

Walking Sermon

Matthew 7:16-23

Preface

Today is Senior Adult recognition day at Barnwell Baptist Church. Senior Adults are playing important roles in our worship service. In addition, I would like to recognize all Senior Adults at this time.

The role of senior adults in the work of the Lord should never be underestimated or taken for granted. Often retired senior adults are able to fulfill certain responsibilities that require being done during the day while others are at their jobs.

Senior adults bring much wisdom and experience to the church. The wisdom of senior adults can save us all heartache and trouble if we will listen to the voice of experience.

Many new churches today are intentionally formatted to only appeal to the younger generation. Personally, I strongly believe that is a mistake. As I have said many times over, I take great pride in how our church enjoys a good mixture of age groups all worshipping and serving together in unity.

Scripture – Read

¹⁶ *By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles?* ¹⁷ *Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.* ¹⁸ *A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit.* ¹⁹ *Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.* ²⁰ *Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.*

²¹ *“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.* ²² *Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’* ²³ *Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’* Matthew 7:16-23 NIV

Introduction

Jesus uses strong words to describe the importance of bearing fruit as Christians.

4/30/10

Walking Sermon1.doc- 1

Illus: Yesterday Pam and I went to visit Joyce Bishop in the hospital. She is in the hospital because she is having problems breathing. When we went to pray, we gathered around and held hands. As I began to pray I realized I was standing on her oxygen line. Think about the irony in that. I am praying for health but all the while standing on her oxygen line, the very thing she needed most.

As Christians, we often say “Lord, Lord” but we do not bear fruit for our Lord. We are going through the motions of worship but it isn’t affecting others in a positive way.

A good doctor is one who carefully and accurately diagnoses a patient’s problem and provides the correct prescription.

A good baker is one who can bake excellent pastries, cakes and pies that are wonderfully tasty.

A good teacher is one who cares about the students and is able to help students learn the intended material.

And, a good Christian is one who bears fruit.

Our text makes it clear that as Christians, God expects us to bear fruit in our Christian life. It is important that we understand some principles about bearing fruit.

Content

1. Bearing fruit is action beyond worship

Illus: Reporters and city officials gathered at a Chicago railroad station one afternoon in 1953. The person they were meeting was the 1952 Nobel Peace Prize winner. A few minutes after the train came to a stop, a giant of a man - six feet four inches with bushy hair and a large mustache stepped from the train. Cameras flashed. City officials approached him with hands outstretched. Various people began telling him how honored they were to meet him.

The man politely thanked them and then, looking over their heads, asked if he could be excused for a moment. He quickly walked through the crowd until he reached the side of an elderly woman who was struggling with two large suitcases. He picked up the bags and with a smile, escorted the woman to a bus. After helping her aboard, he wished her a safe journey. As he returned to the greeting party he apologized, "Sorry to have kept you waiting."

4/30/10

Walking Sermon1.doc - 2

The man was Dr. Albert Schweitzer, the famous missionary doctor who had spent his life helping the poor in Africa. In response to Schweitzer's action, one member of the reception committee said with great admiration to the reporter standing next to him, **"That's the first time I ever saw a sermon walking."**

We are all called to be walking sermons; we are called to bear fruit for the Lord. Bearing fruit can encompass many things from visiting prospects to working around the church. It can include teaching a class or just going out of your way to encourage others who are hurting. It can include setting up chairs and tables to serving in the nursery.

Bearing fruit involves a personal calling and a personal response of commitment. But there are two things that remain constant. **First, we are all expected to bear fruit. Secondly, bearing fruit always involves taking action. In other words, it is a walking sermon.**

We can come together in worship to sing songs together, pray together, take communion together and listen to sermons. But, **until our worship takes on legs and hands, we are not bearing fruit.**

If our worship doesn't lead us to a sermon that walks, we might be present but we're not voting. We aren't bearing fruit.

Jesus said, you know a tree by its fruits. You can tell whether you've actually worshipped by the fruit it produces in you.

2. Bearing fruit involves others

Thinking about senior adults, there is a wealth of experience and knowledge right here in this church. We must tap that experience and wisdom. We must learn from it and allow our young adults to gain from your experiences.

Likewise, senior adults must be willing to open up their lives to others. We need to understand that keeping our mistakes and hardships of the past private is a selfish mistake. When we fell to share our experiences with others, we deprive them of our testimony of what God has done to forgive and heal us.

Illus: I worry sometimes that you as a congregation might get tired of hearing stories about my own testimony. Likewise, I don't particularly enjoy telling about some of my childhood experiences. Telling the stories conjure up difficult memories and

feelings. However, the stories always end with what is miraculous for me; how God has changed my life. I have to tell of these things because I must tell others what God has done in my life.

