

Text: Mark 6:7-12 (Anderson).

July 8, 2018.

How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who spread good news! Amen.

Did you know it was over 20 years ago that Resurrection began? First it was an idea to reach the growing community of Verona. Then it was an action. A pastor, Doug Tomhave, was called to reach out full-time to Verona as an exploratory church, exploring the area, spreading the good news of Jesus. Then there was more action. Meetings, prayers, outreach, a spot in a strip mall, more prayers, more outreach, more blessing from God. Buying land. Building a facility by the dog park. More blessing. More growth. Then starting a church in Mt. Horeb. Now reaching into Monroe. God has done a lot in twenty years. Most importantly God has spread the news that Jesus lived, Jesus died, Jesus rose. And more and more people in more and more communities are hearing that good news, believing in Jesus and have their hearts and lives changed! Wow! That's just so cool!

Yes, every so often, especially after 20 years, it's good to look back and give thanks. God has blessed us so much! From a few people meeting in a pastor's home. To a spot in a strip mall, to the church by the dog park. To a new church in Mt. Horeb and now, reaching more people in Monroe. And where will the next place be? Fitchburg? Another place we haven't even thought of? From a few to over 400! With the goal to reach 1000! God has given his blessing! Yes, God will continue his blessing as we spread the good news, spread the good news, spread the good news.

Jesus sent his followers out to spread the good news. They were apostles, ones who were sent out with authority. Look at the authority they had! Authority over the evil spirits. Yes, for them that was literal. But this still applies to us! The good news gives you authority to overcome the demon of addiction. The authority to fight against the foe of fornication. The authority to pulverize the power of pornography. Jesus gave his apostles authority. And he keeps on giving that authority today as we spread the good news. It's interesting, when Jesus' apostles came back. They rejoiced and were amazed that even the evil spirits submitted to them. Jesus' reply? "Rejoice that your names are written in heaven." We can rejoice over the same thing. At baptism, God wrote your name in his heavenly book. And God uses you to spread the good news.

Jesus sent out his apostles two by two. We can see this would provide mutual encouragement. God's Word also says, "Every matter must be established by the testimony of at least two witnesses." God still usually works that way today in spreading the good news. Even if you are not a wrestling fan, you can appreciate the term, "Tag team evangelism." It often takes a team to spread the good news. If you have a neighbor to whom you've been spreading the good news, invite another Christian friend to help you. Maybe have your friend over and invite other Christian friends over. Invite pastor over. People are impressed that pastor is actually your friend and not just the guy who scolds you for doing stuff wrong. If your relative is in the hospital, ask if they would mind if pastor visits. He'll be happy to. It's another chance to spread the good news. Your witness and another friend's witness can go a long way. Getting people to meet your pastor, especially a smart and good-looking guy like Pastor Bauer can make a big difference.

Did you notice the trust Jesus required his followers to have? He gave them orders. Not suggestions. Not advice. But orders to take nothing along but a walking stick. And the clothes on their back. Not any food. Not a travelling bag. Not a single penny. Can you imagine going on a trip for only God knows how long and not taking a snack? Or a backpack? Or a suitcase? And having a completely empty wallet? That sure would make moving easier! They couldn't even bring an extra shirt. Really? Can any of us imagine having only one shirt, literally, only the shirt on your back? That's unfathomable! I'd be happy to let all of you come to my house and take some t-shirts from me and free up dresser space. They didn't have that problem. Only one shirt! Now many people wore a cloak over the top, a shirt underneath and carried an extra shirt to help keep warm at night. Many people slept outside when travelling. But Jesus told them not to do that. They were to have complete trust that God would provide. God would provide their food, day by day, even if they only had enough for that day. God would provide the money they needed, if any. God would even provide a place to sleep at night, even if when they woke up in the morning, they didn't know where that place was going to be the next night or who was going to provide it.

Wow! That trust in the Lord brought confidence as they preached. They would see day after day after day after day how the Lord provided. Jesus promised, "Someone will listen. Someone will believe. Someone will take care of your physical needs." People did this in a very visible way. When the apostles preached, those who believed would offer to let them stay in their homes. It was a very visible way to show support for these men and more importantly, for their message. The apostles didn't need to go bouncing around from house to house, looking for somewhere nicer, a place with better food. They were to stay. Be content. That would convey they weren't greedy for money. It would remove one hindrance to spreading the good news.

