

**Text: Acts 5:42**

**Title: “Unstoppable Witnesses” Pt.2**

**ILLUSTRATION** – In my message last Sunday I shared some statistics about how the church around the world is growing. One of the statistics I gave from Meyer’s book *Witness Essentials* was that there were more followers of Jesus in China than there are members of the Communist Party. Last Sunday afternoon I was reading Nik Ripken’s book *The Insanity of Obedience*. Ripken has been all over the world researching persecution of the church in various nations. He tells the story of speaking to a training meeting with some believers in China. As part of his presentation he talked about the tremendous harvest that is happening in China. Afterwards one of the leaders present asked Nik to have a meal with him. At their meal the Chinese leader gently challenged the numbers that Nik had given when he talked about the tremendous harvest of souls in China. The Chinese leader said that about two-thirds of the number that Nik mentioned were members, but only about one-third would be considered true followers of Jesus. Nik was puzzled by the discrepancy. The Chinese leader said that members attend a house church. Most of them have been baptized and even contribute financially to the work of the church. Then the Chinese leader said, “But we do not consider church members to be true followers of Jesus until they have led other people to Christ and have helped to plant more churches.”

Passionate followers of Jesus share Jesus Christ with others. And we see that from the earliest days of the church. Open your Bibles to Acts 5:42. In Acts 5 we see persecution unleashed on the church in Jerusalem as the apostles (the leaders of the church) were arrested, beaten and then released, being told that they were to no longer preach in the name of Jesus. They said, “We must obey God rather than men,” and at end of Acts 5 we see what happened:

**Acts 5:42 - Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ.**

It was the personality of the church to be witnesses for Christ. And while we see this primarily focuses on the activity of the apostles, I think we’re safe in assuming that the entire church was engaged in proclaiming the Good News of Jesus. This verse shows us...

- When they proclaimed the Good News ... “day after day” (literally “all through every day,” not just on Sundays)
- Where they proclaimed the Good News ... “in the temple courts and from house to house” (publicly and privately; multiple venues since they had no church buildings)
- How they proclaimed the Good News ... “they never stopped” ... unstoppable, in spite of the fact that the authorities had told them to stop.
- Why they proclaimed the Good News ... “that Jesus is the Christ” (He’s the promised Messiah, the One they were looking for). They didn’t argue about religion; they simply told people about Jesus Christ and urged them to trust in Him.
- What they proclaimed ... the Good News

Your translation of the Bible may simply say “teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ,” or something like that. That word “preaching” is not preaching just any message. Specifically the word means to “proclaim good news,” or news that brings joy. In ancient Greece there were heralds who were sent to various places to deliver messages. For example, the king may have just won an

important military victory, and the herald was sent to *euangelidzo* (proclaim the good news). In fact, we get our word “evangelize” (or the noun “evangelism”) from that word. So the herald came announcing good news of the victory.

**ILLUSTRATION** – For those of you who are runners you may have heard the legend of a Greek herald name Pheidippides. In 490 BC the Greeks had won a tremendous victory by defeating the Persians at the Battle of Marathon, a city on the east coast of Greece. Pheidippides was sent to Sparta to deliver the news of the victory to the magistrates who were meeting in Sparta. So he ran the roughly 26 miles from Marathon to Sparta, thus the marathon is a little more than 26 miles. Legend has it that Pheidippides burst into the hall where the magistrates were gathered and he shouted, “Joy to you; we have won.” And with that he collapsed on the floor and died. He announced the good news that brought joy.

There’s a lot of information that is important to us ... our Social Security number ... foods or medicines that we are allergic to ... our medical insurance policy in case we get sick or injured. And there’s a lot of information we know that is really not important ... fantasy football league player’s stats ... what’s the latest going on in the lives of celebrities. But if we take the Bible seriously, we must know that there is really one piece of information that is eternally significant. Other things may be important, maybe even life-saving, but there’s nothing that is eternally significant like the Gospel ... the Good News of what God did for us in His Son Jesus Christ and why it matters.

At the beginning of Jesus’ ministry we see...

**Matthew 4:23 - Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people.**

And at the end of Jesus’ ministry we read His teaching...

**Matthew 24:14 - And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.**

The Gospel must be communicated with words. The Good News is to be proclaimed. Someone famous once said, “Go preach the gospel, use words when necessary.” But that’s not really accurate. That would be like saying “Go feed the hungry: use food when necessary.” The Gospel is communicated through messengers. That’s what Paul meant when he said...

