

Take Aaron  
Valley Center Seventh-day Adventist Church  
May 16, 2009

*\*This Sermon is available in audio format on our Audio Sermons web page*

Last week one of our members related this personal experience as the children's story. With his permission, I share it with you. While serving as a student missionary among the islands of Ponapei, Micronesia, Craig Adams went with one of the islanders to do some fishing. This gentleman had the luxury of owning a boat with a small motor on it, the only one on that island. For his boat, there was no need for paddles or a sail.

After achieving some success in catching fish, they decided to head back to the island, but the motor wouldn't start. Try as they might, they were unable to get it to work, and by now it was getting later in the day and the boat was drifting away from land. It was with some anxiety that Craig realized the seriousness of their predicament. They were in a boat with no paddles and no sail. They prayed and asked God to help them. As the sun began to sink lower, they were encouraged to see another boat in the distance. The islander wanted to stand in their boat and wave his arms to try to attract the attention of those in the distant boat, but Craig cautioned him that to stand up in their small craft would be dangerous and might cause it to capsize.

Nevertheless, they were delighted to see the other boat turn its sail toward their position. When they got close enough, they threw a line to them and towed them back to the island. Once back on land, Craig asked him how it was that they were able to see them. The rescuer explained that it was easy. A tall man dressed in white was standing in Craig's boat waving his arms. No one will ever be able to convince Craig that his guardian angel hadn't saved him that day! God is involved in our lives, especially when we're doing His work! He wants to be involved in our lives in the same way, as we work for Him today.

Last week we gave thanks to the Lord for our mothers, noting a few of the mothers mentioned in Scripture, among whom was Eunice, the mother of Timothy. During this last week, I was thinking of her name. Can you figure out what it means? "Eu" is "good," as in "eulogy," "good words," or "Eugene," "good beginning, or birth." The last part of her name would be more recognizable to you if you knew that the "c" was originally pronounced as a hard "c," and not like an "s." So, if you took the "c" and replaced it with a "k," what would you have? You'd have "nike,"

wouldn't you, a word that we see almost every day. Her name back then was pronounced "Evnike."

In ancient times, Nike stood for victory, and appeared in names like Bernice ("bringer of victory) and Nicholas ("victorious people"). "Eunice" means "good victory." Think of it this way: Eunice was a Christian mother, raising her son Timothy to be a pastor and missionary, one who "honored God" (that's what "Timothy" means). In this, she accomplished a wonderful thing for the Lord; she won a "good victory." Every Christian mother, raising her children to "honor God" is "Eunice" in God's sight.

She stands for the advancement of missionary work done in the home. Today we give thought to mission work outside the home. Each one of us is called to be a missionary, an ambassador for Christ. "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us; we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God." II Corinthians 5:19, 20. What a beautiful text that is!

The Lord has blessed our church with a unique, special message; "His truth for our times." It is a message that is to encircle the globe. It is a message which is calculated to prepare people to be ready for Jesus' coming. It is a simple message. It can be understood by anyone. It is not complicated. It is straight from the Bible.

It is formed with a special strategy to counteract the deceptions of the enemy of God who began the rebellion in heaven and carried it to this planet. It is based on Revelation 14:6, 7. "Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of Heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth--to every nation, tribe, tongue and people--saying with a loud voice, 'Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him Who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water.'"

Notice the simplicity and clarity of this pronouncement. In these few words are contained the marching orders for our church. Its power and authority are represented by an angel flying in heaven, preaching the everlasting Gospel. The Gospel is God's great Good News of salvation, accomplished by the victory of Christ on the cross. "Doesn't everyone understand the Gospel?" you ask. Unfortunately, many emphasize Christ's mercy freely offered to forgive our sins, but overlook His grace to change us and make us new. Both are vital components of the Gospel. Jesus came to save us from sin, not in sin. Matthew 1:21. This is

Good News! Christ has the power (I don't have it of myself) to overcome sin in my life if I will let Him. Praise God! This is not difficult to understand, but it requires that I surrender to Him completely.

Then the angel says with a loud voice, "Fear God and give glory to Him because the hour of His judgment has come." Accountability has always been a part of God's system because He is a wise Administrator, wishing to forever lay to rest the charges advanced by Satan. Throughout the Bible He has represented Himself as investigating a matter before taking action. This is not because He, as the All-knowing God needs to, but to inspire us with confidence that His justice comes from a position of knowledge. He goes beyond what is necessary; He is the God of the "second mile."

