



TELL IT TO THE WORLD (Sermon)

June 3, 2017

Jim Zackrison

Text: Revelation 14:6 - “Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people” (NIV).

Introduction

Telling the world about Jesus and the Advent message is the reason the Seventh-day Adventist church exists. Whether the words used to describe this mission are evangelism, witnessing, every member involvement — or some other term — the goal is the same: “Tell It to the World.” That is why the apostle Paul informs us that God has placed in our hands the “oracles of God” — the Bible — containing the truths of the Christian religion. (See 1 Peter 4:11).

This mandate comes to us from a variety of biblical and historical sources. The Apostle John used the phrase “the eternal gospel to proclaim” (Revelation 14:6, NIV). Ellen G. White tells how William Miller heard the words “ever recurring to his mind: ‘Go and tell it to the world’” — *Great Controversy*, p. 330. Thousands of years ago the prophet Ezekiel got the same directive. His audience was not worldwide, but the message was the same: “But if the watchman . . . does not blow the trumpet to warn the people . . . I will hold the watchman accountable” (Ezekiel 33:6, NIV). Jesus Himself passed on to us an identical mandate: “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19, NIV).

Who Is a Missionary?

We tend to think of missionaries as church members who feel a call to go somewhere other than their homeland and teach people about the gospel and the Advent Message. In some parts of the world, anyone who actively participates in outreach activities is called a missionary.

The Lord calls each of us to mission service in some way or another. In this sense, every Sabbath School/Sabbath School class should be an evangelistic unit.

The writer of the book of Hebrews tells us that every Sabbath School member should become expert in knowing and understanding the “oracles of God” (Hebrews 5:12). Having a Bible in hand and being able to study it as we do in Sabbath School is special because it is specific; you can see it on a printed page.

Some Unique Missionaries

The Bible relates the experiences of some unique missionaries. Job, who may have been even older than Abraham, was certainly a missionary to his family, friends, and neighbors. God Himself said, "There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright" (Job 1:8, NIV).

As Abraham and his caravan moved deeper into Canaan, they ran into anything but righteousness. Sodom and Gomorrah were the epitome of wickedness. The cities of the Amorites were fast following the example of those two wicked cities.

His entourage passed near a town that took its name from the Canaanite word for peace. It was called "Salem." Later it would be conquered by David and called "Jerusalem." A king of that town was Melchizedek, a name that means "king of righteousness." Melchizedek turned out to be a priest of the "Most High God" (Genesis 14:18). It is no wonder that Abraham was probably surprised to find a king of "righteousness" in such a pagan land. Melchizedek was no accidental worshipper of the true God. He is mentioned nine times in the book of Hebrews where the writer pictures him as the prototype of Jesus' own priesthood.

Melchizedek is a representative of those missionaries whom God has in places where His special revelation has not yet arrived. "Hidden peoples" are often prepared to receive the gospel because of experiences they have had that taught them about the true God without the presence of a missionary. The existence of these people groups is one of the reasons that Sabbath School mission offerings are so important. They help fund "Tell It To the World" activities of all kinds so that the "oracles of God" can arrive at these destinations.

Breaking Up the Hard Soil

In the parable of the sower (Matthew 13), Jesus helps us to understand that as good sowers we must find good soil in which to sow the seed to bring forth the harvest. When you feel and do not act, you pack the soil of the soul until it becomes hard. To be stirred in the deepest emotions of the soul without corresponding action is a dangerous thing. Your job and mine as good sowers is to break up the soil that has become hard, deepen the thin soil, and plant the seed in the good soil so that people see that which should be seen.

One writer tells the story of a piece of wasteland that was once given to a gentleman named "Old Pat" to cultivate. He went to work and made a beautiful garden out of this piece of land. A Quaker superintendent said to him, "Pat, the Lord has done a great work here."

"You have spoken a true word, sir, but you should have seen this piece of land when only the Lord had it."

"The point is important," this writer says. "God works through people. So, the world in so many places remains a wilderness until God finds a person. Then when He finds the person, and God and that person are working together, He makes a garden." (Albert P. Shirkey, devotional sermon, Andrews University).

