

ONE NEW FRIEND – John 4:1-9

MVC SERMON; Mission conf March 30, 2014

OPENING REMARKS AND THANK YOU

PRAYER

INTRODUCTION

I have come today with a clear purpose in mind. To challenge each of you to commit to making one new friend across cultures for Jesus' sake.

To help you do that, I am going to do 4 things:

1. I am going to tell you why it is so important
2. I am going to give you some helps as to how you can make a friend.
3. I am going to suggest some next steps.
4. I am going to ask you to decide to either commit or not.

This prayer is attributed to Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu adapted from an original prayer by Sir Francis Drake.

Disturb us, O Lord

when we are too well-pleased with ourselves
when our dreams have come true because we dreamed too little,
because we sailed too close to the shore.

Disturb us, O Lord

when with the abundance of things we possess,
we have lost our thirst for the water of life
when, having fallen in love with time,
we have ceased to dream of eternity
and in our efforts to build a new earth,
we have allowed our vision of Heaven to grow dim.

Stir us, O Lord

to dare more boldly, to venture into wider seas
 where storms show Thy mastery,
 where losing sight of land, we shall find the stars.

In the name of Him who pushed back the horizons of our hopes
 and invited the brave to follow.

Amen

1. WHY IS IT SO IMPORTANT THAT YOU MAKE A NEW FRIEND ACROSS CULTURES FOR JESUS SAKE?

- a. There are airplanes that are going to land today in SF and Oakland, and families are going to step into those airports to get into vans and cars. Then they are going to be driven on the 580 and Hiway 99 and come to their new home in the central valley.
- b. They are a part of a gigantic movement of people we all the “diaspora.” Means scattering.
- c. Remember how God said to Adam and Eve to scatter and multiply? Remember when the people clung together and built a tower for themselves, and God said he was going to scatter them? Remember how God did that? He confused their languages, and they began to scatter, and I don’t think the world has ever been more scattered than today.
- d. And America is at the heart of the diaspora.
- e. Do you know that today, 20% of international migrants lives in America.
- f. I realize that I am venturing into risky territory with some of you.
 - i. You may have a “we were here first” mentality if you want. You may put on your political hat and say these immigrants are ruining our economy, they don’t appreciate what they have.
 - ii. You may hold hatred in your heart for Muslims because of what some radical Muslims did on 9/11 and what destruction you believe Muslims intend for our country and any country that is not muslim.
 - iii. But I am asking you to take those convictions and emotions and temporarily set them aside. Because even if your fears turn out to be true, fears can get in the way of your obeying God.
 - iv. Because there was an OT prophet by the name of Jonah whose fears of another kind of people called Assyrians got in the way of what God told him to do.
 - v. Love of our own freedoms, or fear of threats from others, even if legitimate, are not reasons to set aside God’s commands.
- g. So what is God’s command? From the earliest days as God began to form his chosen people, one of the priorities He instilled in them was hospitality to strangers and aliens. The scripture tells us to love the stranger as one of our native born (Lev 19: 33-34).
- h. The loving heart of God for all nations is seen throughout all scripture. The prophet Isaiah says that the Temple of God is to be a house of prayer for all the nations. And Jesus quotes this very passage when He goes into the temple in His day and finds that it has been polluted with moneychangers; he also sees that Gentiles are not being welcomed, so he says, “Is it not written, My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations?” (Mk.11:17)

- i. The Bible tells us that God moves people around, He alters their borders, why? In order that they may find him. (Acts 17:26-27)
 - i. Let me tell you: We have representatives of 361 unreached people groups in America; people who are from ethnic groups which do not have a witnessing evangelical community among them.
- j. Scripture tells us that one of the gigantic accomplishments of the cross of Christ was the removal of hatred and division between Jew and Gentile, and the provision for the Church, the body of Christ that is diverse in culture, gender and generations, yet united in allegiance to our one king, Jesus. (Eph. 2:16-17)
- k. Jesus prayed in His high priestly prayer that all who would believe in Him through the ages would be one as he and the Father are one, why? That the world may believe that Jesus is the messiah. (Jn. 17:21)
- l. Why is it important that you join the effort of making friends of those of other cultures? Well, because you will spending eternity as a member of a huge multi-cultural praise choir. Rev. 7:9-10.
 - i. The eternal vision of God the Father is to present to His beloved son an everlasting kingdom made up of people from every tribe and tongue.
 - ii. That's the big picture! That's the reason you and I are still on earth. You're not still here so you can worship. You will do that a lot better in heaven.
 - iii. You're not here so you can attend more Bible studies. In heaven you'll sit at the feet of Jesus himself!
 - iv. No, you and I are still here because God has sent us on a mission and it is not yet complete. The choir is not big enough. The tribes and tongues are not diverse enough. The body of Christ is not united enough.
- m. The mission is not a committee in the church. It is the purpose of the church.
 - i. Mission is not the special assignment of a few. It is the blanket command to us all.
 - ii. The mission is not a weekend conference. It is the time table of history. Matthew 24:14
- n. Maybe you are thinking that Christians living in the big cities are going to really have to figure out how to cope with this. Well, God has brought the diaspora here too.
 - i. In the Modesto statistical area, 11% of the population is foreign born.
 - ii. A third come from Mexico. Many come from the India, Middle East, esp Iran and Iraq, and we can expect Syrians to arrive soon.
 - iii. [SLIDES OF PLACES OF WORSHIP]
- o. Who are these people?
 - i. It might be a professional who came here highly educated – your doctor, an engineer, or small business owner.
 - ii. It might be a nurse at the clinic, a school teacher, a custodian.
 - iii. Your new friend may be a neighbor, or a parent you see in the park.

