

# *Going For The Goal (III): Bringing The Message*

*Bible Reading:*  
*2 Kings 6:24 - 7:20*

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Sometimes the human situation becomes so desperate, it's almost unimaginable. The account we read is example of that.

A city is under siege by enemies. Attacking army keeps everyone from going out or coming in. Supplies dry up. People begin to starve. How bad does it get? Listen to the Bible - "*A donkey's head sold for 1 kilogram of silver, and a half pint of dove's dung sold for 55 grams of silver.*" (v.25)

A little later in the story it even talks about cannibalism - parents eating their children.  
'Nuff said.

Two lepers live outside of town, between the city walls and the besieging army. Eventually they get so desperate that they head to the army tents. "*We'll die here, anyway. What have we got to lose?*" they say. When they get to the tents they discover that everyone has fled. God caused confusion in the camp and chased the army away with a huge miracle. The lepers duck into the first tent and find loads of food. They stuff themselves. Eating. Drinking. They grab armfuls and race back to where they live.

Then comes 2 Kings 7.9. They stop short and look at each other.

*"We're not doing right. This is a day of good news and we are keeping it to ourselves."*

They'd been starving.

Now they're rich beyond their wildest dreams.

They can't handle it all -- there's more than enough for everyone in the city. People are dying behind those walls.

They've **GOT** to share the news!

It's **unthinkable** to say nothing!

This dark chapter of history shows how far humanity can sink.

It also shows the power of God, able to bring hope into the darkest of circumstances.

AND - it shows basic sensibility and wisdom shown by folks from whom you'd least expect it. Lepers - shunned, written off, condemned as repulsive by everyone else, feared, left to a walking death – these lepers stumble onto life itself, life as a gift of God, life unexpected and undeserved.

As they stumble on it, they realize quickly that there is **NO WAY** this gift of grace can be held to themselves. It has to be shared. Some may accept it. Some may not. But it HAS to be shared. And so they do.

Result being that a city facing certain death finds life again. And hope.

Well - almost the whole city.

The one who doubted the power of God has a dark ending.

As I read this story last week, I approached it in the manner that many of the ancient church fathers did - I saw it as a most vivid allegory. True history, yes. But functioning for us in New Testament times as a picture of something central to our life as believers.

Over the past two weeks we've begun with these words of St. Paul:

*"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith....."* (2 Tim 4:7)

Paul - a man on a mission, living a focussed existence, very intentional about how he would live out the days allotted for him on this earth;

living them for Jesus Christ.

Which has left us to think - if that how the greatest missionary and leader in the history of the Christian Church conducted and organized himself, ought we do any less?

We've been asking that question about our personal lives, but also our life as a congregation -  
What's the focus and direction of Calvin CRC?

And how intentional are we about living that focus; about moving in the direction that we believe God has set for us?

So far the teachings of the Bible have helped us understand that living as Christians is something:

- a. We do together - Christianity is not a lone ranger faith; it's not a religion for people to live out in isolation; it's communal.
- b. We do to the glory of God - the key question to ask is NOT "*what's in it for me*", but rather "*What's in it for God?*"

By the way, is that how you approached our gathering in worship this morning? Seeking to come and **bring** honor, praise, glory to God? Or did some of us get caught up in the prevalent mind set of our great consumer-driven society, and arrive wondering what we would **get** out of this gathering?

We are, then,

***members of a community that wants to glorify God.....***

Today we're going to move the yardsticks just a bit further as we set our sights on the goal to which the Lord calls us as believers joined together in the bond of faith in Jesus Christ, here at Calvin CRC.

Going for the goal.

Reading the account of 2 Kings, and seeing it as a metaphor, helps us remember that the faith we have is enormous, rich, life-renewing and fulfilling gift of God.

And those who have this great gift cannot keep quiet.

Enjoying it only for ourselves is simply **NOT** an option.

We live in a spiritually starving city, friends.

People hop from pub to bar. They try fun fix after fun fix. Throw themselves into their work. Purchase the very best.

But again and again I run into folk who find themselves coming up empty.

Some of you know exactly what I'm talking about. Because you've been there not too long ago.

Life was just a shell without central meaning.

But after you surrendered your existence to Jesus Christ things began to take on a different perspective. It's as if some great void inside was filled; a hunger was satisfied; a pain relieved. A reason for living; a certainty about tomorrow and beyond; a friend to travel with you; release from guilt and regret about the past; inner power to help overcome destructive habits and lifestyle issues – more than any amount of money can buy.

You are experiencing the life-changing power of God at work within you.

What incredible riches!

An **amazing** stockpile!

More than enough for all who will come, says the Reformed doctrine of Atonement. It'll never get to the point where a sinner will come to Jesus only to hear, "*Sorry, but we just ran out. I'd love to have something available to forgive your sins but inventory is empty. I'd love to make room for you in heaven, but all our rooms are full. No vacancy.*"

Never will happen!

Never will happen that God will say, "*I've got enough in my family. I'm not going to adopt any more children. No place or time for you. Can't take care of you. Not enough resources.*"

There's resources for **ALL!** Lots to go around!

Hey, Ottawa -

Stop scavenging. Stop picking at garbage heaps trying to find significance, hope and meaning for your life.

There's a veritable banquet table waiting here inside!