Putting Witness into Action

Witnessing can be done by anyone anywhere. For instance, the retired conductor of a famous symphony orchestra, a life-long Seventh-day Adventist, had contact with people you and I don't even know exist. He was well known for holding no rehearsals on Friday night or Sabbath; a highly visible witnessing action. Sabbath School members in a country under a totalitarian government, where every move is watched, report how they used the Sabbath School Bible Study Guide as the basis for revival meetings in a large geographic area — and baptized a lot of people.

Witness involves both telling and action. Everyone needs to be ready to go into action and tell when asked, or when a window of opportunity opens because of our actions. It is not an either/or choice. Both go together. As one studies Scripture, there are numerous styles or approaches to sharing Jesus. One approach is not better than another. In fact, most people are a blend of or use a blend of styles depending upon the situation.

A secret to success in witnessing is to keep it simple. Ellen G. White has some valuable counsel regarding the simplicity of witnessing: “What you need is a living experience in the things of God and simplicity in presenting the love of Christ to the lost.” —*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 266. In another statement, she writes: “Thousands of hearts can be reached in the most simple way. The most intellectual, those who are looked upon and praised as the world's great and gifted men and women, are often refreshed by the most humble, simple words spoken by one who loves God, who can speak of that love as naturally as worldlings can speak of those things which their minds contemplate and feed upon. Words, even if well prepared and studied, have little influence; but the true, honest work of a son or a daughter of God in words, or in a service of little things, done in natural simplicity, will unbolt the door, which has long been locked, to many souls.” — *Evangelism*, p. 443-444.

1. Sometimes a direct approach is appropriate. This means getting right to the point of the matter. This approach is seen in Acts 2:36-38. Peter is preaching and states bluntly to the listeners, “You crucified Jesus.” Their response was “What shall we do?” Peter responds, “Repent and be baptized.” This approach might be viewed as a lack of sensitivity or tact. Nevertheless, people considering accepting Jesus as Savior, or some other teaching of Scripture, usually need someone to ask them directly for a decision. The key is to pray for guidance and as caringly as possible, call people to make a decision.

2. Sometimes you need an intellectual or discussion approach. For instance, Paul used this approach in Athens (Acts 17:22-33). The listeners were philosophers who loved to dialogue about different topics. Very often people will say something like, “But I always believed . . .” Phrases like that open the door to deliberations of what the Bible says about the issue under consideration.

3. A testimonial approach is always effective. Every Christian has a story. For instance, the woman at the well in Samaria (Matthew 4) went home and told the people what Jesus had said

and had done for her. She related her personal experience. When you share your story no one can argue with you regarding whether it is right or wrong. It is your story.

Friendship Evangelism — The Key Way to Witness

Friendship evangelism is the core of all successful outreach. A Sabbath School or Sabbath School class is an ideal place to practice friendship evangelism.

Caring for someone is a vital step in sharing the gospel, and everyone can be involved. Large numbers of people have become followers of the Lord and members of the Seventh-day Adventist church as a result of friendship evangelism.

The apostle John tells us about a caring experience from the ministry of Jesus. “The nobleman said to Him, ‘Sir, come down before my child dies!’ Jesus said to him, ‘Go; your son will live. . . . So he and his whole household believed.” (John 4:49-50, 53, NIV). The family of this nobleman accepted Jesus because He cared enough to meet a need. A sick boy needed Jesus to heal him. Jesus cared enough for a family that he was not acquainted with to pause in His daily activity and meet a need. The caring spirit of Jesus led an entire family to accept Him into their lives.

You may not have the ability to heal, but everyone has the capacity to care, to love, as directed and guided by the Holy Spirit. “The world,” writes Ellen G. White, “will be convinced, not by what the pulpit teaches, but by what the church lives.” — *Testimonies*, vol.7, p. 16. Think carefully about that statement. The method that gives “success” in acquainting people with Jesus is being yourself! Are you a plumber, a mechanic, do you like to shoot hoops, golf, knit, serve in the medical field, ride horses, shop, garden, or whatever. That is the way you get started building relationships that will touch someone’s life with the gospel message.

Simple witnessing is always effective. It’s natural, spontaneous, and for the most part unrehearsed. You will be amazed at how it works.

Effective Ways a Sabbath School Can Witness

1. Bible Studies

Innumerable people have been led to the Lord and to membership in the Seventh-day Adventist church because someone led them through a series of Bible studies. A Bible study is a teaching/learning environment that studies what the Bible says about a topic in an organized, systematic sequence, usually in a one-to-one or small group setting. The typical format of a Bible study is called “question and answer.” The instructor asks a question and the Bible study participants look up the answer in the Bible. A Sabbath School/Sabbath School class might set a goal of conducting X number of Bible studies led by members.

