

“Ambassadors for Christ”

2 Corinthians 5:18-6:2.

Imagine receiving a phone call from the President of the United States. “I’m calling today,” he explains, “because I have chosen you to serve your country as a U.S. ambassador. In this capacity, you will go where I direct. You will deliver the messages I provide. And you will carry the full weight and authority of the United States of America.”

How would such a phone call make you feel—that is, besides astonished? “I’ve been chosen to be a U.S. ambassador.” Wouldn’t you feel honored? Wouldn’t you be bold and confident, knowing that you were backed by the authority of the United States of America, the most powerful nation on earth? Wouldn’t you work diligently and tirelessly, given the importance of your position? In fact, wouldn’t your ambassadorship profoundly impact all of your thinking, speaking, and acting?

“Well, I suppose,” you may reply. “But this is only imagining, Pastor Weis. In reality, such an appointment will never happen. I will never be an ambassador for the United States.” No, perhaps not. Only, you may not realize that you have already been appointed to a far greater ambassadorship, and by a far greater authority than the President of the United States. And this is not imagining; it is the reality according to the Word of God.

You, dear Christian friend, are an ambassador for Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul stated this clearly in 2 Corinthians 5:20, “**We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors.**” We. Not merely some of us. Not merely the apostles. Not merely the pastors and teachers. But all Christians. If you are a believer in Jesus Christ—and you are; then you are also an ambassador for Jesus Christ.

This morning, let’s discuss what this ambassadorship means. In so doing, my prayer is that we will all approach our roles as ambassadors for Christ—whether as private individuals, or public ministers, or members of St. Luke’s Evangelical Lutheran Church—with greater joy, greater confidence, and greater boldness. As an ambassador for Christ, tasked with the most important work on earth—reaching others with the saving Gospel—consider your APPOINTMENT, your MESSAGE, and your sense of URGENCY.

First, your appointment as an ambassador for Christ. So, who appointed you to serve as Christ’s ambassador? The truth is, if the President of the United States

called anyone of us to serve as *his* ambassador, we would be honored beyond description. “Me? You want me to do this, Mr. President?”

Within two minutes of disconnecting from that presidential call, we would be making numerous personal calls—to our family, friends, employer, coworkers, virtually every name and number in the CONTACTS LIST of our cellular phone. “You’ll never guess who called me today. That’s right, the President of the United States. And you’ll never guess what he asked me to do. Never. He asked me to represent the United States as an ambassador. Can you believe that? I am so humbled, so honored.”

The sad part is, we almost never get that excited when thinking about being ambassadors for Christ; when speaking on His behalf; or when sharing His Word. “Canvassing? Oh. Distributing invitations for worship services? Oh. Sharing Christ with a hurting family member, coworker, friend, fellow Christian; a local mechanic, the checkout clerk at IGA; the teenager who cuts the lawn? Oh. Well, all right; if I have to, I will. I guess. If I have the time.”

How many of our friends or coworkers or next-door neighbors even know that we are Christians? I’m as guilty as anyone in this regard. After spending nine years in the public ministry, I left it for twenty-two years in Corporate America; until 2010 when, to my utter surprise and eternal gratitude, God called me back into the ministry. But early in my corporate career, when interviewing for job openings, I often downplayed or even omitted my role in the ministry, thinking that ministerial experience—being an ambassador for Christ—was more of a detriment to obtaining a job than a benefit. Lord Jesus, forgive me. How wrong I was.

Earlier I asked, “Who appointed you to be an ambassador for Christ?” The answer is, of course, God Himself. I can all but assure you that the President of the United States will not be calling any of us to serve as a U.S. ambassador to Russia, South Korea, Israel, Japan, the United Nations, or any place else. And even if he did, that ambassadorship—for all of its prestige and responsibility—would not be worth comparing with that of being an ambassador for Christ. And this ambassadorship, ambassadors for Christ, came directly to us from Almighty God. **“All this is from God,”** Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:18, **“who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.”**

Living in the First Century A.D., the apostle Paul was very familiar with Roman ambassadors—or as they were called in Latin, *legates*, from *legatus*, meaning ‘to send with a commission.’ We are Christ’s ambassadors because He delegated and commissioned us. He sent us forth as His ambassadors on this great mission: **“Go and**

make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age,” Matthew 28:19-20.