There's also something in Jesus' words about staying. Keep on staying. Keep on spreading the good news. I know there are people here today who have told me, "Thanks for not giving up on us. Thanks for sticking with us and keeping on coming back to visit us and encourage us." We need to keep on spreading the Good News. We need to keep on keeping on. People will hear. People will listen.

People will believe the Good News.

But not everyone. Jesus is real up front. Very honest. Some people won't give you a friendly welcome. Some people won't listen to what you have to say. How many doors have we knocked on? How many people new to our communities have been visited? How many people have been annoyed by our persistence and even turned off by what we have to say from the Bible? It's not always easy. The day before I wrote this sermon, I sent out several emails to people who had come to church once or twice, but it had been a while. One person replied back in about two minutes. "We are never coming to that church again. You guys bugged us so much you seemed desperate. Leave people alone. If they want to join your church, they'll join. And we really didn't like that we couldn't take communion the first time we came. We think everyone should be able to take communion at any church, anytime." Wow! That hurts. But didn't Jesus say, "Some people won't give you a friendly welcome? Some people won't want to listen to what you have to say?" Maybe it's about communion. Maybe it's about some other teaching of the Bible. But someone, somewhere will not want to listen. Those hurts can keep us from witnessing. That pain can make us pull back from spreading the Good News.

You know what? The Word the original Greek language uses in this part of the Bible for someone who spreads the news is the word, "herald," or, "preacher." The herald was highly regarded. The herald was looked up to. He didn't speak his own message. He brought news from the king. I think today the word preacher is spoken a lot of times with spit. People say, "Spare me the sermon. Don't preach to me." Even the simple act of inviting a friend to church can make our palms sweaty, our hearts race, our tongue tie in knots. "Don't want to be too pushy. Don't want to be too preachy." And the devil laughs as we fail to spread the news, the good news.

So Jesus has a message for us, a message of good news, a message of change. He changed our hearts with his love. Jesus loved us so much he convinced us, "We are sinful." He loved us so much even more he convinced us, "Jesus died for all my sins." There's good news! My sins are forgiven. There's good news! Jesus died on the cross for me! There's good news. The good news we are spreading. The good news we are sharing. The good news that fills our hearts with forgiveness. The good news that changes our minds and changes the way we live.

The Bible has a big, fancy word for Jesus changing our minds and changing the way we live: repent. The one Jesus appointed to prepare the way for Jesus preached it, "Repent!" When Jesus came, he himself preached it, "Repent!" When Jesus sent out his apostles with authority, he told them to preach it, "Repent!" God will change your heart. God will change your mind. God will change your life, the way you live. Notice Jesus didn't preach, "You are fine the way you are. You don't need any change. I affirm and approve of all you do." No way! Jesus said, "I love you like you are. Don't stay that way. My love will change your heart to a heart of love. My love will change your mind and the way you think. My love will change your life and the way you live. You won't be looking for people to approve of every choice you make. You will be looking to me to lovingly point out your sins, lovingly forgive your sins, and lovingly give you the power to live differently than you ever have before, better than you ever have before."

There is power in that good news. Do you know what I was? A sinner headed to hell! Do you know what I am now? A saint headed for heaven! Man, has God blessed the spreading of that good news Jesus lived, Jesus died, Jesus rose. From a small group to start to so many people today. More people hearing. More people believing. It's just so cool to look back and see how God has blessed Resurrection in twenty years. But we aren't done yet. There's probably still a few people in Verona and Monroe who don't know Jesus as their Savior. I've talked to people who live less than two miles from the church by the dog park and don't know about this church by the dog park. And I've met people in Monroe who aren't sure if the church is still open. We will always have more work to do in spreading the good news! And there are certainly more places where we can start more churches, so more precious souls hear the good news, so more lost souls are found by Jesus' love, so more hearts and lives are changed by the best news of all: Jesus lived, Jesus died, Jesus rose! Amen.