

Go Home
Luke 8:26-39 June 20, 2010

Before I start – let me take a poll.

Will everyone who has a perfect family, including extended family, with no problems, no issues, and in total harmony; please stand up.

If you like, you may go get some coffee and come back in about 15 min.

Wow. So Jesus tells the healed demoniac to just stay home.

That means, he doesn't have to travel, no sleeping out on the road, no talking to strangers, doesn't have to leave his family, no risk of bandits;

just go home. Spread the good news at home. This dude gets it easy. Right ?

WRONG.

Jesus really didn't do him any favors.

In fact, I would say that being a disciple of Jesus at home is a whole lot harder than going off to do it.

There's just all sorts of things that make being an evangelist at home a very difficult job.

To start with, if you stay at home it's really hard to be a new person.

It's like when you go off to college you can sort of remake yourself.

It's a lot easier to really repent, change your ways, and leave behind old habits if you leave home.

Of course, at college you may accumulate other things for which you need to repent.

The point is, it's easier to change who you are.

But staying at home there's a lot of pressure or momentum just to stay the way you are.

At home there's no anonymity.

On the road nobody knows who you are or more important, who you were.

You're not that old demoniac that use to run around naked and doing insane things the graveyard.

But at home it's always, "Hey, aren't you that crazy demoniac."

At home you've got a reputation and nobody gives what you say any authority.
It's like the old saying that a prophet is not honored in his own home.

Because everyone knows you as "the guy formally known as the demoniac," nobody believes what you have to say.

On the road you're somebody; but at home you're just one of the homies, and what you have to say doesn't carry any more weight than what anybody else has to say.

Then there's the issue that there's a lot more at risk at home.

After all, on the road if you get into big disagreement over religious issues and inadvertently offend someone, or hurt someone's feelings by telling them that their lifestyle is not what God is looking for; well, not much is lost.

But if it happens at home, then you risk alienating family members and maybe even get shunned.

You risk tearing the family apart.

And it's a lot more personal at home.
If your family is like most, there are already some

issues of pain, sickness, dysfunction, stress and old family skeletons that make it really hard to be much of an evangelist at home.

This is why PKs, pastor's kids, often end up a little messed up.

Mine are perfect, of course.

But often, they have the pressures and dysfunction of every other family going on, but there's also all kinds of expectations put on them;

and at the same time, they are the ones that really don't have a Pastor.

It's almost impossible for a pastor to be a pastor to their own family.

As a pastor you're often encouraging people to live a life that you yourself have not really perfected.

So most pastoral families never really have a pastor and the one they see all the time is usually no angel.

Making it all very confusing.

So, I trust you're seeing the problem, that it's really hard to evangelize, share the good news, at home.

But at the same time, it's probably the most important place there is for folks to be evangelists.

There are lots of obstacles; but it's not impossible.

How do we evangelize at home?

How do we spread the good news of God's love to those who see us in some of our more 'unsacred' times?

Let me point out as we get to this that if the Gospel of Mark is accurate, then even Jesus had a hard time with this one.

There was that thing about a prophet not being honored in his own home; but it was even worse than that.

The religious leaders in his home town thought he had been possessed by a demon.

It seems that, according to Mark, Jesus family was not very impressed with him either.

They just thought he was crazy.

In their eyes he was just one step away from joining that demoniac in the graveyard.

It was so bad that Jesus even disowned his family, saying,
"Who are my mother and my brothers?"
And looking at those who sat around him, he said,
"Here are my mother and my brothers!
Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister
and mother."

Yup! Even Jesus seems to have had a hard time with this one.

But have no fear. Just because the Son of God, prophet, teacher, miracle worker, couldn't do it – that is no reason to despair. There's still hope. Really!

So what can we do?

What's a stay at home evangelist supposed to do?

**To start with – live out the saying,
"Charity begins at home."**

This is not a shortsighted injunction that mission dollars should stay close to home; it doesn't even necessarily have anything to do with money.

This is a wise recognition that the way to teach love is to be loving; and that starts at home.

I actually think this is something we may be getting better at and largely because the expectations of fatherhood have largely changed.

Back in the fifties, as I remember them, a father was rarely home and when they were home their role was to be the strict enforcer who put the fear of God into you.

A father's role was to be the authority; an authority that didn't use many carrots.

The father came home and took over. He, the Lord of the Manor, was the absolute authority, who for the two or three hours a day you saw him demanded respect and obedience.

There was no negotiating.

Any attempt at negotiation was seen as treasonous sedition and quickly punished.

That's the way it was in our house and it's the way I saw it in all the houses of my friends.

Now some may yearn for the day's of yore, but I really think we have improved our parenting skills and in the process our evangelization skills.

We have learned that violence breeds violence.

We have learned that if you want to teach respect, you don't do it by disrespecting a child.

The way you teach a child to listen, is to listen to them.

We have learned that the way to teach love, compassion, mercy, and respect is to model those actions.

Fathers have become more a part of the family, not just dropping in for a few hours of paternalistic domination.

This is not to say that my father, or the father's of the fifties and prior didn't love their kids.

I think they loved and cared for them very deeply, but they were simply doing things they way they had been taught to do them.

They were doing things the way their father's did things.

They were doing things the way every other father expected them to do it.

What changed things was the advancement of a relatively new science called "Child Psychology."

How many of you remember good ol' Dr. Spock.
Sorry, not the one on Star Trek.
Now, how many of you remember Dr. Spock?
Rather, Dr. Benjamin Spock.
As the great authority Wikipedia tells us,
“Spock was the first pediatrician to study
psychoanalysis to try to understand children's needs
and family dynamics.”

His ideas about childcare changed parenting,
encouraging parents to become more flexible and
affectionate with their children, and to respectfully
treat them as individuals,
whereas the previous conventional wisdom had been
that child rearing should focus on building discipline.

It was the beginning of scientific testing to see what
actually worked and what behaviors delivered what
results.

**I really believe that this change in parenting has
also brought a change in our understanding of
God.**

Parenting no longer works to put the fear of God into
a child, but it now does a much better job of putting
the love of God into a child.

Parenting has become the primary instrument of
evangelism.

It has become the primary way in which we teach the good news of God's love.

And just as Jesus did it, we have learned that the best way to teach God's love is to model God's love.

The old theory was that a child should be seen and not heard.

But, Jesus said, "let the children come unto me, for to such belongs the kingdom of God."

We want to build the Realm of God – the place we start is with the children.
And the way we do it is by modeling the Realm of God in our own families and households.

I think that the movement of baby boomers away from the church was not because they were the first generation to be exposed to Dr. Spock and notions that the fear of God should not be forced upon a child.

Rather, I think many of them moved away from the church because they were the first ones to see that learning the fear of God was the wrong lesson.

The new theories in child rearing gave them permission to reject a God who demanded to be feared.

And as a result many rejected God all together.

But as time has passed I think that many of the children and grand children of those baby boomers are learning a new lesson and seeing a new God.

It is no longer the fear of God that is being taught, but rather the love of God.

And without being too delusional, I think we may start to see a resurgence of faith in America.

But it will be a God of love that will lure them in and not a God of fear that demands their obedience.

This is the new evangelism, that is being done in the home.

Let the children come unto me, for in them we will build the Realm of God.

Go home --

and build God's Realm.

AMEN.