Contemplate this great reality. God, the only true God, the Creator of heaven and earth, chose you to be an ambassador for Christ. That fact alone should fill you with joy, honor, and a sense of deep reverence and humility—certainly not a sense of reluctance. “Me! God chose me! I am so humbled, so honored.” Consequently, when you’re about to share God’s Word with an acquaintance, coworker, family member, or complete stranger; when you’re reaching for the doorbell while canvassing a neighborhood, first remember these words: “I am an ambassador for Christ. God Himself sent me to represent Him.”

Second, your message as an ambassador for Christ. Throughout history, the primary role of an ambassador has always been to faithfully represent the one who sent him. In antiquity, the relationship between an ambassador and his king was so close that to insult the ambassador was to insult the king and even to invite a war.

Of course, to faithfully represent the king, an ambassador had to faithfully convey the king’s word and will, not his own. For an ambassador to change the king’s message for any reason or in any way—adding or subtracting words; removing threats or promises; using half-truths instead of relating the whole truth—was in no way faithfully representing the king.

And if that is true of earthly kings, it is far more true of the King of Kings, Almighty God. Paul wrote that God “**has committed to us the message of reconciliation,**” 2 Corinthians 5:19. In other words, God not only chose us to be His ambassadors; God also provided the message His ambassadors were to proclaim throughout the world.

And where do we find God’s word and will clearly expressed? In the Bible, of course. Therefore, for ambassadors of Christ, the Bible in all of its words, sentences, paragraphs, and parts is God message to the world. And no one, dear friends, absolutely no one, has the right to change God’s message in the slightest degree; because this message is not our message. It is God’s message.

Yet, sadly and shamefully, we see this happening increasingly today, especially in churches where the emphasis is more on packed pews and massive budgets than on proclaiming God’s Word in its truth and entirety. Such churches often revel in God’s love; yet fail to recognize that God’s love cannot be seen its fullness outside of Christ’s

sacrifice for sinners. **“God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son,”** John 3:16.

Such churches often preach forgiveness, but not godly sorrow and repentance. They talk of salvation but avoid the topic of sin. They urge contributions, but not commitment to Scripture. They condemn confessionalism, but not homosexuality and gay marriage. And still they claim the title “ambassador for Christ.” Such a disparaging treatment of God’s Word is not being an ambassador for Christ; rather, as Paul wrote in Romans 16:18, **“For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites.”**

And worse still, to undermine any part of Scripture is to undermine the whole. If I will not believe that God created the entire universe in six ordinary days; that Abraham fathered a child at the age of 100; that the Israelites crossed the Red Sea on dry ground; that manna fell from heaven; that the walls of Jericho crumbled and tumbled; that Jonah was swallowed by a whale; that Jesus was born of a virgin, and calmed storms with a word, and healed the sick, and fed thousands from scraps, and raised the dead—all events which are clearly taught in the Bible; then why should I believe that Jesus Christ even existed?

Why should I believe that Jesus Christ is true God and true Man; that Jesus Christ atoned for the sins of the world by dying on the cross; that Jesus Christ rose from the dead; and that because Jesus Christ rose triumphantly from the grave, those who believe in Him will also rise to eternal life. If I can’t believe one part of Scripture, how can I believe the rest? Why should I believe anything at all?

But Jesus said in Matthew 24:35, **“Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will never pass away;”** and in John 10:35, **“the Scripture cannot be broken;”** and in John 17:17, **“Your word is truth.”**

And praise God that His Word is the truth; for in it we find such a glorious message for ourselves, our loved ones, and the whole world—what Paul referred to as **“the message of reconciliation,”** 2 Corinthians 5:19. Reconciliation, reconcile; words Paul used four times in today’s brief text. And what does reconciliation mean? The word is from the Latin *reconciliare*, literally meaning ‘to make friendly again;’ or in more concrete terms, to conciliate, to unite, to bring together again.

