

Man in the Mirror Bible Study
Spiritual Disciplines-A Man and Evangelism
Patrick Morley 10/4/2002

This week we will be talking about the spiritual discipline of evangelism. We will be looking at what God sees when he sees men. We want to look at what makes men open to a reasonable explanation of Christianity and what Paul believes about Christianity. Then we will look at a few suggestions about how you can have a more effective discipline of evangelism.

The big idea to explore is: **Once we see what God sees and believe what Paul believes everything is evangelism and evangelism is everything.**

What we need is a reminder of the things that we already know to be important and some encouragement to go and do it. This is our approach this morning.

In yesterday's paper there was an article on John Heisman, the coach at Georgia Tech, for whom the Heisman award was named. There was a quote in which he said to the players on his team, "Gentleman, it is better to have died as a small child than to fumble this football." In other words, this guy is tough. There is a man I know that I have been praying for, once a week for 20 years. This man makes John Heisman look like Mother Teresa! This guy is the most stubborn, proud person I know. Yet the thing that is so astonishing to me is that there is no area of his life that is working. You know what I'm talking about because you have people in your life that you have sort of given up on because they seem so unsaveable- they just don't get it. How is it that God sees men like this?

Matthew 9:36

Jesus has been out teaching, preaching, and healing people in the town and villages. In verse 36 the scripture says, "When he saw the crowds he was sickened by their depravity." How does God see men? We see in the text that when he saw the crowds he had compassion on them because they were "harassed, and helpless like sheep w/ out a shepherd." This is a seminal text for us in how we see men. If you see men in any other way you are wrong. God our Savior wants all men to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth. It's a universal offer of salvation, not to say that everyone will accept it, but it is the desire of God that all will be saved. God is patient with us, "not desiring that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." In Ezekiel, a passage that you will have in your discussion questions, the Lord himself says, "I take no delight in the death of the wicked."

In the course of our day to day lives, we do tend to forget this. What are the implications for you from these texts, knowing how God sees men? Why are these men so harassed and helpless? I'm going to call it cosmic loneliness. These are men who have gotten caught up in the lust of the flesh and the eyes, and the boastful pride of life. They have had scales come over their eyes and they can no longer see. Their lives have become

futile and some pretend that their life is not futile. When is it that men become open to the Gospel of Jesus Christ? I would like to suggest that it is when, through the futilities of life, they open themselves up to overcome this cosmic loneliness that men have. I think there are several different ways that this comes to the forefront.

One way is when a man becomes overwhelmed with eternity. Every man at some point in his life looks out into the starry host and thinks about, “where is the edge of eternity?” Where does infinity begin? Does it end where it begins, or vice versa? We all have been overwhelmed contemplating eternity. When you think of the vastness of eternity and you don’t know a personal God how can you help but not experience a cosmic loneliness.

A second way that this comes to the front is when we are pierced by the brevity of life—when we see a four year old child snatched away. Or when we see a 49 year old man who has lost 80% of his lung capacity and now his whole life is different. You come face to face with your mortality and the brevity of life. Hold your thumb and forefinger as close together as you can without actually touching them. Every problem you have, every relationship, every disappointment, every financial failure, every problem fits in that little crack. It’s not just *your* history it’s the whole history of mankind. It all fits in that little seam between infinity past and infinity future....brief, it’s gone. When a man thinks about this he is struck with a cosmic loneliness.

There is a third thing which is, that men from time to time are overwhelmed with their own moral guilt. We all do bad, sinful things. Even the worst of sinners, by the grace of God, through the Holy Spirit, will from time to time be brought to repentance and experience a sense of Godly sorrow for what he has done. When he comes to this true sense of moral guilt, again, there is this sense of cosmic loneliness. What do I do with this guilt? How do I unburden myself? How do I take care of this?

And the fourth is the fear of death. What man contemplating his own death could possibly cope with stepping across the precipice from this life to what ever is next and not feel, without God, a sense of cosmic loneliness?