**Romans 1:16 - I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.**

**Romans 1:17 - For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”**

So it’s important that we know how to communicate the Good News that God has won the victory for us in His Son Jesus Christ. And when we put our trust in Him we gain a righteousness, not of our own, but the righteousness of Christ.

This morning I want you to imagine that we are sitting down together at a coffee shop and with a napkin or a piece of paper I want to use a simple diagram to communicate this Good News. So take out your pen, pencil, lip-stick, crayon or whatever you have, and draw along with me on your sermon note sheet.

This is called the “3 CIRCLES: LIFE CONVERSATION GUIDE. It comes to the Gospel from a little different angle. Most of the time when we talk to people about Jesus we start with the question, “Do you know if you’re going to heaven or not?” And that is a very important question. The stakes are high when it comes to what you do with Jesus Christ. But many people today are not thinking that far down the road of heaven or hell in eternity. Their main issue is the “hell” they’re living in right now. They see brokenness in them and all around them. And honestly, that’s where we encounter people who are open to the Gospel. How many times, in everyday conversations, do people talk about their problems and troubles? It’s amazing how people talk about their heartaches with their marriages, children, finances, addictions, or depression. People are hurting, and they need hope. And that becomes the bridge we cross over with the Gospel into their lives.

We live in a broken world ... surrounded by broken lives, broken relationships, and broken systems.

This brokenness is seen in suffering, violence, poverty, pain, and death around us.

Brokenness leads us to search for a way to make LIFE work.

In contrast to this brokenness, we also see beauty, purpose and evidence of design around us.

## **GOD’S DESIGN**

The Bible tells us that God originally planned a world that worked perfectly – where everything and everyone fit together in harmony. Human beings enjoyed an unbroken relationship with Him.

**“God saw all the He had made, and it was very good” (Genesis 1:31).**

God made each of us with a purpose – to worship Him and walk with Him.

But life doesn’t work when we ignore God and His original design for our lives.

We selfishly insist on doing things our own way. The Bible calls this sin. We all sin and distort God’s original design for life.

## **SIN**

The consequence of our sin is separation from God – in this life and for all of eternity.

**“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23)**

**“For the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23a)**

## **BROKENNESS**

Sin leads to a place of brokenness. We see this all around us and in our own lives as well.

When we realize life is not working, we begin to look for a way out. We tend to go in many directions trying different things to figure it out on our own and to fix our broken lives.

## **CROOKED ARROWS**

Brokenness leads to a place of realizing a need for something greater. That's what the Bible means when it says...

**“They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served something created instead of the Creator” (Romans 1:25).**

At this point we need a remedy – some good news.

## **GOSPEL**

Because of His love, God did not leave us in our brokenness. Jesus Christ, God's Son, God in human flesh, came to us and lived perfectly according to God's design.

Jesus came to rescue us – to do for us what we could not do for ourselves. He took our sin and shame to the cross, paying the penalty of our sin by His death. Jesus was then raised from the dead – to provide the only way for us to be rescued and restored to a relationship with God.

**“Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures ... He was buried (and) raised on the third day according to the Scriptures” (I Corinthians 15:3-4).**

Now simply hearing this Good News is not enough.

We must admit our sinful brokenness and stop trusting in ourselves. We don't have the power to escape this brokenness on our own. We need to be rescued.

We must ask God to forgive us – turning from sin to trust only in Jesus. This is what it means to repent and believe.

## **REPENT AND BELIEVE**

Believing, we receive new life through Jesus and God turns our lives in a new direction.

**“If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord’, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10:9)**

When God restores our relationship to Himself, we begin to discover meaning and purpose in a broken world. Now we can pursue God's Design in all areas of our lives.

## **RECOVER AND PURSUE**

Even when we fail, we understand God's pathway to be restored – this same Good News of Jesus.

God's spirit empowers us to recover His Design and assures us of His presence in this life and for all of eternity.

**“For we are His creation, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time so that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10).**

Now that you have heard this Good News, God wants you to respond to Him. You can talk to Him using words like these: “My life is broken – I recognize it's because of my sin. I need you. I believe Christ came to live, die and was raised from the dead – to rescue me from my sin. Forgive me. I turn from my selfish ways and put my trust in You. I know that Jesus is Lord of all, and I will follow Him.”

**“For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Romans 10:13).**

You can do that right now. Please bow your heads.

Copies of “3 Circles: Life Conversation Guide” will be given as you leave today.

To download the 3 CIRCLES: LIFE CONVERSATION GUIDE for smart phones or tablets see the QR code