

Outlive your life through sowing seed: Luke 8:4-15

Proposition: All Christians are called to and are capable of sowing the seeds about the bread of life (Jesus) in the world daily.

We are into missions month, a fun time of the year where we encourage each other to share our faith locally and deny ourselves something so we can support the mission to Roma youth overseas in Nou.

Last week Pastor Michael introduced us to the theme of outliving our lives by telling us the parable about Father Benjamin. On this island in the south seas, the only island that was prosperous out of so many that were in poverty, a captain goes in search of where Father Benjamin lives, the man who has brought about education, health and prosperity on this Island, and is taken to a medical clinic, fish ponds, a church. Only to find that though Father Benjamin still lives there through the influence of his life, Father Benjamin had in fact died many years earlier.

This month we are encouraging the church family to do things that will cause the influence of your life to live on way past the number of years that God may give you on this earth.

This week we are looking at outliving your life through throwing the seed of the Word as you go shopping or to work or to the playgroup or to the sports game.

Outlive your life through sowing seeds.

One of the great objections that people often have to speaking about their faith, throwing seed is that they are just ordinary people and not gifted in evangelism.

I want you to think back to those early disciples who became apostles that were to spearhead a movement that has changed the world and whose influence has been felt on every continent and in every nation of the world. Were these guys special, gifted people or were they just ordinary people like you and I who God called and as they stepped out and began to speak for the kingdom – God equipped them to be world changers.

Were they humble people? No in fact they used to argue over who was the greatest.

Did they have great theology? No. Peter even encouraged Jesus to forget the cross.

Were they sensitive loving people? No. John even asked Jesus if he could call down fire and torch a whole village of people. Were they loyal? No. When Jesus needed prayer support, they slept. When Jesus was arrested they ran.

Were these 12 gifted evangelists?

No, but when the Spirit of God came upon them on that day of Pentecost, they received the call to share their faith, to cast the seed of the Word, and they obeyed, and the world changed forever.

The great commission to share your faith as you move about the world, to baptise people then teach them to do what Jesus did was not given to missionaries or evangelists with a unique gifting and call but to all His followers, to normal people like you and me.

There are a few men in the world who like shopping but most of us don't. I heard of a man recently who was given a shopping list from his wife where item 1 was to buy milk, item two was to buy butter, item three was to buy sugar, item four was to buy cheese and he came home with 1 bottle of milk, two blocks of butter, 3 bags of sugar, and four blocks of cheese.

In our family Thursday evening is when we usually do the grocery shop. Ben and I usually go together because for probably 7 of the last 8 years Juliette has led a Bible study on Thursday evenings. Ben and I have made shopping a bit more interesting by aiming to always shop without a shopping list and to do the whole of Pak n Save in under 10 minutes to the check out which we do and usually we do pretty well in terms of getting what we need.

But we have all gone shopping and forgotten the thing we went for. I heard of a man who was asked to go to the shop and get some bread and when he got there he noticed a number of his favourite things and put them in the trolley instead. Only when he got home and showed what he had bought to his wife did he remember that he forgot the one thing that was most important on the shopping list. He forgot the bread.

1. DON'T FORGET THE BREAD

You see I believe as often as churches rightly get involved in caring for people, helping people, befriending people it's all too easy to forget the number one reason why we are doing it. This is interesting. We can help with that but ... don't forget the bread.

Jesus said "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry again." John 6:35

There are church's who are putting huge volunteer hours into the community up and down NZ, who have massive funding and good statistics but... they have forgotten the bread. Their main reason for existence is to give out the bread. If a rotary group, a lions club or a volunteer organisation can provide the same service that we offer to the community, there is no point in us doing it *unless* we are talking about Jesus – giving out the bread while we do it.

Now you need to find out ways that are natural for you, that aren't following a program or formulae or people will just switch off to those approaches. God made you the way he did and you have a unique, God given way of sharing the bread, revelations about God naturally that you need to tap into. If you are not sure how you can do that effectively for you then follow the instructions in the sermon insert and work through the biblical styles of evangelism before you meet with your home group this week.

In the areas of community service and interaction that we offer there are some through which we are sharing the truths about God very naturally and effectively. Most often when we budget for people seeds of truth about how God can cause us to be content and provide for our needs are usually shared.

I think with all the forms of counselling services we give, the difference God can make is pretty much always mentioned.