The fifth thing is a longing for transcendence. All men, at various times in their lives, long for the knowledge of transcendence, which we would call God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. The reality that there must be something behind all that we see. We have a loneliness that we try to fill in different ways. The only solution is a relationship with God, but we think that we can fill this need in relationships with other people. Some men go to bars, some men chase women, some men try to accumulate achievements, other men try to get money. All of these attempts are to try and fill this void that is created by cosmic loneliness. It all ends in futility, so men find themselves pining for God, for truth, for beauty. The chief occupation of the secular man is to run away from cosmic loneliness. Knowing this (what God sees) and knowing that there are 63 million of these men out there in the US alone, why do we have to be reminded? Why are we not already motivated? **Once we see what God sees and believe what Paul believes, evangelism is everything and everything is evangelism.**

How can we get a hold of this kind of motivation? When can get it by believing what Paul believes. First go back to Matthew 9:36. After Jesus observes the people (the harassed and helpless sheep) he tells his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field." There is a shortage of workers! There is not a shortage of believers but there is a shortage of workers. There are 63 million men out there, spiritual zombies, dead men walking. Every other man you meet today is a dead man, and many of them are open because they are walking around either pretending they don't have it or either totally wiped out and therefore no longer pretending that they care at all- a sense of cosmic loneliness. Why am I not out there right now?

Let's now read Philippians 3:7. "What ever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ, what is more I consider everything a loss compared with the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord for whose sake I have lost all things, I consider them rubbish that I may gain Christ...I am not ashamed of the gospel for it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes...I resolve to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified...Yet when I preach the Gospel I cannot boast for I am compelled to preach this Gospel." What did Paul believe that made him say these things? **If we could believe what Paul believes and see what God sees than to us evangelism would be everything and everything would be evangelism!** What do we need to know that Paul knew?

Number one, he believed in the enormity of eternity, he believed in an actual heaven, an actual hell, and in an actual salvation. The second thing he believed was that all men need a savior. The fundamental teaching of Christianity is that we are sinful people who need a savior. The third thing he believed was that Jesus is the only Savior. John 14:6, "I am the way the truth and the life. No man comes to the Father except through me." It's an exclusive way. There are not many paths. Paul believed that there is one way to heaven and that is through Jesus Christ. He believed that salvation was not a result of goodness but of repentance and faith in Jesus. That is why Paul was so committed to evangelism. Paul believed that the greatest privilege is to be chosen by God for salvation and that the second greatest privilege is to help someone else to experience that same salvation. What is important today-next week, next month, one hundred years from now, is not going to be so important anymore.

A few suggestions: If you want to have a more effective discipline of evangelism, here are a couple of resources to look over: "How to Lead a Man to Christ". Another thing you can do is to write the names of three unsaved men that you can begin to pray for and look for and opportunity to build a relationship with them. Do you want to know why I am able to lead men to Christ? It is because I try to see what God sees and believe what Paul believes, and evangelism is everything to me. It can be so nerve wracking to step out, but there is so much cosmic loneliness out there. People really want to talk about this. You don't have to produce any particular result. Here is my advice to you: just help a man go as far toward Christ as he wants to go that day. It could be all the way! It could be that he just needs someone that he feels is able to understand. Someone of

whom he thinks, "This person can help me". That's witnessing- it's just helping people to move as far toward Jesus as they want to go. That's it.

Let's Pray. Heavenly Father, I just pray that you would burn this reminder in our hearts. I pray that if any of us have had the wrong attitude toward people- if we haven't been seeing people the way that you see them, that you would help us in this area. I also pray that you would give us the faith to believe and trust in the scriptures so that we might believe what Paul believes; and that we might be motivated and break out of our apathy and fear, or whatever the hindrance might be. For these lost men who are out there, just consume them with this cosmic loneliness, so that they might turn to you for salvation. We pray this in the name of Jesus. Amen