

Sermon Title: Go Tell Judea – The Acts 1:8 Challenge to State Missions

Sermon Scripture: [Acts 10:1-48](#)

Introduction:

If Acts 1:8 makes anything clear to us, it is that Christ has commanded us to be witnesses to all of the people, of the entire world, all of the time. Similar to The Great Commission, Acts 1:8 commissions all believers to be missionaries of the gospel. If God has not called you to be a missionary in another place on the planet, then He has surely called you to be a missionary right where you live, work, and go to school. The reason, of course, is that a person who is lost in your neighborhood is just as lost as a person who is without Christ in some remote corner of the earth. Judea is accessible. As missionaries, we are without excuse. We are surrounded by a mission field that is increasingly lost. There are multitudes all around us who need to hear from us the message of salvation through Jesus. The amazing thing is that many Southern Baptists are getting involved in missions by going across the world to do volunteer mission work, but will not go next door or across the street to lead their own neighbor to Christ.

If you lead your neighbor to faith in Christ, you will discover an entirely new list of prospects. The Greek word for circle of influence is *oikos*. Every new believer will have an *oikos* that will include many lost friends, family members, coworkers, fellow students, special interest groups, and dozens of others. Multiplication is a naturally occurring event once you have taken the step of obedience to the command of Christ to be a witness.

Dr. Steve Parr, vice president for Sunday School and evangelism with the Georgia Baptist Convention, recently challenged Sunday School classes in Georgia, his Judea, with what he refers to as “The Power of Ten.” Dr. Parr asks and answers the question, “What would happen in the next year if every Sunday School class or small group made a commitment to pray, strategize, and intentionally seek to bring two people to faith in Christ and

to be baptized? First, I believe that God would bless the effort given that He Himself desires to bring people into a personal relationship. Second, I believe that it is attainable because any group of ten (which is the average size of a Sunday School class or small group in Georgia) could experience this blessing if they were intentional about it. Third, I believe it would bring great joy to every congregation and class as well as to the angels in heaven. What would be the result for your church? The typical church would have an increase in baptisms of 166% above last year! Isn't that amazing? Do the math. Multiply the number of classes/groups in your church by two. Compare that to the previous year's baptisms."

What Steve Parr describes is an approach to evangelism through the Sunday School that would be effective when implemented by any of the forty-two Southern Baptist state conventions serving in their Judea. The prerequisite to successful evangelism is obedience to Christ's command. Our goal should be to respond as did Peter when the Lord sent him to tell the Good News to a Caesarean Gentile by the name of Cornelius.

I. All need the gospel.

A. Even good people need the gospel.

1. Verse 2 – Cornelius was a devout man.
2. Verse 2 – Cornelius feared God along with his whole household.
3. Verse 2 – Cornelius did many good deeds for the Jewish people.
4. Verse 2 – Cornelius always prayed to God.
5. Verses 3-8 – Cornelius was obedient to God.

B. No one created by God is unacceptable to Him.

1. Verses 9-15 – Peter's vision
2. Verse 15 – God's instruction, "What God has made clean, you must not call common." (HCSB)

II. All believers must tell the gospel.

A. God has a plan and it includes you.

1. Verses 17-18 – Cornelius' servants find Peter.
2. Verses 19-20 – Peter is directed by the Holy Spirit.
3. Verses 21-23 – God's plan is revealed to Peter.

Illustration: The young pilot had just earned his private pilot's license. Wanting to share the joy of the moment, he and his wife invited another young couple to fly with them from the West Georgia Regional Airport to Panama City, Florida for a seafood dinner. The flight instructor had drummed into the young pilot the importance of always taking along a flashlight in case an electrical failure caused the loss of lighting in the cabin. Though the instruments would continue to operate on the vacuum system, they could not be seen in a dark cabin. The new pilot obediently carried along a flashlight for the maiden voyage into the evening sky.

The flight seemed to progress so well that the pilot became involved in the conversation and laughter with his wife and friends, apparently failing to remain focused on his primary responsibility, flying the airplane. On a flight that should have taken about an hour and a half, the pilot suddenly realized that he was approximately an hour and fifty minutes into the flight. He looked out of the window into the darkness below him. What he saw by the light of the moon caused him to break into a cold sweat. All he could see was the Gulf of Mexico. "How could this happen? Where am I?" he wondered. He searched for the problem and found that the flashlight, which he had placed on top of the instrument panel, was one of those flashlights with a magnet on it. All of the instruments had been drawn off course. When he took the flashlight from above the instrument panel, he was relieved to see all of the instruments return to their proper heading. He was able to turn around and fly safely back to the Panama City airport.