A **huge** stockpile.

Meaning that we who are members of the community that wants to glorify God...  
**....are called to bring the life changing message of Christ to our neighbors.....**

You want to bring glory to God?

Want to know the best way for this congregation to put a divine smile on God's holy face?

I suppose we could speculate on what the answer might be. Each one here would probably have their own opinion. But why don't we all stand down and let the Bible give us direction. Hear these inspired words of Jesus:

*I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.* (Luke 15:7)

Having someone come from emptiness to fullness in Christ is cause for the greatest heavenly celebration imaginable. You may want to read the whole of Luke chapter 15. Once, twice, three times - that's the whole point of the entire chapter.

Lost ones being found.

Dead lives being brought back to life.

Hope for the hopeless.

Starving people who rush through the gates of their lives and satisfy themselves on the food and nourishment that the Spirit of God has prepared for them.

And huge celebrations when it happens.

Bringing people from death to life; guiding, directing, encouraging, challenging, moving, shaping people towards faith in Christ -

- ultimately that is the work of God. His great power finally makes it happen.

I can tell you how it worked in my life: At the time when faith was developing in me, and I was moving towards the point of grabbing hold and committing to it, I was convinced that I was in the driver's seat, making the decisions and the commitment.

Looking back now - I can see that God never left me alone. His power was at work in my life from the get-go.

How many of you can say the same thing?

That's how it happens.

Just like it was the power of God that chased away the Aramean army.

I can also tell you one more thing.

God channelled his power into my life through the lives of other people. Sometimes without them even being aware of it. He used believers to be his agents of development and love and encouragement and direction in my life.

Like He used the lepers to get the word to the city.

How many of you can say the same thing in that way?

This is the reality that Paul writes about in 2 Cor 5:20 when he says:

*"We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us."*

Jesus makes us His not-so-secret agents in this world. God has **chosen** in His sovereign wisdom to use **us**. Just like He chose to use the lepers.

What an honour!

And what a challenge!

Maybe we don't feel like folk who can change the world.

Maybe we don't think we have the people skills, or communication talents, or analytical skills, or philosophical bent needed to convince people or guide people or encourage people or influence people.

Neither did the lepers.

All they knew is that they had riches.  
They had to tell somebody.  
What the people did with that news would have to be sorted out by God.  
The lepers did the only thing possible.  
The result was life.

The apocryphal story is told of Jesus going back to heaven and being greeted by the angels. They rejoice and praise Him for His victory over sin and Satan.

And then they begin to ask, "Now what, Lord? Who will carry on the work? Who will bring the Kingdom around the world?" And Jesus explains about a band of common folk -- tax-auditors, fishermen, farmers, and family types -- regular vanilla folk that He has appointed to do the work. The angels talk among themselves.

One, with a worried look, turns to Jesus, and says, "Lord, but what if they fail? What's your 'Plan B'?" And Jesus says, "I have no other plan."

No other plan -- we're it.  
Jesus doesn't need another plan. His power working in us **will** succeed.  
Just as the power of God guaranteed the resurrection of Jesus, so certainly will His power flow through us to accomplish His will.

Hear these bible words of encouragement:

*Therefore, dear fellow believers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord.....  
.....because.....*

***You know that your labour in the Lord is NOT in vain!***

[1 Cor 15:58]

What does that mean for our lives?

*Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt., so that you may know how to answer everyone.* [Col 4:5-6]

Be awake for the little moments that God will create for us -- the moments when we can put in a word here, or a deed of love there -- a moment to be a not-so-secret agent for the saving love of Jesus.

Moments to show and tell people that they **matter** to God!

Show.....

And tell.....

Show: *The way you act toward outsiders.....* [i.e. non-believers]

And tell: *Conversation full of grace.....*

As we surrender our agendas to the Lord in prayer these moments will come. We won't have to manufacture them, or be phoney, or have any big come-on's. No heavy hand. No long memorized speech.

Just being us.

Taking advantage of little openings rather than let them drop.

Wouldn't it be great that God would smile in love and keep presenting us at Calvin CRC with opportunities to represent Him?

Wouldn't that be much better than seeing God, with a sad sigh having to say, "*To achieve my electing purposes in saving the lost I'll have to use another segment of the Church. This arm of my Body on earth is just not responding. It's gone lame.*"

And one thing -- don't get all hung up, agents for Jesus.

Don't get hung up thinking that getting results depends entirely on you. They don't. Any more than getting food to the city depended on the power of the lepers being able to chase away the Aramean army.

Just do the best you can. Be sensitive. Be relevant. Be real.

Begin by being a friend.

Tell your own story; share the importance of the Lord in your life; what Jesus means to you; and then invite people to come with you and check it out.

Jesus will do the rest.

You present the riches of Jesus in a form that people can understand.

The Lord through His Spirit will reach into the heart and work change.

Brothers and sisters in Jesus,

We know it. We've tasted it. We've experienced it. We live it.

Christianity is the greatest way to live.....

and the only way to die.

We'd be off the mark, out of focus, if in our life as a church family we didn't consciously work to share it with others.

Join me in committing to obedience to the Lord.

Let's commit before Jesus to this part in the adventure of Christian living:

***bringing the life changing message of Christ to our neighbors.***