Thus it was in the Garden of Eden, when God came looking for Adam and Eve and inquired of them before pronouncing judgment for their sin. Thus it was at the flood when He looked and saw that man's wickedness had passed the bounds of tolerance. Thus it was when God said concerning Sodom, "I will go and see if it is as wicked as the cry that has come up to Me." Thus it was when a bloodless hand wrote on Belshazzar's palace wall, "You have been weighed and found wanting." It is not difficult to understand that God will likewise conduct an investigation before He comes back with His reward! And to know that this process has already begun speaks to the nearness of His coming.

The angel continued, "Worship Him Who made heaven and earth." This is a clear invitation to worship God as the Creator. This is an invitation to return to the memorial that He established at the beginning as a reminder of His creativity, the Sabbath. So important was this that He inscribed it into the heart of His holy law, proclaimed with glory and honor from Sinai. No, we're not saved by our keeping of the law, but our obedience is our expression of loyalty to Him. When we allow Him to write in our hearts the principles of His law, the New Covenant is fulfilled in us. This is not difficult to understand! But an enemy has been hard at work to bring confusion and distortion to the plain teachings of God's Word.

The mission of our Church is to declare what this angel preached in Revelation 14. It's to fulfill the commission of Jesus when He said, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe (some of the things? No. Nine of the Commandments? No) all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Matthew 28;19, 20. It's not a difficult message to understand, but it is different than what other Christian churches are

teaching. God wants these truths to be shared with the world, and is depending on us to share in this ministry.

What if I meet someone who apparently loves the Lord but doesn't know these things? Should I say nothing to them and presume that they are "just fine" where they are, and not "disturb" them with new things that might unsettle them? If I took that attitude, I would not be fulfilling the commission of Christ. That's not what I read in this Book. I'm not talking about sharing in an un-Christlike way. Truth needs to be shared in love and courtesy, but it needs to be shared! The angel in Revelation 14 cried "with a loud voice." We should appreciate the fact that truth is good news! I have no authority to withhold God's truth from His children. What gives me the right to decide that someone shouldn't hear what God wants the world told today? I am not called to judge or condemn, but I am called to share.

The Holy Spirit is waiting to use human beings as agencies in this work of sharing. God could have sent an angel to the Ethiopian treasurer; He didn't. He sent Phillip. God could have given the Gospel message to Cornelius through an angel. He didn't. He sent Peter. God wants to send you. He wants to use you as His Ambassador.

I heard somewhere that a young lady who had won a state beauty pageant was given certain guidelines during her tenure. She was told that when she was in her house she could basically wear and do whatever she wanted. But when she stepped out the front door, she was to consider herself a representative of the state. In a sense, when she was out in the public, she belonged to the state. The way she dressed and how she conducted herself, for the year of her reign, was to conform to the guidelines given her.

You and I are representatives of Christ. We are His ambassadors. We need to look and act the role. In our appearance, demeanor and even facial expression and tone of voice, we are influencing others for or against Jesus. Let me share something with you: living for and sharing Jesus is the purpose of living. It's why you and I exist. When we come to "that day" we will see clearly the purpose of our lives. We will wish that our eye had been single to this purpose our entire lives.

With that in mind, we need to see each person we meet as one for whom Christ died and one to whom we might share the message of truth for our days. Oh, that God would educate me to improve the opportunities for witnessing for Him! So many times the Lord arranged a meeting between "Phillip" (me) and the

“treasurer,” (someone He put in contact with me to learn about Him), but “Phillip” kept his eyes on other things and didn’t see the opportunity to share Jesus!

What if I don’t feel competent to talk for Him? Take Aaron. I take Aaron wherever I go. Aaron’s in the car right now. In fact, he’s in both cars. Aaron is put in mail that I send out. “You’re confusing me!” you say. Alright, I’ll explain.

Go back to the story of the Exodus. Moses was asked by God to go to Egypt and deliver Israel from bondage. But it had been 40 years since Moses had been in Egypt, and he felt that his language skills were deficient. He said, “Oh my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither before nor since You have spoken to Your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue.” Exodus 4:10. What did the Lord do? He said, “Is not Aaron the Levite your brother? I know that he can speak well. And look, he is also coming out to meet you.” Exodus 4:14. So Moses took Aaron on his journey to Egypt to speak for him in the ministry of salvation.

