

Come and See  
 Brookfield Congregational Church  
 October 31, 2010  
 Colossians 4:2-6, John 1:35-42

*George settles in rocking chair and begins reading the paper. Sound track of Packer Song begins and George reads paper while glancing up at an imaginary TV. The announcer portion of the track begins and George stands up – cheering away. At the end of this section, there is a doorbell ring – then two more. George looks frustrated – glancing between the imaginary door and his TV. Sound track goes silent as George answers door.*

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John: *(Holding bible – smiling broadly)* Good afternoon sir. May I come in and share a few words with you regarding the good news about Jesus Christ?

George: *(Looking aggravated – answers abruptly – looking back and forth between TV and man at the door.)* Well... it's not a good time for company. I'm watching the Packer game... *(at TV)* **Oh no! Driver fumbled!**

John: Ah yes Sir – but you know the condition of your soul is much more important than a football game.

George: My soul is just fine thank you. But the Packers are in a big hole right now and that's the condition I am concerned about right now!

John: But sir – I have come to know a great deal about the bible and salvation and I know the most important question in the world for you is, ***“Do you know where you are going to spend eternity?”***

George: *(At TV)* They got it back! They got it back! *(At visitor)* Please go now – I don't know about eternity – but I'm going to spend the next couple of hours watching the rest of this game!. *(Begins to close door)*

John: *(Sticks foot in door)* But sir – I am very concerned for your soul and there are things I have come to know that you need to know.

George: Ah dang! Missed a touchdown. **You need to leave now!** *(Then pauses)* Wait a minute – I'll be right back. *(Scribbles a note then brings it back.)* Here, read this at your leisure, but right now I am going to finish watching the game. *(Closes door)*

John: *(Sticks out finger as though to ring the doorbell again. Then reconsiders and walks away reading note. )*

*“People don’t care how much you know...  
Until they know how much you care!”*

When you hear the word *evangelism* something like the scene you just saw may come to mind. Wikipedia begins its definition of the term this way: *Evangelism refers to the practice of relaying information about a particular set of beliefs to others who do not hold those beliefs.* The “evangelist” who visited George was of the –*shoving it down your throat – passing on information –* school of evangelism. You may have experienced something like this at one time or another and it is, frankly, simply obnoxious.

The word evangelism has been much abused. If translated literally, it means, “*A good message*” or “*Good News.*” The first time I encountered one of these obnoxious evangelists, I was accosted with something along the line of, “*If you do not accept Jesus as your personal Savior, you are going to burn in hell for eternity.*”

“*Really,*” I replied, “*And why is that?*” “*Because God loves you so much,*” was the answer. Then he started to quote John 3:16. “*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son so that whoever would believe in him would not perish, but might have everlasting life.*” His take was that God loved me and gave Jesus for me and if I would believe I would go to heaven, otherwise I would perish which he took to mean I would burn in hell for all eternity.

My obnoxious evangelist took offence at my response. “*You have a silly god,*” I said, “*I’m going to fry because God **loves me** so much?*” Doggies! You see – these folks care a lot about their version of the truth – but they don’t really care about me as a person, know nothing about my struggles or my hopes and dreams. *Mainly* – they care about their stuff.

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Nevertheless it is clear from Paul’s words to the church at Colossae that we *are* to share the good news of God’s love. That love, as we sang this morning with our children, is very deep and very wide and it brings great joy to our living. Once we have been touched by that love, we want to share it with the people in our lives we care about.

There are two critical lessons in our scripture readings this morning. I want to take you now to the reading from the gospel of John. This reading makes the first point:

***We are all created with a God shaped blank***

John 1:35-42: *John {the Baptist} was {at the River Jordan} with two of his disciples. When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, “Look, the Lamb of God!”*

*When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, “What do you want?” They said, “Teacher, where are you staying?” “Come and see,” Jesus replied.*

*So they went and saw where he was staying, and they spent that day with him. It was about four in the afternoon. Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, “We have found the Messiah” (that is, the Christ).<sup>42</sup> And he brought him to Jesus.*

Notice Jesus’ gentle invitation. “Come and see.” Not, “believe in me or burn!” That gentle invitation to come and see is a part of who we are as a church. “We’re on a journey, sharing our story.” Come and journey with us – come and see.

