

Luke10 Emmanuel, Norwood 2022 Pastor Ken Hilston

Titles: MANDELA, LEAN AND CLEAN, or, URGENT WITHOUT THREATS, or; "An Easter Dusty Faith" 1615/1772

Centuries ago, energetic evangelists" from Europe invaded a country in South America. To prove their 'kindness,' in a Christian kind of way,"- lined up and baptized the natives. Great so far, then killed them before they could sin, to save THEM.

The disciples last week, used, THEIR most aggressive method to blatantly trumpet Christianity. They begged Jesus to rain down fire and destroy those who made their ministry tough. They rang faith's threatening alarms. Jesus wondered if they slept through the sermon on "Blessed are the Peacemakers."

Too often, an arrogant faith lurks just below the surface. Yes, faith is important, but how do you express it with exuberance, without sounding arrogant, haughty, or condescending: how do we example faithfulness?

OK! In my first parish, a group of local pastors asked churches to attend a workshop on Evangelism, the Kennedy program. We went, but found out too late, the keys to the program: first, soften up the people with a lot of nice talk about their nice things, then pop the provocative sure-fire question, the faith hand grenade, to persuade them to join: "where would you rather spend eternity: heaven or hell!"

We left. OF course, we don't want converts to go "down under," BUT how do we introduce Jesus without a threat? Evangelism is important, but can be arrogant.

Today, Jesus said, “go out by twos, to support each other. Trust you will be provided for, without the need of purse, bag or sandals.

Yes, you will be lambs in the midst of wolves, but the kingdom will come.” Jesus never implied threats. Our Lord’s injunctions: LEAN, CLEAN, URGENT, BUT WITHOUT THREATS.

It was a greeting of peace, but if the peace is rejected, it was just not received, period, without recrimination. Only think about their faith needs, not ours.

Eat what people give you, even if it is not kosher. Don’t waste time on the road with normal greetings, heal those you can, and remind them the Kingdom of God is here.

Trust the spirit to do the heavy lifting- conversion work.

If renounced, the disciples shook off the dust from their feet, and moved on. (remember “dust”)

Unlike the threats of the previous disciples, they urgently passed the message on period, a terribly important message, but it is not arrogant:. “The Kingdom and Peace of God is upon you.” Pass on the message, plainly and simply.

TRUST the people to do the right thing, and IF not, even subtle threats might antagonize and make it even worse. Threats and Christianity to not wed well.

The same with covid. The medical message was passed on, with too many people simply not responding to the suggested medical precautions: “don’t tell me what to do.”

But how much can you force people to do, if they have options? Drivers still don’t obey speed limits, I’m sorry, “speed suggestions!”

We know, how easily, we just arbitrarily say “no” to what we are told to do. Brush after every meal??? We also know, just because there is a stop sign, don’t count on cars to stop, if no police are around to enforce it.

We know better, but... we are not the “faith police!” We are not the ones to separate the wheat from the chaff. No finger-pointing: just proclaim the faith. No arguments! Walk on! Trust the spirit. 543/581

They passed on the message, but look at what even those who reject the offer, see in the disciples: how the disciples demonstrated the faith by what they did, and did NOT do, not just what they said.

The disciples knew they would not be welcomed, yet took the time to offer the message, quietly. Sow the first faith seedlings. Remember, sometimes the first impression is the only opinion most people remember.

Who we are, speaks louder than our words.

After they left, I’d be curious to know what the townspeople thought of them and their approach, not just the message. It seems they were not receptive, but not angered.

How did the disciple’s presence and actions speak to the faith,

example the faith,

demonstrate the truths of the faith,

and shine a light on the faith, by what they did, and did not, say or do?

They didn’t brag about the faith, just told the story.

What did the people learn about the faith by how the disciples acted and treated the townspeople, without force, and did not look down on them. They just spoke the words? What did they learn about them,

different from those disciples who tried to rain down fire for disbelieving?

These disciples believed strongly, but did not push! They disagreed with them, but didn't shame them. What did their simple presence teach them about the faith?

When they looked at them, what did they witness is a Christian?

Then the big question: if they liked what they saw, would they be more or less likely, to become a disciple?

What attracts your attention in a positive way? What would either scare or attract you for the wrong reasons?

Would they sense – it is either TOO easy, by bragging about the faith, or is it TOO hard, an impossible daunting, challenge to be a disciple?