Bible studies are not complicated, formal activities. Bible studies should use the principles of friendship evangelism and be informal, relaxed activities. A Bible study is

spiritually healthy for the person studying and the person leading the study. Ellen G. White noted: “Open the Scriptures to some one that is in darkness, and you will not complain of weariness and lack of interest in the cause of truth. Your heart will be awakened to an anxiety for souls, and joy in the evidences of the faith will fill your heart, and you will know that ‘he that watereth shall be watered also himself.’” — *Christian Service*, p. 144.

Bible studies are not limited to someone’s home. You might lead a Bible study in the workplace, on a camping trip, on the church campus, with some friends at school, wherever the opportunity presents itself. A local church elder, an auto mechanic who owned a small shop, once reported how he organized a Bible study group in his shop over the noon hour and had twenty-five people attending regularly. A university student reported how he and some other Sabbath School members went to a non-Christian town where they planted a church using Sabbath School children’s materials.

The Seventh-day Adventist church has made available all kinds of Bible study materials. The most popular are series produced by media programs such as the Discover Bible Lessons. Booklets containing a series of Bible studies are available wherever you may reside. Another way to always be prepared is to mark a series of Bible studies in your Bible. A Sabbath School class might sponsor a project for interested members to mark their Bibles. Many people, with a little experience, develop their own series of Bible studies that are useful in their environment.

2. Sponsor a Bible School

A Bible School is an outstanding means of reaching and winning many people. Adventist media organizations around the world offer Bible School resources. A Bible School can be managed through direct mail correspondence, direct visitation and face-to-face Bible study, on the Internet, or in a small group setting. A Sabbath School/Sabbath School class can sponsor a Bible School. They can manage a Bible School as a class outreach project or volunteer to help in a local church/district Bible School.

For instance, a gentleman visiting his daughter’s apartment was asked to throw out the trash on his way to his car. In the dumpster he saw some colorful pamphlets that turned out to be Bible School lessons. He sent in an enrollment card and today is an active Seventh-day Adventist. In another part of the world, a barefoot person walking along a dirt path felt something stick between his toes. It turned out to be just the address for free Bible studies. He enrolled and today is a faithful Seventh-day Adventist.

Bible School management teams at Adventist media facilities typically have training programs available on how to find students, how to lead out in studies, how to obtain decisions, and, in general, how to manage various styles of Bible Schools.

3. Baptismal Classes

A special Sabbath School offers the pastor and those conducting the class an opportunity to get acquainted with people who are potential prospects for baptism and church membership.

This class can be organized in some prominent place in the church, preferably in a separate room. This will offer a cozy privacy and tend to bring in a more personal atmosphere. You can put up some signs that direct people to this class.

The class itself should be friendly and informal. It's a good idea to have people greet each other with whatever greeting style is appropriate. The teaching should encourage a response from the class. They should be supplied with the special study guides prepared for this special class and inspired to study for themselves.

It may seem that a baptismal class can only be successful in a large church, but this is not true. One evangelist tells how he has seen small churches having half the main church auditorium fill up with visitors. This just illustrates the potential of the Sabbath school evangelistic Bible class.

4. Service to the Community

An example is a lady in the Bible named Dorcas. She was known for helping those who needed food, clothes, blankets, and a helping hand. Actions speak louder than words. When someone sees your kindness, they see Jesus. When someone sees your kindness, they sometimes become interested in the One who impels you to be kind.

Sabbath School can cooperate with the Community Services program of your church/district. A Sabbath School class could take on a project related to Community Service.

Conclusion

Reaching the world is a key mandate in the Scriptures. There is no single way to do this. Every entity in the church plays a role. As the Apostle John wrote, the angel he saw had "the eternal gospel to proclaim." Friendship evangelism, personal testimony, Personal Ministries, Sabbath School, Bible Schools, Bible studies are all ways and means to accomplish this assignment.

The writer quoted leaves us with a valuable concept: God works through people. So, the world in so many places remains a wilderness until God finds a person. Then when He finds the person, and God and that person are working together, He makes a garden.