I understand that at the op shop our team pray with folk, counsel folk and invite folk

to church.

We get some great conversations in parenting courses about the Lord and I think this mentoring program will give plenty of opportunities.

This year we have Melanie working with children on Sundays, supporting cornerstone intermediates, giving some leadership mentoring, running Mainly Mums on Fridays, preaching and doing pastoral care - while she is still at Carey finishing her degree. I have asked her in her spare time to give some real bread sharing support and encouragement to our church's pre-school ministries. I want Pastor Mel to get alongside the pre-school ministries that we offer and help them find ways to mention Jesus or the church or to give some kind of a kingdom witness, in a way that each group can do so naturally and effectively. We can't forget the bread in any ministry of the church.

I am really stoked when I hear that market days have gone really well and the op shop has turned a good profit for the month. That thrills me because our finances are often scary to look at requiring a lot of faith. But the *main* reason we do what we do as a church, through all our services is to give out the bread – to appropriately and naturally talk to people about Jesus.

Let's have a look at how Peter presented the bread to those first converts?

2. PETER SHARES THE BREAD. Acts 2:22-24

v 22 “God proved that he sent Jesus to you by having him work miracles, wonders, and signs.”

When Peter talks about Jesus he is quick to point out that Jesus is from God. The evidence of this is the supernatural things that tens of thousands have been eye witnesses to. When we talk to people about the Lord the key issue is this “who is Jesus?” He claimed to be from God and he claimed to be God and was crucified as a blasphemer. Peter would say to those thousands that heard his first sermon – do you want evidence that Jesus is divine – look at how he lived and what he did, there is your evidence.

Then God delivered him to death. ***V23 “He had already planned and decided that Jesus would be handed over to you. So you took him and had evil men put him to death on a cross.”***

In Peter's presentation of the bread he makes sure that his hearers understand that Jesus' death was part of God's plan, this was no man controlled accident but an event planned by God so that a sinless man would die in the place of and for the sins of mankind.

V 24 God set him free from death and raised him to life. Death could not hold him in its power.

Deep within the dark sepulchre of Joseph of Arimathea, behind the secured and sealed rock of the Romans, amid the sleeping corpses and ancient graves of the Jews, God did his greatest work. He spoke to the dead body of his incarnate Son. With hell's demons and heaven's angels watching he called on the Rose of Sharon to lift his head, the Lion of Judah to stretch His paws, the Bright Morning star to shine forth his light, the Alpha and Omega to be the beginning of life and the end of the grave. God

untied the death ropes and raised him up. Death was no match for Him.

That's how Peter shared the bread.

Not everyone is called to preach like the apostle Peter to share the bread but we are all called to do two things:

Please insert your name in the gap on point three.

3. _____ SHARES THE BREAD.

Be prepared and practiced at all times to explain the gospel and to share your testimony (your way).

1 Peter 3:15-16

15 Honor Christ and let him be the Lord of your life.

ALWAYS be ready to give an answer when someone asks you about your hope.

16 Give a kind and respectful answer and keep your conscience clear.

Practice presenting the gospel and giving your testimony in a way that works for you. I like to explain what I believe using pictures and so a sample of how I share my faith is on the church website on the home page under "How to connect with God"

But each one of us is meant to be prepared, practiced at sharing our faith, giving a reason for the hope that is within us. Practice explaining your faith and giving your testimony with your home group or with friends this week.

A testimony should cover

1. How God drew you to Him

2. What you came to believe and did to become a Christian.

(That should include faith, turning from specific sin, water and holy spirit baptism)

3. What difference practically Jesus makes to your life today.

4. WE CAN ALL SHARE THE BREAD BY SHARING OUR TESTIMONY AND BY THROWING SEED

Romans 10:17 No one can have faith without HEARING the message about Christ.

When people audibly hear the revealed Word of God, through the reading of the scriptures, the preaching of the Word, through your testimony, through a statement of faith you say as the spirit prompts you. When those seeds of faith are scattered by you daily and are planted in the hearts of others they begin the faith process. If those spoken words find fertile soil in the hearts of the hearers faith will grow. Every one of us are called to scatter seeds where ever we go in the harvest fields of this world.