Are you willing to open yourself up to others to allow yourself to become a sermon that walks?

Hebrews 13:15-16 says, *"¹⁵ Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that confess his name. ¹⁶ And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased."* NIV

When we do good and share with others, we are putting our worship into action. And notice in our text, this is what pleases God. We are creating a walking sermon that impacts the lives of those outside the walls of this church.

You can't be a Christian and live in a vacuum. Yes we all need times of retreat. We need vacations to rest up and recharge. It took me many years to understand the need for vacation time.

But we must also be busy about the Lord's work touching people's life with the gospel. We must be willing to sacrifice a little and open our homes and whatever it takes to bear fruit.

Jesus summed up this concept in His sermon on the mount when he said; *"...let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."* Matthew 5:16 NIV

When you and I display good deeds towards others, not only do we worship but our work lead others to worship God. In other words, you become a sermon that walks.

3. Bearing fruit is present tense

I spoke kindly about senior adults and I very much value the senior adults we have in our church. However, I must also say that too **often some senior adults think retirement means retiring from God's work. This simply is not biblical.**

Notice our text says, *"¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."* This tells me that bearing fruit is a present tense action.

Your Christian life is not about the fruit you used to bear. It is not about the fruit you plan to bear. What you and I are as Christians today is judged by God from the fruit we bear today.

You might say, “Well I did my time in the nursery, I don’t have to serve anymore.” We desperately need people to volunteer to help in the nursery. If more people would volunteer, people would not have to serve nearly as often.

We need help during AWANA, with the youth and with senior adult ministries. Our church is hosting the association wide Keenagers Luncheon on May 13th. This will require a lot of work and decorating. I encourage our senior adults to call Donna Nix and volunteer to help with the preparations. Your help is desperately needed. Will you help?

I know Christians who seem to be living on their past fruits. When I speak with them they tell me all about the things they did in the past. They talk about how they use to teach Sunday School and how they use to help in one area or another. It is often all I can do to keep from saying; “**What about now? What are you doing for the Lord today?**”

Bearing fruit is present tense. This is an important concept for people of all ages to understand. Teenagers, you should be bearing fruit right now. If you aren’t faithful to youth and if you don’t get involved and study the word and serve God now, you won’t do it when you get older either.

Illus: A teen helps clean our office. Each time she leaves little notes around the office with words of encouragement and scripture verses.

Regardless of your age, the time to serve God is now.

Conclusion

Doug Nichols served with Operation Mobilization in India in 1967. He tells of how tuberculosis forced him into a sanitarium for several months.

His story: I did not yet speak the language, but I tried to give Christian literature written in their language to the patients, doctors, and nurses.

Everyone politely refused. I sensed many weren’t happy about a rich American (to them all Americans are rich) being in a free, government-run sanitarium. (They didn’t know I was just as broke as they were!)

The first few nights I woke around 2:00 A.M. coughing. One morning during my coughing spell, I noticed one of the older and sicker patients across the aisle trying to get out of bed. He would sit up on the edge of the bed and try to stand, but in weakness would fall back into bed. I didn’t understand what he was trying to do. He finally fell back into bed exhausted. I heard him crying softly.

The next morning I realized what the man had been trying to do. He had been trying to get up and walk to the bathroom! The stench in our ward was awful. Other patients yelled insults at the man. Angry nurses moved him roughly from side to side as they cleaned up the mess.

One nurse even slapped him. The old man curled into a ball and wept. The next night i again woke up coughing. I noticed the man across the aisle sit up and again try to stand. Like the night before, he fell back whimpering.

I don’t like bad smells, and I didn’t want to become involved, but I got out of bed and went over to him. When I touched his shoulder, his eyes opened wide with fear. I smiled, put my arms under him, and picked him up. He was very light due to old age and advanced TB. I carried him to the washroom, which was just a filthy, small room with a hole in the floor. I stood behind him with my arms under his armpits as he took care of himself. After he finished, I picked him up, and carried him back to his bed. As I laid him down, he kissed me on the cheek, smiled, and said something I couldn’t understand.

The next morning another patient woke me and handed me a steaming cup of tea. He motioned with his hands that he wanted a tract. As the sun rose, other patients approached and indicated they also wanted the booklets I had tried to distribute before. Throughout the day nurses, interns, and doctors asked for literature.

Weeks later an evangelist who spoke the language visited me, and as he talked to others he discovered that several had learned about the love of Christ of His offer of Salvation as a result of reading the literature.

What did it take to reach these people with the gospel? It wasn’t health, the ability to speak their language, or a persuasive talk. I simply took a trip to the bathroom with an old man.

HE BECAME A SERMON THAT WALKED.