How did the faith “taste” by how they were treated?

You are the message! If they cannot trust you, they surely will not trust the message.

Let's start with the “dust!” How could “dust” be an invitation or sign of the faith? When the disciples left a town, they shook off the dust from their feet when they said, “no thank you.” How can dust be positive? Remember, cleanliness is NOT necessarily next to godliness!

They shook off the dust to leave a faith REMINDER, an INVITATION: “The faith was, and is still offered.”

How possibly could dust incriminate or shame them?

There was no finger-pointing or threat involved. The disciples didn't look down on them, not a harsh reminder of guilt: they did not see the light!

With just, simple dust, to remind them, the disciples offered the kingdom: pure and simple. A gentle reminder! “Remember, we met with you,” period!

We know how we feel to get an unwanted pompous telemarketer.

Wouldn't you hate to be an arrogant telemarketer for the faith, like the Kennedy workshop recommended!?

The disciples left Common Dust, street dirt, for the people. How could you argue with dust, a simple reminder, a quiet calling card? The world is MADE OF DUST: plenty of faith dust reminders!!

What did the Lord God use to create life? Remember, the Lord God picked up dirt, dust, and blew the spirit onto the dust, to create Adam, us!

Yes, we want people to be curious about the faith, inquisitive, but how we example it, must be an accurate portrait of the faith.

If we shout out the faith, it reveals we do not trust God's spirit to reveal it.

Do we trust the faith, to reveal the faith, through us? Jesus never pushed the faith on anyone. Remember the town of the demoniac.

Here are two great examples of how to lovingly pass on the faith in ugly situations, where anger and force, could easily be used and justified.

First, Martin Luther King's dad, Daddy King, spoke to us at the seminary, not long after his wife, the mother of Martin Luther King Jr. was shot and killed at the organ bench, during a church service when a black assailant shouted, “all Christians are my enemy.”

Daddy King was as gentle and peaceful and forgiving as anyone. What an example!

If you did not know it, you could think he only lived the most peaceful life possible.

Not an arrogant or angry thought came from even facial expressions: faith! That is faith! If he could do it....

At a national youth gathering, Arch Bishop Desmond Tutu, spoke about Nelson Mandela who became president of South Africa. For years, imprisoned as a traitor, beaten unmercifully, to teach him a lesson: obey the law or else, even if the laws are simple prejudice and ugly brutal hatred: Apartheid.

From Gandhi, he practiced non-violence to the extreme. He did not even complain about his harsh treatment.

He did not even look down on his persecutors who tried to tempt him to be angry, nasty and revolt: so they could beat him again.

He never complained!! He kept an even temper. He never shamed the guards for their inhuman, ill-treatment, before or after he was released.

By not playing their game, an eye for an eye, eventually, his guards learned to respect him, though they disagreed with him. Finally, the brutality ceased, and Nelson Mandela was elected president. The guards in reverence for his selfless life, not as punishment, asked to sit in the front row at his inauguration: out of deep respect. What did they learn from Mandela? About the faith??

Just because the guards fought, Mandela did not fight back.

The guards finally learned how Mandela taught them who he was, and who they were, by his, non-verbal, non-reactions. He did not even mock them for their cruelty. He let the guard's MIRROR OF LIFE, reveal it to them. They finally saw they were!

Anyone who wants to promote the faith, as we see from Jesus, King and Mandela, cannot do it by force, humiliating someone, or tricking them, so we can arrogantly, save them! Jesus never fought back on the cross.

Just a little defenseless dirt, kicked off from the shoes of the disciples, maybe could speak louder than fancy words or vicious threats, even if it was the truth. The warning is real, but,

How do you get someone to HEAR it clearly?

When people listen or look at us, what of the faith do we reveal, even if they do not know we belong to the faith?

How much of the faith shines through our lives, without it looking obvious? Wear my collar?

Do they ever even sense an inaudible, quiet arrogant sneer from us?

Why didn't Jesus reprimand the disciples who did not listen in Holy Week? And what did they learn, when Jesus did not chastise them?

Remember the beautiful Easter walk to Emmaus? Jesus just walked with the disciples until they recognized Him, when He broke

the bread: some Easter dust!!!!

The Bread was the only word He used.

Lastly, obviously- disciples are lambs in the midst of wolves, but never the wolves, devouring the lambs for the faith! Amen