This story has meaning for you and me. Who is “Aaron” for you and me? “Aaron” can be any literature that is packed with the truths for this time. Do you have “Aaron” handy with you? Is he in your car? As a matter of fact, “Aaron” is good to bring and share wherever you go, even if you are skilled in relating the Gospel. Why is that? Because by putting a book or piece of literature in someone’s hand, you have given them something to refer to after your conversation.

Pray that each day God will put you in touch with someone with whom you can share Jesus. He will! He will train your eyes and ears to see opportunities to share. Not every occasion will result in “success” as you might judge success, but as someone said, “We are not called to be successful, we are called to be faithful.” President John Adams said, “Duty is ours; results are His.”

I pulled into a gas station a couple of days ago and noticed the license plate of the car in the opposite bay. It had the shape of a heart and then the word “books.” The Lord put it into my mind that that could be a springboard that could lead to a conversation on spiritual matters. So as we stood there pumping gas, I said to the gentleman, “I see that you love books.” “Oh yes,” he replied, although he confessed this was actually his mother’s car. What should I say then? “What kind of books do you like to read?” He responded that he liked a variety of books, including mysteries and thrillers. “Do you ever read religious literature?” This would be the transition point of our conversation. “Aaron” was waiting in the car, ready to come out. “No,” he said emphatically, “never.” I politely explained that I was a Christian pastor and would like to share some reading material, but he

declined. The entire conversation didn't last more than a minute. We finished pumping our gas and parted with a friendly, "Have a nice day." I pray that the Holy Spirit will speak to this young man's heart and point him toward a better way.

I was visiting someone in the hospital a few days ago, and when I went into the room there was a lady whom I presumed to be the nurse. I introduced myself as being a pastor and she told me a bit about herself. She was not a nurse, but a private care-giver retained by the family for the benefit of the patient. She told me she was a Catholic, and by strange coincidence we used to live within blocks of the church to which she belongs. By further coincidence, my wife and I attended a memorial for one of her teaching colleagues at that very church earlier this year.

She asked me of what church I was a pastor, and I said, "I'm a Seventh-day Adventist pastor." Those are the questions I pray for! Those questions are doors waiting to be opened. "Do you know anything about our church?" "Oh yes," she said. She had many friends who are Seventh-day Adventists, who had spoken to her on Bible themes. After we talked for a while, we prayed together for the patient, and then I left the room and went to the car. Aaron was waiting. I went back up to the room and brought her a copy of *The Desire Of Ages* and encouraged her to read it. I told her, "Outside of the Bible, this is the best book on the life of Jesus you will ever read." I shared with her that the Bible says that God loves us very much and paid for our sins on the cross, and that I believed that Jesus was coming soon and we must be ready to meet Him. What a privilege it is to share Christ with others! Simple language given with a sincere heart and a direct eye is the best.

Monday of this last week I took my brother-in-law to the doctor. It turned out that there was someone I wanted to visit in a facility near by, which I did, but anticipating that I might have some time waiting, I brought my Bible and a clipboard to work on this sermon. Here's what I've learned. You don't have to stand on a street corner and wear a "sandwich board" to preach. Sitting quietly in that doctor's waiting room with your Bible open will be as if you were behind a pulpit ten feet tall. In a doctor's office, in the airport waiting area; any place where you will have a few moments of time can be used to witness "silently" by reading your Bible. There's nothing really in the magazines they put out on the tables in those places, is there?

When I returned from my visit after about 25 minutes and entered the waiting room of the doctor, there was my brother-in-law. "Oh, that was quick!" I said. "No,

I haven't been called in yet," he informed me. That's alright. I had my brief case and found a chair next to a corner table so that I could spread a few things out, opened my Bible to II Corinthians 5 and began jotting notes down as the Lord impressed my mind with ideas. Not a word did I speak to anyone in that waiting room. Some people were talking, presumably with relatives. A young man wearing a uniform of some type was responding to questions asked by an elderly lady and talking on his blue-tooth phone to try to help her. Our eyes didn't meet.

