

JESUS SEND US OUT AS INFLUENCERS

NOTES FOR A SERMON PREACHED AT ST PAUL'S ON 30TH OCTOBER 2005

MATTHEW 28:16-20

2 CORINTHIANS 2:14-15

So, there I was sitting next to the Archbishop of Canterbury.

"George," I said. It was 1992 and the Archbishop of Canterbury was George Carey.

What do you call an Archbishop? Your worship? Your most honourableness and especially reverent? Arch?

The occasion, Zebabdeh, St Luke's Hospital, 3 hours a day work because of occupation restrictions, David Penman Memorial Clinic, Jean Penman, The Archbishop of Canterbury, Aussie Ambassador, President of World Vision International, Bishop of Jerusalem, A dozen important Israelis, Palestinians, muftis, and others. And me.

Didn't matter what I called Arch, because when it was my turn to be introduced he called me "Paul". A fine name, just not *my* name.

George's message: "Go into the world and preach the Good News. Use words if necessary."

No-one from WV, least of all me, got to make a speech about anything. No words were said. But the David Penman Memorial Clinic spoke/speaks louder than words.

The Great Commission, Echoed in Mark 16:15 "preach the gospel to the whole creation."

Preach = like a town crier. Sometimes – *proclaim*.

Only words? *But I'm not a preacher!*

The word of God is not just one word. Build your life on the whole of the word.

So, in Matthew. Not *preach* but *teach*. But what kind of teacher? The boring lecturer. One way preaching?

No, invite people to learn, to follow, to be a disciple.

Jan 90. Mexico City. Ajusco. Million dollar views in \$10 houses. There were three aspects to the project--income generation (running a day care centre); training (tutorial assistance for 5-12 yo students); and health ("holistic health", self esteem courses, use of foods, nutrition). And a soccer team. Is this *preaching/teaching*?

Fr Alfonso Navarro. We then finished the afternoon with an hour with Father Navarro, a pioneer in holistic development, or should one say holistic evangelism. It was an inspirational hour with a man who is doing "integral evangelisation" (his words) right there in the slums of Ajusco. Some colleagues had mentioned him to me as a "must see" in Mexico City.

He said, "Too many priests see themselves as the *hat* of the church, when they should be her *head*." In other words, the priest/minister's role is to *lead* not merely to sit on top of a structure. "Too many churches are like service stations. People just come in to take a service. The church provides what the customer wants and that's it." For him, he wants to transform "religious service stations" that are primarily sacrament-oriented Parishes, into missionary Parishes, "evangelising communities."

He sees the parish as "the place where the mission of the church is fully accomplished." And that mission is holistic! "Going to all! Providing all! Involving all! The whole church with the whole Gospel to the whole World." When I commented sagely that I discerned an emerging common ground among some Catholics, Protestants and Evangelicals, he said "Well, I borrowed it from the Protestants. But it's not Evangelical or Catholic. It's just the Gospel. It belongs to everybody."

More than one Great Commission.

More than one way to witness.

Our second reading: For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. 2Cor 2:15

And elsewhere, we are to be the *salt* of the earth, and a *light* to the world. More than one way to skin this witnessing cat!

Paul Borthwick "Stop Witnessing and Start Loving." Chapter 3 :Jesus sends us out as Influencers

Five-sense evangelism:

How would Jesus *sound* / *taste* / *look like* / *touch* / *smell*?

Sound> preach proclaim

It can be a simple word. Funeral. Student after the service. "I sometimes think that God must exist, but I just can't work it out." I said, "I reckon belief in God isn't something we can work out. I can't work it out either. I just choose to believe. That's what we call faith."

A blinding flash? No, but in a small, natural way, I was proclaiming the good news.

Taste> Matt 5:13 *You are the salt of the earth.*

Perhaps the most stretched metaphor in the Bible! One idea is that salt is a preservative. It keeps good things from going bad. But also, I think Jesus wants us to be flavour enhancers. The Message "You're here to be salt-seasoning that brings out the God-flavours of this earth."

You know what it's like to have a lovely, mouth-watering meal placed in front of you, and to take a few bites and discover there's no salt in it! You reach for the salt-shaker!