In Acts 1:8, Jesus established the course for every Christian to follow. We must reject every magnetic impulse that would draw us from that course. Sometimes it is a magnetic personality, or the magnetism of a small group within the church, or even fascination with our own plans and activities.

Remember, God has a plan for reaching the lost and that plan includes you.

B. Who is waiting for you to come?

1. Verse 24 – Cornelius is expectantly awaiting Peter’s arrival.
2. Verse 24 – Cornelius’ *oikos* is present.
3. Verse 25 – Peter receives a warm reception.

Illustration: Christians are often discouraged from witnessing because they fear rejection. The contrary is actually true. The usual response is a warm reception just as Peter received a warm reception from Cornelius.

When the Apostle Paul proclaimed the gospel to the philosophers in the midst of the Areopagus, he received three responses to his faithful witness. Some believed the gospel, others rejected the gospel, and some procrastinators said, “We will hear you about this again” (Acts 17:32-34, HCSB).

Whenever we witness for Christ today, the response will be one of these three. Just remember that when rejection is the response, Christ is being rejected, not you.

III. All the gospel, to all the people, of all the world, all the time

A. Man’s prejudice vs. God’s plan

1. Verse 28 – Peter speaks of the division between Jews and Gentiles.
2. Verse 28 – Peter reveals that he understood the vision.
3. Verses 30-33 – Cornelius’ story confirms God’s plan.
4. Verses 34-35 – Peter acknowledges that God does not show favoritism. The gospel is for everyone.

Illustration: It is likely that the first song most of us learned at church was “Jesus Loves Me.” This song teaches a wonderful truth to every child who hears it. The song we probably learned second contains an equally important lesson for life. This song says:

*Jesus loves the little children,
All the children of the world.
Red and yellow, black and white,
They are precious in His sight.*

Jesus loves the little children of the world.

B. The Message

1. Verse 36 – God sent His Son, Jesus, Who is Lord of all.
2. Verses 37-39a – God revealed His love through Christ.
3. Verses 39b-40 – The death, burial, and resurrection of Christ
4. Verses 40-41 – The resurrected Christ was seen by Peter and others.
5. Verses 42-43 – The invitation to believe and receive Christ

IV. All believers give evidence of their salvation.

A. The Holy Spirit

1. Verses 44-45 – The Holy Spirit comes down upon all who heard the message.
2. Verse 46 – The new believers speak in other languages, as did the believers at Pentecost. God was demonstrating His will to save all who call upon Him.

B. Baptism

1. Verse 47 – Peter asks for agreement that these new believers should be baptized.
2. Verse 48 – Peter commands that they be baptized.

Illustration: My stay in Taipei, Taiwan would be brief. There was to be a dinner for sixty Southern Baptist missionaries at the Grand Hotel. We pastors would learn first-hand about ministry among the Chinese on our way to an evangelization crusade in Hong Kong. That evening I encountered three Chinese young men, college students, who were curious about why I was in Taipei. I began to share the gospel with them. When I spoke of the resurrection of Christ from the dead, they started laughing and walked away. One said, "Who could believe such a story as this?" Feeling like a miserable failure I went back into the hotel and was blessed to encounter Miss Bertha Smith, a long-time missionary to the Chinese people. I told her of my experience and asked her to share with me how she had witnessed so effectively among the Chinese. She said, "You witness to the Chinese as you do to anyone. The gospel is the same for everyone and everyone needs the gospel. When I witness, I begin with the story of Jonah. The Chinese love stories. I point out the fact that we have all sinned and it is impossible to run from God. Then I take them to the prayer of David in Psalm 51 and tell them how we must confess our sins to God. Then I go to Romans and take them right

down the Roman Road of Salvation. Some will believe the gospel and others will reject the gospel, but we are responsible for sharing the gospel.”

Conclusion:

In Luke 24:47, Jesus reminds us, “And repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”(HCSB)

In our day, when the gospel is proclaimed in our Jerusalem and Judea, it is truly proclaimed among the nations. The world has literally come to us and our opportunity to declare the truth about Christ to people from around the world is unprecedented. Regardless of language, culture or national origin, every person’s need is the same. The need is to repent, ask for forgiveness of sins and trust in the name that is above every name – Jesus. As Miss Bertha Smith said, our witness is the same to all because all have the same need for Jesus Christ. Paul states it clearly in Romans 10:12, “...for there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, since the same Lord of all is rich to all who call on Him.” (HCSB)

Our desperate need is for believers who will be obedient to the command of Christ to tell the good news of the gospel. Peter was obedient and the result was the salvation and baptism of everyone who heard his witness at the home of Cornelius.