- iv. He may be an international student. They say that the average I.S. never sees the inside of an American home in 4 years here. This is tragic.
- v. Many of these folks are “immigrants”; they wanted to come here, and work hard to make it.
- vi. A different grouping are “refugees”. They are brought here because they need refuge from war, famine, oppression. They would rather be back home, but they cannot go back. They had little or no preparation. They get off the plane into an unknown world that will change their lives permanently.
 - 1. Refugees are desperate for help especially in the first two years. They bring nothing but a couple suitcases.
 - 2. What kinds of help do they need? Donated furniture and household items. They need to be picked up at the airport; and rides to the doctor appts. Tutoring in English, and learning how to get a drivers license and write a resume, how to apply for a job. They need a friend.
- p. So, what shall we say? Why is it important that you make a new friend across cultures for Jesus’ sake. Because it’s important to God, and I know that deep down, you really want to live for Him.
- q. TR. So that bring us to our second item.

2. HOW CAN YOU MAKE A NEW FRIEND ACROSS CULTURES FOR JESUS’ SAKE?

- To answer this question, I would like us to learn from Jesus’ example, recorded for us in John 4 where He met the Samaritan woman at the well.
- And as we look at this story, I want us to focus on what the Samaritan woman needed from Jesus. In that way, we can learn what your new friend needs from you.
- There are five simple things your new friend needs from you.

1. Your new friend needs you to go out of your way (Jn. 4:1-4)

- a. It is likely that your routines and his routines do not cross that much. Your stores, your friends and relatives, your restaurants likely are not the same.
 - i. “birds of a feather flock together”
 - ii. Jeff Christopherson, vice president for the Southern Baptist Convention's North American Missions Board, agrees. "We hide in our own evangelical ghetto," he said. "We send our kids to Christian schools, we go to churches that would only be welcoming to people that think like us."
 - iii. Unless we go out of our way, we are not likely to make a friend of another culture.
- b. You will have to go out of your way; the way Jesus did. Read 1-4
- c. “He needed to go through samaria.” Why?
 - i. Actually from a geographical standpoint, he didn’t; some Bible scholars say that Jews would bypass Samaria and go the long way around.

- ii. Another view is that going through Samaria was the most direct route, so it was necessary to go through it. If that's the case, the idea seems to be that any Jew having to go through Samaria would hurry through, and certainly would not have any interaction with the locals so as not to be socially or religiously contaminated by these lower class half-breeds.
- iii. One thing we can say for certain, is that Jesus needed to go through Samaria for the sake of his disciples. Jesus was in the process of challenging stereotypes of his day.
 - 1. The Samaritans were despised by Jews. So what does he do:
 - a. He heals 10 lepers, and only one, who is a Samaritan, turns back to say thank you.
 - b. He tells the story of a man beaten and robbed, Religious types walk around the victim, but one traveler, a Samaritan, stops to help him.
 - d. If our routines do not take us near our new neighbors, we need to go out of our way.
 - e. Would you begin to pray, Lord, give me the courage to go out of my way to encounter someone of another culture.

2. **Your new friend needs you to look with a mission perspective. (vss. 5-9)**

- a. I know this sounds ridiculous, but my experience tells me that many of us look at internationals but don't really see them.
- b. It's like they are not real; they are not in our world; no, not invisible exactly, they are just not people in our realm of relationship.
 - i. We see a man with a turban and "Oh, got a category for him."
 - ii. We see a lady with a burqa and "Oh, that one goes in that box."
 - iii. We hear a person with an accent, and "Not sure where he goes, but I know its foreign."
 - iv. "Not my kind" "Not interested in knowing her."
- c. Now let's pick up our story, and realize that the most natural reaction from a man like Jesus would have been to completely ignore a woman like her. Read 5-9
- d. Normally, a man like Jesus would not even see a woman like this.
- e. And frankly, she wouldn't really see him either.
- f. I think you are familiar with the cultural barriers at work here.
 - i. There was a class superiority: Jesus a Jew, she a Samaritan (a half-breed); the two have no dealings with each other.
 - ii. There was a status difference: He an educated, famous rabbi; she a discarded divorcee four times over, now living out of wedlock.
 - iii. There was a religious incompatibility: He was a Jew who came to fulfill the Law; she was of a false cult.
 - iv. There was a gender gap. He a male in a male-dominated society. She was a female that even the other females looked down upon.
 - 1. An Ethiopian friend of mine explained that the fact that she came to the well at high noon, indicates she was being shunned by the other women, because women come to draw water in the cool of the morning, not the heat of the day.
- g. Normally a man of his caliber would have either ignored her, said something really degrading, or deliberately moved away to keep his distance.
- h. Instead, he saw her. He saw her as a person of worth.
- i. I would humbly ask that you begin to pray: Lord, would you give me eyes to see those of different cultures as people of worth and value to you.

