

**Psalm 29   Isaiah 6:1-8   Revelation 4:1-11   St. John 3:1-15**

An Door Opened

### **MISSION STATEMENT:**

**The Anglican Church of St. George the Martyr is a community of believers in Jesus Christ seeking to live out the Gospel among ourselves, seeking to take the Gospel to the world, and committed to being Biblical in our faith, liturgical in our worship, and evangelical in our witness.**

#### **6. We are committed to being evangelical in our witness:**

We endeavor to help all parishioners to effectively share their faith through a variety of methods.

One of the Mahatma Ghandi's withering criticisms directed towards Christians is a statement once made to a group of Missionaries in India. Addressing their efforts to evangelize he said, "You work so hard at it. Just remember that the rose never invites anyone to smell it. If it is fragrant, people will walk across the garden and endure the thorns to smell it."

You see, true evangelism is really just a way of life...a lifestyle, as it were, not a method you learn and apply slavishly with the hope that if you follow each step exactly the other person will magically respond to your message in a positive manner. When you read the Gospels, you never find Jesus giving out tracts or asking people why they thought God should allow them into heaven...nor did He apply a bumper-sticker to the rear of His donkey as He rode into Jerusalem with "WARNING: If rapture comes this donkey will be unmanned!" on it. No, He simply lived a life that was so attractive to those around Him that they could not help coming to Him and asking Him all sorts of questions, such as the questions asked by Nicodemus in our Gospel lesson for today. You see, His life opened up a door through which the greatest or even the lowliest could enter to listen to

what He would teach...teaching, I might add, which perfectly matched what they had already observed simply by watching Him from day to day.

Now, of course, this same life-style intimidated those who were phony and so He received negative comments and hostile behavior as well. But my point is this: Jesus simply was Who He was...there was nothing “automated” about Him. He simply loved the Father so much that His whole life was in step with the Spirit. Or, as Andrew Murray once said, “In the words “The Father in Me doeth the works” (John 14:10), Christ revealed the secret of His and all Divine service – man yielding himself for God to dwell and work in him.” Evangelism for Jesus then was based solely upon the harmony that existed within the relationship of the Trinity. Each loves the other so much that they simply cannot but show it and live it.

Think about something you are really excited about. It may be gourmet food, or good wine, or football, or music, or art, or golf or even Nascar...you simply cannot help but show your enthusiasm, can you? Or, think about that time when you were or, hopefully if you're married, still are in love. Even when you tried your best your mind wandered into that marvelous world of that one significant person in your life. You dreamed of ways to please him or her...you studied him or her closely so that you could know what he or she liked or disliked...and then you did that which you knew would be pleasing...and nothing gave you more satisfaction than to see that smile that made you weak at the knees. It wasn't or isn't hard to show that love, now is it? It simply oozes out of your pores...it is obvious, and perhaps even irritating, to all those around you...even strangers. It is the most natural thing in the world to portray what you love best by the way you walk and talk. No normal person is a totally closed book...what you

cherish most can usually be seen, even if one has to look a little more carefully and perhaps scratch a bit deeper than the surface.

So, let's apply this general rule to evangelism, shall we? When contemplating the greatness and majesty of God as the one sole and supreme ruler over the Universe, King David could not help but ascribe vocal praise and worship to the King and, indeed, command those who heard him to do the same. When he beheld the glory of his enthroned Lord, the prophet Isaiah could not but immediately respond favorably to the question, "whom shall I send and who will go?" When a door was opened in the Heavens and St. John was ushered into the very throne room of God, He too was filled with awe. You see, the supreme splendor of God is compelling and when you behold Him, whether with the physical eye or the spiritual eye, your life cannot possibly ever be the same again...and what He says, you will do, gladly and willingly and gratefully.

Remember, Jesus once asked the question, "Why do you call Me Lord and do not do the things which I say?" Think about that question for a moment, will you? Why call Jesus Lord (Master, Ruler, King) if you are not willing to do what He tells you to do? It just doesn't make sense does it? If you are not willing to submit to the Word of God (the Bible, the Scriptures), do us all a favor and call yourself anything you choose, but do not call yourself a follower of Christ...a Christian. Do not name yourself after the One Whose Name you deny. I've said it before, it is like pledging allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all, while plotting to violently overthrow the government...or while sitting by idly while others do that.

Dearest beloved brethren, here at our Lord's Table we pledge our allegiance to Him and His Kingdom every single Sunday. Here we proclaim to all and sundry that we are His and He is ours. Here we call Him Lord. But is this 'pledge of allegiance', is this proclamation, is this claim of ours obvious to all those we come in contact with out there? Your neighbors may know that you love gardening and that you like designer clothes and expensive cars, but do they know through simple observation that you love Jesus? If not, why not? Could it be that you love Him less than all the other things that demand your rapt attention? The others things you speak about so freely and so enthusiastically? You see evangelism is not that difficult if you really love Jesus. In fact, it is simply a natural extension of your relationship with Him. As the Holy Spirit cannot but glorify the Son and the Son cannot but glorify the Father because of the perfect love that exists within the Trinity, so the true follower of Jesus cannot but glorify God because he or she loves Him with all his or her heart, soul, mind and strength. His or her relationship with God cannot be hidden, just as a city on a hill cannot be hidden from view...and the reality of this ever deepening relationship is expressed most naturally in the Christian's manner of life and the content of his or her conversation.

So, here at St. George the Martyr models and methods of evangelism are really not as important as actually knowing Jesus because if we truly know Jesus evangelism will take place as surely as visitors to the great gardens of this world will cross over the lawn to smell one solitary fragrant rose. Indeed, St. Paul says as much in his second letter to the Corinthians. "For we are," he wrote, "to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life. And who is

sufficient for these things? For we are not, as so many, peddling the Word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ.”

Yes, it is important to know the Bible well as in it we discover our Lord’s character and thus learn what is pleasing to Him and what is not pleasing to Him. Indeed, there really is no other way to truly know Him other than through His self-revelatory Word. And yes, it is important to be exposed to various apologetical methods through which you are enabled to present the Gospel message cogently and intelligently so as not to hinder the listener’s understanding of it...and I confess that I have failed in teaching you these methods and hope to remedy that in the future. But knowledge without a true and vibrant and growing relationship with Jesus will not help you to be a fragrant aroma of life for God any more than simply studying text-books on marriage will make you a better husband or wife.

If what you know of God does not lead to your falling hopelessly in love with Him to the extent that you cannot but demonstrate that love to all and sundry, then what good is that knowledge? It is like calling Him ‘Lord’ and then not doing what He tells you to do...it just doesn’t make sense...and you will not convince anyone into following Jesus if they can’t see you doing what you are asking them to do first.

Here at our Lord’s Table a door is opened for us each and every Sunday so that we, like the Psalmist, the Prophet and the Apostle might behold for ourselves the grandeur and splendor of Almighty God as He once more demonstrates so graphically the amazing love He has for each one of us – and also for those who are not yet part of us, but who could be if we would but live inviting and enticing lives patterned on His life revealed to us in His Holy Word. And so, dearest beloved brethren, as you prepare your hearts and

minds to once more come before His holy throne to partake of that which so clearly shows His love for you, ask Him to touch your heart today so that you may begin to love Him in such a way that all will know, simply by observing your life, that you are a follower of Jesus, even they have not yet heard you speak a solitary word.

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