



Life Guide

applying God's Word to life

They Preached the Word Wherever They Went September 27th, 2020

Acts 8:1b-8

On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. ² Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. ³ But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off both men and women and put them in prison.

⁴ Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. ⁵ Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah there. ⁶ When the crowds heard Philip and saw the signs he performed, they all paid close attention to what he said. ⁷ For with shrieks, impure spirits came out of many, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. ⁸ So there was great joy in that city.

1. Have you experienced a tragic event or a terrible situation which seemed like there was no good that could possibly come from it? Share a story.

My senior year of seminary started with my mom dying after a 4-year battle with cancer. Not too long after, we had a very unusual insurance situation which cause some great anxiety. Then I found my Grandma on New Year's Eve after she had fallen, still alive but with a broken hip. She made it through surgery, but died not long after. The

following February I tore my ACL, MCL, Meniscus. It was a year when nothing seemed to go right, yet each thing was something God used to develop me and equip me to help others face as I minister to them.

2. Compare Saul's role in this section to his role in the 2nd lesson from Ephesians 3: 1-13. How does this reversal testify to God's amazing grace?

By God's grace, Saul went from being the church's greatest persecutor, a violent man and blasphemer to being the Apostle Paul, possibly the church's greatest missionary, and especially the one whose privilege it was to take the gospel to the gentiles. Only a God of grace takes his worst enemy and makes him the poster boy for displaying his grace and for spreading the gospel.

3. What were the reasonable temptations the believers would've faced in the midst of the persecution?
It would have been so reasonable to scatter during the persecution, to only think about their own safety, to lay low and forget about their priorities and about Jesus' mission. It would have been so reasonable for people even to doubt whether Jesus was really still with them or whether his mission was even worth it, especially if it might cause them death.
4. What are the reasonable temptations we are facing in the midst of COVID-19, civil unrest, and a messy election year?
It would be so reasonable to just completely tune out on everything that is happening around us. It would be reasonable to get focused on only ourselves, and our needs, and our maintenance. It would be so easy to let our own opinions about everything get in the way of our concern for the bodies and souls of others. It would be so reasonable to look at the current days and think that God had postponed the great Commission. But we can't afford to fall into any of these reasonable traps.

5. The devil smiles when he is able to silence our witness for Christ. With everything going on, what things have made it harder and harder for you to witness your faith to others? How might you overcome those obstacles?

For me, it's just harder to talk to strangers or people I'm interacting with. The situation has trained us to get in and out as fast as we can, not linger or do anything unnecessary and try at all cost to avoid being in other people's space. All of that, along with the fact that now no one can see our mouths or facial expressions when we talk to them, makes witnessing considerable harder.

But the Gospel empowers us to overcome our difficulties and fears. Maybe it's time to call and check on people like we never have before. Maybe it's time to leverage our social media to reach people with good news, (not more Covid or political messaging).

6. Are there any new opportunities you've found where it has been easier to share your faith while all this chaos is going on?
- This situation allows us to ask people how they are, and then ask them again how the 'really' are. People are hurting and they are looking to talk about it. This gives us a unique opportunity to hear their pain and grief and apply law and gospel in a relational way.
7. God worked wonders even out of terrible persecution. The believers spread the word and it resulted in great joy in the city. How does this encourage you to witness in spite of everything the devil does to try to stop us?
- If God can work good out of terrible persecution, then he can certainly work good out of COVID. It's leading people to realize how empty all of the stuff they spent their busy hours on was. But it also has created a vacuum. People

have this void that they are looking to fill. We can fill it with joy! That brings a whole new urgency to our witness.

8. Back up each statement with reasons:
- a. Laypeople have an advantage when it comes to sharing their faith.
- Lay people likely have a wider circle of people they interact with daily who don't yet know about Jesus and need someone to share with them.
 - Lay people get to share Jesus with their friends, who trust them and have a relationship with them. Everybody knows that a pastor's job is to talk about Jesus (he's kind of like a paid salesman.) But people trust their friends.
 - Lay people have the advantage of all kinds of life experience in this world that equips them with unique skills and interests to use for witnessing.
- b. Called workers have an advantage when it comes to sharing their faith.
- Called workers have experienced the blessing of the worker training system of our synod, which has equipped them with all kinds of knowledge and skills.
 - Called workers have the advantage of getting to meet the friends and prospects of all the members who bring people to hear about Jesus.
 - It is easy to start a spiritual conversation when a pastor or teacher says, "I'm a pastor or teacher at Mount Olive." That's an easy transition.

9. The believers M.O. (modus operandi, operating method) was: they preached the word wherever they went. Let's get practical. How do we make that our Mount Olive M.O. and have it be true for each of us personally?

This is an important question for us as a congregation to answer. Each one of us is personally commissioned by Jesus to share Jesus. So I'm interested to hear what people say. Feel free to keep track of people's feedback and suggestions and share it with me. (Pastor Priewe).