3. Your new friend needs you to slow down and sit down. (vss. 5-9)

- a. This is slow, inefficient ministry. It's a marathon, not a sprint.
- b. To make a friend across cultures means taking a lot of time to build a trusting relationship where previously there was likely some apprehension, suspicion and even fear.
- c. In American culture, we mostly operate on "Clock time"; where time is a limited commodity; so we start and end promptly.
 - i. Many from other cultures operate on "Event time"; where time is abundant; things happen when the time is right; when everyone is present.
- d. This helps explain why we are so efficient and productive; it also explains why we are relationally starving.
- e. If you are hiring an employee, teach him to hurry up.
- f. But if you want a friend, slow down and sit down. The way Jesus did.
- g. Your new friend is likely used to people just coming to the house "unannounced but always-invited." Hospitality is a way of life, and an honor.
- h. Couple Dos and Don'ts
 - i. DO have tea and cookies on hand
 - ii. DO invite into your home, no questions asked
 - iii. DO sit and talk casually
 - iv. DON'T worry if your house is clean
 - 1. Be concerned about kinds distracting
 - 2. Be checking your watch or be in a hurry
 - 3. Don't do all of this perfectly; you're not the messiah!

4. Your new friend needs you to speak up, drink up, and listen up.

- a. This is what Jesus did.
 - i. But I'll have to say, Jesus example was so radical that there are two ways we should not imitate him:
 - 1. Don't claim to be the messiah
 - 2. Don't make a friend across genders; men, your new friend should be a man. Women, your new friend should be a woman.
- b. Speak up. You think you are apprehensive about this!? Your new friend is ten times more apprehensive. You are comfortably established in the dominant culture. He or she has entered a strange, unknown world.
- c. You think you are afraid of making a cultural blunder. Your new friend is much more so.
- d. So here is what you must do. Use your power humbly and lovingly.
- e. Your new friend will not likely speak up first. You can broach a conversation.
- f. Another pointer is to "drink up." Your new friend needs you to receive hospitality. Drink a lot of cups of tea.
 - i. Accept invitations to their home, to their special gatherings – even religious events, special ceremonies. If you are invited to a Hindu wedding by a friend, go! If your Muslim friend invites you to come to the mosque and have a meal, go!
 - ii. Jesus conducted his entire ministry in the midst of doctrinal error.
 - iii. Even in this story, he sat by a well on a mountain of false worship.
- g. I am not naive. If you are a new believer, learn about your position in Christ. If you have not learned about spiritual warfare and how to put on the full armor of God in prayer, learn how to do that.
- h. Jesus promised you the power of the Holy Spirit to be his witness in Samaria. You can do this, in Christ.
- i. And listen up. Be a good listener. Genuinely care. Your new friend has a fascinating story to tell. But very seldom does anyone ask to hear it.
- j. Examples:
 - i. What was it like when you came here?
 - ii. What was life like back home?
 - iii. What are some of your family traditions?

5. Your new friend needs you to bring your personal friend, Jesus.

- a. Why do I put it that way? Your friend knows nothing about a God he can know in a personal way.
- b. For him, God is transcendent; far away; unknowable; to be revered and feared; someone to be worked for; prayed to in formal repetitious ways...
- c. But you bring a personal God, through Christ.
- d. So talk of your Jesus like he is your friend. Share how you talk with him about your troubles. Ask your friend if you could talk to Jesus about her concerns.
- e. You will notice in this sermon I have not asked you to make a convert.... But a friend.
- f. Only the Father can draw a person to his son.
 - i. But don't you think, if God is taking the trouble to reach out to Muslims in the ME through dreams and vision, that he would love to do so through friendship with a Christian here?
 - ii. And who knows, maybe Jesus will say to your friend what he said to his, "I who speak to you am he."
 - iii. And who knows, maybe your new friend will begin to wonder, "Could this Jesus be the Savior?"

6. Will you commit to making one new friend across cultures for Jesus' sake?

7. Let me tell you about some next steps.

- a. Next Sunday starts a 6 week class called "Passport to Friendship." This experience will take you further in the things we have talked about today. You will learn about some easy "onramps" to local cross-cultural ministry.
- b. Here in town, we have the IRC (Int'l Rescue Committee) that needs volunteers to help new neighbors learn how things work here. Contact the church office for information.
- c. The India Friendship Center needs volunteers.
- d. Westside Ministries needs volunteers.
- e. iSpectra Multi-cultural conference, April 25-26, 2014 Venture Christian Church, Los Gatos

8. Will you make it your commitment in prayer with me today, to begin to see with mission eyes, the nations around you, asking God for one new friend for Jesus' sake?