

Sermon – August 27, 2023 – Pastor Sung Ho Lee

Matthew 28:16-20

“Rally for Jesus”

A wealthy old man summoned to his bedside his doctor, his priest, and his lawyer. “They say you can’t take it with you, but I’d like to have something with me, just in case. So I am giving each of you an envelope containing \$100,000 in cash and I would be grateful if at my funeral you would put the envelopes in my coffin.” They each agreed to carry out his wish.

At the old man’s funeral, each of the three advisors slipped something into the coffin.

As the three were walking away together, the doctor turned to the other two and said, “Friends, I have a confession to make. At the hospital we are desperate for a CAT SCAN machine, so I took \$20,000 of our friend’s money for a new machine and put the rest in the coffin as he asked.”

The priest admitted, “I, too, have a confession to make. I took \$50,000 for our homeless fund and put the rest in the coffin as our friend requested.”

The lawyer righteously replied, “I am astonished that you would treat so casually our undertaking to our friend. I want you to know that I placed in his coffin \$100,000. It was my personal check though.”

Have you made your will? You can create a will if you are 18 or older.

One thing I can tell you is, you can’t write one after you die.

But I know one person who made his will after his death.

Jesus died and then rose again from the dead and then appeared to His disciples.

And then to his disciples he shared his will. We call it the Great Commissioning.

What did he say in His will?

It is found in today’s Scripture – Matthew 28:16-20:

I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth.

Go, then, to all people everywhere and make them my disciples: baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And I will be with you always, to the end of the age.

We take the will seriously, don’t we?

So we must take Jesus’ will seriously.

Go to all people everywhere and make them Jesus’ disciples – followers of Jesus.

What should we do to follow His will, the Great Commissioning?

Rally! Rally for Jesus. Bring people to Jesus.

This is a picture of the Rally Day Banner that I had at Trinity Church on Grand Island 7 years ago.

What would your expectation be when you made a banner?

We have done our job. Now it is the banner's job to bring new people to our church. Would the banner bring people?

If it brings 1-2 people, it would be a great success.

The banner's main role is to tell people that we are a welcoming church. The banner tells people who we are. The banner can leave on people a good impression of Livonia Church as a welcoming church. But the banner itself would not bring people to church.

The real work of bringing people to church must be done by us – each and every one of us.

Bishop Robert Schnase (Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations, p. 29-30. Section 5) says getting new people is not going to happen until each person takes responsibility and make changes in the attitude from “they ought” to “I will.”

Good news is, it's not that difficult. It is simple. Everybody can do it.

An invitation is not complicated. It is simple. Jesus showed how to do it. In the first chapter of John's gospel, Jesus' invitation was simple: “Come and see” (John 1:39).

What would you do when you watched a great movie? You are so anxious to tell your friends about the movie. “Sandy, I watched a movie last weekend. It was so wonderful. I can watch the movie 10 more times. You should watch it. It won't disappoint you. If you don't feel comfortable going by yourself, I will go with you. Just let me know.”

Basically it is “come and see.” What you need to do is, just tell them about your experience and invite them.

That's all you need to do when you invite people to church:

I love my church. The people in our church are so friendly. They care for each other and support each other. Our music program is so great. It touches my soul and fills my heart with such a good energy. And we have a new pastor. His message is

inspiring. It is food for my soul for the entire week. And he is funny. I would like you to meet our church people and the new pastor.

You can do it. You can invite your family, friends and neighbors to church.

But we must do it in the right way.

Here is how we should invite people.

Make a list of people who you can invite.

Who should I invite?

Church members

Family

Friends

Neighbors

Coworkers

Step 1 – Make a list of invitees.

Someone might say faith is a private thing. I don't feel comfortable talking about faith.

Faith is private – That's one of the myths about faith.

This myth, unfortunately, is found among non-Christians and Christians alike. Pope Francis said, "Faith is not a private matter. It is not a completely individualistic notion or a personal opinion. It comes from hearing, and it is meant to find expression in words and to be proclaimed."

No one comes to faith on their own. We must share our faith, our faith stories.

It is not inappropriate to invite people to church, to MY church. We are commissioned by Jesus to invite people to church.

Step 2 – Pray for them and for you.

Here is a sample prayer.

I would like to invite Mary to our church. Give me an opportunity to talk about Rally Day. Also give me courage to do this.

Don't be afraid.

Nothing to lose. Just do it. Just like Joshua and Caleb did.

Moses sent twelve spies to Canaan, the Promised Land just before the Israelites were about to cross the Jordan River.

They brought their reports back.

One group said, "The people in Canaan are giants. There is no way for us to beat them."

The other group (Joshua and Caleb) said, "Yes, they are humongous. But we can beat them because God is with us."

No matter how big the challenge is, if it is for God, God is with us, and we can do it.

Step 3 – Action. Invite.

The simplest way is this.

Drop a Rally Day flyer or card in the mailbox.

Drop the invitation in the mailbox. Let them know that you go to Livonia Church.

However, most likely it would not bring them to church.

Offer a personal invitation.

Give the invitation personally. It works much better than dropping a card in the mailbox.

You should know this when you invite someone. Invitation should not be an open-end invitation – "If you have time. I hope you can come."

Instead, the invitation should be like this: "I would like to invite you to my church on Rally Day. Would you like to come with me? I would be happy to pick you up."

Bob Farr, in his book, "Get Their Name," says, "An invitation comes best after you build a relationship."

So this year, invite someone you know. Invite one person you know well.

You know the parable of the lost sheep (Luke 15). One day Jesus told this parable.

"Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them—what do you do? You leave the other ninety-nine sheep in the pasture and go looking for the one that got lost until you find it. When you find it, you are so happy that you put it on your shoulders and carry it back home. Then you call your friends and neighbors together and say to them, 'I am so happy I found my lost sheep. Let us celebrate!' In the same

way, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine respectable people who do not need to repent.

Once we all were lost. And Jesus found us.

There are many lost sheep out there. Like the good shepherd, let us go look for them and bring them to Jesus. Jesus will be thrilled and throw a wild party.

Just bring one person. Jesus will be thrilled.

The church is shrinking!

In our grandmothers' generation, born one hundred years ago, 80 percent of people were connected to God through church.

Of the generation born ninety years ago, 65 percent are still connected to God through church.

In the Baby Boomer generation, born seventy years ago, fewer than 35 percent are connected to God through church.

Of the Generation X children, born forty to fifty years ago, fewer than 20 percent are connected to God through church.

Among the Millennials (children born in the past thirty to forty years), fewer than 10 percent are connected to God through church.

- Bob Farr, Get Their Name, p. 1, 2013

The church is shrinking.

Good news – The harvest is plentiful. Let's bring people to church. Let's rally for Jesus.

I will show you a picture.

This is a picture of my daughter's church in California. It's a Korean Church. They have services in two languages. The service in Korean is held in the sanctuary. The service in English is held in the gym as you seen in this picture. The gym is packed with young people. In this service, you are old if you are 40.

What about our church? You are young if you are 60. The world needs God.

So let us rally for Jesus. Bring people to Jesus.

It starts right here. It starts right now. It starts with you.