



Sharing the Message with the World...

Week 3 – Samaria

Check-in...

How are you? Where have you seen Christ working in your life in the last week? And... who is your “rival?” If it’s sports, is there a fanbase that drives you nuts? Maybe you’re a Mary Kay rep and are therefore required to “raspberry” when passing a Sephora? Perhaps you’ve sworn allegiance to Popeyes and on principle drive the long way to work so as not to pass the Chick-fil-A?

Opening Prayer...

God of Reconciliation, give us the courage to tell everyone about your Son, extending a hand of love and grace... even to our “rivals.”

Introduction...

Jesus has spent 3 years pouring into his disciples. He’s laughed with them... and at them. He’s cried with them... and for them. And he’s

suffered with them... and because of them. And eventually, he is betrayed, arrested, sentenced to death, and crucified. Now, if you haven't read the book or watched the movie, spoiler alert... 3 days later he conquers death and is raised back to life. Then over the next 40 days he begins appearing to them, teaching them more, proving he's alive, and setting them up for what's coming next, for what will be the most difficult part of their journey. And finally, he gives them an instruction that will be the foundation for their ministry for the rest of their lives, and one that will change human history.

Review: Last week, we continued our discussion on The Great Commission and telling others about Jesus in our "Judeas," our inner circles. Did you have a chance to have a spiritual conversation with someone in your Judea? Maybe the opportunity arose to invite them to worship or Connect Group? Did you take advantage? Why or why not?

Scripture...

Jesus is sitting with his followers for the last time. They're obviously concerned about what comes next. They thought they knew what the mission was. They thought Jesus was there to free Israel from the Romans. But Jesus has a much bigger mission to set them out on, a ministry that wasn't just about Israel in the first century Roman Empire, but rather about all of humanity for all time. He says this...

Read Acts, Chapter 1, verse 8. (Anyone have it memorized yet?)

Jesus says, “Tell others about me.” It’s a foundation for ministry that has been passed down for 2000 years, from person to person to person, starting with these first followers, through a sometimes messed up family tree, until it gets to us. In that way, we are the heirs of this Commission... because one of these disciples told someone in 33 AD, and that person told someone, and that person told someone, year after year after year, until we get to this millennium and the person who told you about Jesus.

Question 1: For you, who was that person? Who first told you about Jesus and introduced you to a life of faith? Or perhaps it wasn’t the *first* person, but someone who made it real for you? (Bonus points: send them a quick “thank you.”)

Reflection...

Without those people living out this Commission, we don’t have the grace and healing and love that we’ve found in a relationship with Christ. And so, the Commission then falls to us... *we* are *sent* into the world, to take the peace that we’ve found to hurting world. And that is the *why*... Why do we live out this commission? Because we have come to Christ with our brokenness, and he has given us healing and life in return. And it is then our duty, *our* commission, to tell the world about Jesus, and help others find a new life in Christ. Easy, right? Well, no. Because, if it were easy, everyone would be doing it, and churches would be bursting at the seams. But sharing our faith, telling others about Jesus, even something as seemingly simple as inviting someone to come to worship with you is difficult... it’s awkward... it’s

uncomfortable, and so we just don't do it. And yet, this is the door through which you could help Christ change their life. So, how do we do it? Well, Jesus gave us a hint in this Commission.

Let's review. Jesus gave us 4 places where we were to tell others about him. They were, (say them with me...)

Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the Ends of the Earth. He began with *Jerusalem*

that was the disciples' home base, reminding us that we are to share Christ with those in our "homes," our closest relationships.

Samaria...

Judea...

Jerusalem...

And then last week, we looked at Judea, the next sphere of influence out. Judea was the region around Jerusalem... places where the disciples were still familiar, and people

who still operated like they do. So, our Judea is our "inner circles": our communities, our clubs and organizations, our circles of friends and co-workers, the places we work and play. But Jesus isn't done. To this point, the disciples are still comfortable. But Jesus moves out one more sphere... and here is where the mood turns. He says a taboo word, "Samaria."

Samaria was the nation just outside Judea to the north, and though they weren't warring, they definitely did not get along. In fact, they'd been rivals for a thousand years. (And you thought the Cubs and Cards had a history.) Samaritans were technically Jewish, that is, they believed in and followed Yahweh... However, they denied certain



aspects of the religion, didn't observe Jerusalem as the "Holy City," and when the Assyrians conquered the area, they intermarried with them, which was seen as an abomination to the Israelite purists. So, the Israelites looked down on the Samaritans as "half-breeds" and heretics, and the Samaritans viewed the Israelites as stuck-up elitists. And so, when Jesus says, "you will tell others about me... in Samaria," the disciples must have double a doubletake.

Question 2: Take a moment to identify your Samaria. Who is outside your inner circles? Perhaps it's political or social... a group of people you just seem to be averse to? Maybe it's geographic or racial or socioeconomic? Maybe it's personal, an individual or group with whom, for whatever reason, you have a conflict and have been pushed to this sphere? Who is your Samaria?

When Jesus says to the disciples, "you'll be my witnesses in Samaria," things just got real. And, more than anything else, *this* is likely why Jesus had to define "everywhere." He knew how his disciples, being human, would respond if he didn't. "Jerusalem? Great... we live there. Judea? No problem... got friends all over that. Wait, did he just say Samaria? Uh, Jesus, we don't know those people? They don't like us... and well, we don't really like them. Are you sure this should be a thing?" And Jesus is saying, "yes... you are to tell others about me... even in Samaria. Because when you build relationships with those people,

their hearts will change toward me, but *yours* will change toward them. And so, yes, even people you don't know, people you may not like, people you probably don't get along with, may have nothing in common... even *those* people. Yup... Samaria... you heard me right."

So, if Jerusalem is our "home base" and Judea is our "inner circles," Samaria is our "outer circles." There are so many ways for you to enter into your Samaria to tell others about Christ. And think about it... it is such an incredible witness when someone who is supposed to be your opposite, your outsider, maybe even your enemy... extends to you a hand of love and grace and acceptance. So, if you can be the person extending that hand, what a powerful testimony to what Christ has done in your life. And in that way, you are telling others, your "rival" about Jesus and living The Commission. What is your Samaria... your outer circles?

Question 3: Consider your answer to the previous question. How might God be calling you to "witness" to that person or group? Come up with one concrete way you can enter into your Samaria this week and then pray for the bold opportunity to execute that plan. Be a witness!

Closing...

Jesus didn't give us these 4 regions by accident. Each one had a meaning for the people listening, and each one is a metaphor for us, as well. First, we are to tell others about Jesus in our own home... the relationships that are closest to you, your Jerusalem. Second, though it might be uncomfortable and awkward, we are to tell others about Christ in our inner circles, your Judea? And today, it's easy to think, as I'm sure the disciples did, "nah, Jesus, you can't mean Samaria?" But this week, focus on that question... how are you called to witness to someone in your "outer circle"? And then make that step... share your faith... because you are sent to them, as well.

Take some time to share prayer requests or celebrations.

Close in prayer.