And how did God reconcile the whole world to Himself? Did He change? Did God change His perspective on sin and its deserved punishment? No. In fact, God cannot change. A changeable God is no God at all. Then, did we change? Did we suddenly become less sinful and more desirable—people who deserved God’s love and grace; people able to earn or contribute to our own salvation? Again, no. For according

to the Bible, **“all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,”** Roman 6:23. In today’s text, Paul wrote that God was **“not counting men’s sins against them,”** 2 Corinthians 5:19. But he did not write that we had no sins to count. We do.

Through what means, then, did God reconcile the world to Himself? Wonder of wonders, grace beyond grace, God punished His own Son, Jesus Christ, instead of punishing us. As Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:21, one of the most beautiful, comforting verses in the Bible: **“God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.”** This is the message of reconciliation that God entrusted to us; and that as ambassadors for Christ and as members of this Christian congregation, we joyfully and confidently proclaim to the surrounding neighborhoods and to the whole world.

And speaking of the surrounding neighborhoods, precisely here we should be greatly encouraged and emboldened by our role as ambassadors of Jesus Christ; and particularly the glorious message He has given us to share. Remember, when you knock on a door to share the Gospel—any door; the door of the Live Centers; the door of a hospital room in Hettinger; the door of a family member, friend, or even stranger—you aren’t selling anything. You are giving the greatest of gifts. You are telling people about that which God has freely given them in Jesus Christ. As Paul told the Romans: **“There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus,”** Romans 3:22-24. Our salvation cost us nothing. But it cost Jesus everything.

When you knock on a door to share the Gospel, you are not the bearer of bad news, but the bearer of Good News; indeed, the best news that a lost, hurting sinner could ever hear. And amid all the trouble in our world and lives, wouldn’t it be great to hear some GOOD NEWS for once? That’s what the word *gospel* means—good news.”

When you knock on a door to share the Gospel, you’re not asking anyone for anything. You’re not taking; you’re giving. You’re not telling people to find a way to reconcile themselves to God. You’re simply inviting them to receive the reconciliation that God obtained for them in Jesus Christ. In fact, when we share God’s message as ambassadors of Christ; when we knock on doors; when we comfort hurting family members, friends, coworkers, or strangers—according to Paul, God **“is making His appeal through us,”** 2 Corinthians 5:20.

Said differently, when you and I share the Word of God with others, we are speaking with the full weight and full authority—not of the United States of America, the most powerful nation on earth; rather, in the name, power, and authority of

Almighty God. And if that fact doesn't give us the strength to share Christ or ring a doorbell, I don't know what will.

We all know the words of the Great Commission: **“Go and make disciples of all nations,”** Matthew 28:19. Too often, however, we forget to include the preceding verse that explains why this Great Commission is not only doable but enjoyable. Jesus said first, **“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. THEREFORE go,”** Matthew 28:18.

Third and finally, your urgency as an ambassador for Christ. I think the author of Hymn #496, *Hark! the Voice of Jesus Crying*, summarized this urgency very well, saying, “Let none hear you idly saying, ‘There is nothing I can do,’ while the souls of men are dying and the Master calls for you.”

The first month I moved to Fort Myers, I noticed a middle-aged woman sitting on a green metal bench outside of a nearby Publix. Day after day. Hour after hour. Same bench. Same blistering sun. Non-stop smoking between sips of water and fits of coughing. Painfully thin. Now staring at the shoppers. Now staring at her feet. The woman wasn't homeless, or so I was told when I asked a Publix manager. “I don't know her name,” said the manager. “But she lives in the apartments across the street. She comes here every day, and has for a long time.”

As the months passed, every time I went to Publix I looked for the woman. Every time I told myself that I would say “hello” or see if she needed anything or even invite her to church. But something always intervened or distracted me. The shopping list became more important than the woman. And then one day, she was gone. Just gone. That was two months ago, and I haven't seen her since.

I didn't know that woman. But I do know this about her: God loved her. God redeemed her. God reconciled her to Himself in Christ. I wonder if she knew that? I wonder why, as an ambassador for Christ, I didn't make the time to tell her? **“Now is the time of God's favor,”** wrote Paul. **“Now is the day of salvation.”** That is the reason for the urgency.

If you are a believer in Christ, you are an ambassador for Christ. And this, above all, should profoundly impact the way we think, the way we speak, and the way we act.