Luke 8:4-15 A Story about a Farmer

4 When a large crowd from several towns had gathered around Jesus, he told them this story:

5A farmer went out to scatter seed in a field. While the farmer was doing it, some of the seeds fell along the road and were stepped on or eaten by birds. 6Other seeds fell on rocky ground and started growing. But the plants did not have enough water and soon dried up. 7Some other seeds fell where thornbushes grew up and choked the plants. 8The rest of the seeds fell on good ground where they grew and produced a hundred times as many seeds.

When Jesus had finished speaking, he said, "If you have ears, pay attention!"

Jesus Explains the Story about a Farmer

11This is what the story means: The seed is God's message, 12and the seeds that fell along the road are the people who hear the message. But the devil comes and snatches the message out of their hearts, so that they will not believe and be saved. 13The seeds that fell on rocky ground are the people who gladly hear the message and accept it. But they don't have deep roots, and they believe only for a little while. As soon as life gets hard, they give up.

14The seeds that fell among the thornbushes are also people who hear the message. But they are so eager for riches and pleasures that they never produce anything. 15Those seeds that fell on good ground are the people who listen to the message and keep it in good and honest hearts. They last and produce a harvest.

I remember a time in Raetihi when Juliette's wisdom transformed my approach to sharing my faith and to evangelism. My neighbour had been a severe alcoholic and partner beater for years. He used to keep us up all night most Saturdays with his loud pounding music and party type behaviour.

I had Bill Subritzky booked in to speak at the school hall and just hours before I felt the Holy Spirit say to me to invite this neighbour from hell.

So I did and without hesitation he came and stood at the back of the hall. One of the first words of knowledge that Bill had was that there was a man here with a unique and painful neck condition and that his mother in law had exactly the same problem. This guy responded, got bowled over by the Holy Spirit, accepted Christ and I began to work with him giving him huge amounts of time and counsel and friendship for six months. He was so changed that he was the talk of the little town amongst the drinking fraternity. Then 6 months later he just went back to drinking and walked away from the church. I was utterly gutted. I cared about this man. I wanted to see him blessed. I had invested so much of the church's time into this guy.

As I shared my disappointment with Juliette she said to me Russell as Christians we are all called to throw seeds but we can't control what type of soil those seeds fall into.

That truth changed my approach to evangelism. I would still drop one liners everywhere about the church or God or this week's testimony but then I would simply watch to see where that seed was being received and faith was beginning to germinate. I learnt that instead of trying to do the work of an evangelist, its better just to throw the seeds and then support whatever Jesus is doing in the lives of those that hear. If faith began to grow in a person I would devote prayer and time and make

myself available to that person long-term. If no faith began to germinate as I threw seed I would still be polite and real and caring but I wouldn't devote any time or energy to that person.

I began to learn what it is to be a co-labourer with the Holy Spirit to look for what he is doing and to follow and support His lead. Sharing my faith moved from being something I felt I had to do to something really enjoyable, an adventure with God as I realised that I didn't have to work for him but just allow him to work through me when and how he chose.

My style of sharing my faith is through friendship evangelism but the key is to throw seeds first, *then* form the friendship. Many theological colleges and churches are saying that you should serve your community and your neighbours for months before you share your faith. That is absolutely unbiblical and ineffective. The longer you leave it to mention an answered prayer or a testimony or that you go to church, the longer you leave it to throw seeds the harder it will be to share the bread later. Throw an appropriate, spirit led seed at the beginning of any relationships and if there is good soil there they will come back to you and ask for more very naturally and comfortably as the relationship forms.

Everyone is called to throw seeds wherever you go daily. Someone says to me “what an awesome day”. “I might say yes, the world is amazingly designed”. Some-one might say to me “what are you up to this weekend?” I might say “I have some repairs to do or something to do with the family but what I look forward to most is seeing what God will do at church on Sunday.” Some one might say to me “How is your day going?” To which I might reply – “it’s busy but fun, I have seen God answer some great prayers already today.”

One liners. Seeds thrown but often they germinate in hearts and faith grows.

In your small groups this week practice throwing seeds.....

Here's a revision test for you, an example I used in this church a couple of years ago Mobil example.....

Friends, don't forget the bread. Where ever you go and whatever you do especially if it is part of a ministry of the trust and church, don't forget the bread.

Be prepared to share your testimony or to cast seed at the beginning of any relationship. Do it your way. Do it in a way that is natural and effective for you and you will outlive your life through throwing seed.