***Here’s the key to the text.*** Andrew and his brother Simon were fishermen. We know the story from Luke where they fished all night and caught nothing. One can imagine conversations between the brothers as they sat in their boat looking up at the night sky. “*What do you think Andrew? There must be more than this to life. They say some day a Messiah will come along who will make God real for people. Do you buy that?*”

Then it happens! Andrew meets Jesus. The man with the gentle invitation. “Come and see.” Andrew spends the day with Jesus and his followers and something inside lights up. Something brings his spirit to life. When Jesus speaks, God whispers in Andrew’s soul. When Jesus touches people, they are made whole. And notice what happens:

*The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, “We have found the Messiah. And he brought him to Jesus.*

God  
shaped  
blank

Andrew found the one thing that could fill his God-shaped blank. That would, of course, be God. The very first thing Andrew wanted to do was to share this fantastic news with his brother Simon.

The second critical lesson from our readings this morning comes from Paul's letter to the Colossians:

***We are all created for a God shaped mission***

When we have opened our God-shaped blank to the grace of God, we are always on the lookout to share that grace with others.

Brennan Manning, in his book The Ragamuffin Gospel tells the story about Fiorello LaGuardia, mayor of New York City during the worst days of the Great Depression. He was called the 'Little Flower' because he was only five foot four and always wore a carnation in his lapel. He was a colorful character who used to ride the New York City fire trucks, raid speakeasies with the police department and, take entire orphanages to baseball games. Whenever the New York newspapers were on strike, he would go on the radio and read the Sunday funnies to the kids.

One bitterly cold night in January of 1935, the mayor turned up at a night court that served the poorest ward of the city. LaGuardia dismissed the judge for the evening and took over the bench himself.

Within a few minutes, a tattered old woman was brought before him, charged with stealing a loaf of bread. She told LaGuardia that her daughter's husband had deserted her, her daughter was sick, and her two grandchildren were starving. But the shopkeeper, from whom the bread was stolen, refused to drop the charges. "It's a real bad neighborhood, your Honor," the man told the mayor. "She's got to be punished to teach other people around here a lesson."

LaGuardia sighed. He turned to the woman and said "I've got to punish you. The law makes no exceptions--ten dollars or ten days in jail." But even as he pronounced sentence, the mayor was already reaching into his pocket. He extracted a bill and tossed it into his famous sombrero saying: "Here is the ten dollar fine which I now remit; and furthermore I am going to fine everyone in this courtroom fifty cents for living in a town where a person has to steal bread so that her grandchildren can eat. Mr. Bailiff, collect the fines and give them to the defendant." The following day the New York City newspapers reported that \$47.50 was turned over to a bewildered old lady who had stolen a loaf of bread to feed her starving grandchildren. Fifty cents of that amount was contributed by the red-faced grocery store owner.

At the same time, some seventy petty criminals, people with traffic violations, and New York City policemen, each of whom had just paid fifty cents for the privilege of doing so, gave the mayor a standing ovation.

*“Come and see,”* Jesus invites us. We discover in our journey that we are all the widow in the courtroom as we receive the grace and mercy of God.

To paraphrase Paul’s words, *“Always be on the lookout to share the Grace of God with others.”*

Last week Kathleen had you take a slip of paper from a cup that said, *“I am the one Jesus loves.”* Hopefully that message of grace spoke to your heart during the week. Today there is something else in the cups.

The cups today have small business cards in them that have our theme, *“I love this Church!”* on them. Each person should take a card. Carry the card with you, in your purse or wallet and following Paul’s words – be on the lookout for a time when you can pass the card along to a friend or neighbor.

This is sharing God’s good news with a soft touch. Keep the card and prayerfully think about how you could give this to someone who may be searching.

You are on a God-shaped mission!