Christians are meant to be like that: they oppose corruption and decay in the world around them, penetrating and influencing the society for good, and acting like a moral antiseptic to curb evil and frustrate the work of the enemy. And they add flavour to the lives of those around them.

We should take every opportunity to add salt to life.

A Sunday School teacher was reading Bible stories to the class. He read: "The man named Lot was warned to take his wife and flee, out of the city but his wife looked back and was turned into a pillar of salt." One boy asked: "What happened to the flea?"

Another said, "My Mum looked back when she was driving and she turned into a telegraph pole."

Light> You are the Light of the World.

Light brightens (the corner where you are). Light guides us through the darkness. Light warns of danger. It dispels darkness.

History of the good news is that it cannot be extinguished. Like those party candles.

The light of Christ keeps on shining. New ways of sharing the good news come along. New believers are attracted to his light. Sleepy Christians are re-awakened. Fresh discoveries give even more confidence in the truth of the Bible.

Note: Not salt/light of the *church*. Our mission is to the *world*.

Touch> We witness when we touch people. When we bump against them. When we offer them a helping hand. At playgroup. In kidzworks. At your office.

Every special person who touches our life
Leaves their own unique mark on our heart.
A mark which can never be chizzled away
Even if the years eventually pull us apart.

Touch can be so important. Major tragedy that there are rules and protocols preventing good people from hugging a child. You don't need to tell me about the dangers of child abusers, but sometimes our fear of the few damages the quality of life of the many.

India, 1977. Leprosy village. Shook people's hands. Because of widespread prejudice you're all thinking, did their hands fall off. But it's a myth. Quite hard to catch leprosy unless you're living all the time. When Jesus met a leper "Jesus was filled with pity, and reached out and touched him" (Mark 1:41, TEV). Can you imagine what that touch meant to that man? When I held my hand out to this man with leprosy, I could see on his face how much he appreciated being touched.

Smell> 2nd reading. The aroma of Christ. What does it mean? Be like Boronia. Invisible but beautiful. Who does the garden? Who puts the music away? Who washes the communion cups? Who puts the wheely bins out?

5 sense witnessing.

Hearing> Just say something.

Taste> Enhance the flavour of the lives of people around us.

Sight> Be a conspicuous Christian. Let them see our good works and point them towards Christ.

Touch> Be the hands of Christ to a needy world.

Smell> leave a Christian fragrance behind when you leave.

A traveller's car broke down as he was driving past a beautiful, old monastery. He walked up the drive and knocked on the front door of the monastery. A monk answered, listened to the man's story and graciously invited him to spend the night. The monks fed the man and led him to a tiny chamber in which to sleep. The man thanked the monks and slept serenely until he was awakened by a strange, beautiful aroma. The next morning, as the monks fixed his car, he asked about the smell that woke him. The monks said, "We're sorry. We can't tell you about the aroma. You're not a monk."

The man was disappointed, but eager to be gone, so he thanked the monks for their kindness and went on his way. During quiet moments afterward, the man pondered the source of the alluring aroma. Several years later, the man was driving in the same area. He stopped at the monastery on a whim and asked to go in. He explained to the monks that he had so enjoyed his previous stay, he wondered if he might be permitted to spend another night under their peaceful roof. The monks agreed and the man stayed. Late that night, he awoke to find his room filled with that wonderful aroma again. The next morning, he begged the monks to explain the smell. The monks said, "We're sorry. We can't tell you about the aroma. You're not a monk."

By now, the man's curiosity had turned to obsession. He decided to give up everything and become a monk if that was the only way to learn about the aroma. He told the monks of his decision and began the long and arduous task of becoming a monk.

Seventeen years later, the man was finally established as a true member of the order. When the celebration ended, he humbly went to the leader of the order and asked to be told the source of the aroma. Silently, the old monk led the new monk to a huge wooden door. He opened the door with a golden key. That wooden door swung open to reveal a second door of silver, then a third of gold and so on until they had passed through twelve doors, each more magnificent than the last. The new monk's face was awash with tears of joy as he finally beheld the wondrous source of the mysterious aroma he had first smelt so many years before.

But, I can't tell you what it was. You're not a monk.