doing it, I encourage you to be as prepared as possible by being in God’s Word every day, by being involved in bible classes here at church where you can ask your pastor about issues you may face while telling others about Jesus, by finding and using resources aimed at equipping you to tell others about Jesus. Here is how St. Peter put it in one of my all-time favorite bible passages: ***“Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect” (I Peter 3:15).***

That last part is important, isn’t it? Just because the good Lord has given us the truth does not give us the right to be arrogant about it. In fact, it’s just the opposite. The truth we are telling – about Jesus’ freeing the world from the slavery of sin – is as true for us as it is for the people we tell. How could we be anything but humble as we tell them?

So...are you ready? Still a bit uncertain? Still a bit scared? I understand. But, think of that person you know who does not know Jesus. Picture him. Picture her. Now, picture the smile on that face, the wonder in those eyes, as he or she experiences God’s glory in heaven one day. All because...you told them the truth. Amen.

*Rev. E. Roecker at Faith Lutheran Church, Radcliff, Kentucky; September 23, 2018.*