When my brother-in-law was finished with his appointment, I put my things back into the brief case and we left, as it happened, at the same time this young man was leaving. It became obvious that he was a driver for a municipal vehicle used to give transportation assistance to people with medical needs. As I was turning the key in the door of my car I heard a voice call out, "What church do you belong to?" I walked over to his vehicle, smiled and said, "I'm a Seventh-day Adventist." "What's that?" he asked.

In about 30 seconds I replied that we believe in the Bible as the Word of God, in Jesus as our Savior Who died for our sins on the cross and is coming back soon, that the Ten Commandment are God's rules for Christian living, and that in accordance with what we find there, we worship on the seventh-day as God's holy Sabbath. Is there anything there that's hard to understand or complicated? You don't have to have a degree from a seminary to share the simple truths of God's Word with anyone. You could say something similar to that if someone asked you, couldn't you? Witnessing for Jesus doesn't require high intellect; it requires a willing heart. It's based on love for God and compassion for souls. It's not wrong, by the way, to visualize someone coming up to you on "that day" and thanking you for sharing Jesus with them.

I asked him if we could pray and he said yes, and so right there in the parking lot of the doctor's office I offered a short prayer asking God to bless and guide us in our journey of life. He told me that he was looking for a church, and so I invited him to come to one of ours. Then I went and got Aaron. I gave him a copy of The Great Controversy. I pray for that young man, and believe that the crossing of our paths was not coincidental. What if my brother-in-law's appointment had been over quicker?

Not long ago I needed the oil in one of my cars changed. Normally I'd do it myself, but because the oil filter is in such a difficult place to reach, I've resigned myself to go to one of those oil-change places and have it done. Of course, that means waiting in a waiting room while the work is done. With my Bible and

clipboard, I made use of the time working on that week's sermon. By the way, you don't have to be a preacher; you could be studying your Sabbath School lesson, or just reading the Word. One time I was waiting for tires to be put on my car in the waiting room, just reading the Bible. An employee was washing the windows of the establishment behind me. Later he came by and whispered, "Great book, I Samuel."

Waiting for the oil to be changed, I could overhear the conversation among the others who were waiting, and something came up that caught my ear. (The Holy Spirit trains us to see the doors of opportunity.) Even though this facility was in Escondido, the topic being discussed was the heavy increase of traffic in Valley Center (about 8 miles from Escondido). That provided an opportunity and I felt impressed to join in. Laying my pen aside for a moment I said, "I know something about the traffic in Valley Center. I'm a pastor there." I have found in most cases that leaving the door of curiosity open invites a follow-up question. "Are you a pastor at the Community Church there on Valley Center Road?" asked the gentleman sitting next to me. "No, my church is on Fruitvale Road." "Oh," he said, "Seventh-day Adventist." Most interesting, because we're not the only church on that road, and we're not the largest by any means. And Fruitvale Road is not one of the main thoroughfares of Valley Center.

He told me a bit of his story. He had been raised as a Seventh-day Adventist in Keene Texas, but had left the Church many decades ago. But he was still convicted about the Sabbath. He knew deep in his heart that it was God's appointed day of rest. We conversed and before I left I asked for his phone number. I looked up his name in the phone book and found his address and determined to visit him at his home, which by God's grace I was able to do. Because the approach to his driveway was guarded by a mechanical gate, I called him on the phone, telling him who I was and that I was at his gate at that very moment. Riding a tired-looking golf cart, he came down the drive and we had a chance to converse and pray together. I left Aaron with him, in this case a study the Lord had led me to write called "Should Christians Keep The Sabbath?" (available on our website) and encouraged him in the Lord.

The Lord has someone He wants you to share with. Pray each day to see these divine appointments in the making. One of our members was having a tire repaired and the conversation turned to the sad shape of our present world and the coming of the Lord. It's not difficult to see how this could be a topic of conversation today! The owner of the tire store expressed an interest in learning more about the Bible Sabbath and its place in last day affairs. "Aaron" paid him a visit.

Keep your sharing simple and uncomplicated. Never argue or dispute. Let the love of Jesus predominate. Share what you know to be true in your heart. Be ready to give an answer to anyone who asks of your faith and have “Aaron” ready at all times. Whatever you share in book form, make sure that you have read it yourself. I discovered that by reading a chapter a night before going to sleep, I could read *The Great Controversy* in a month and a half. It has 42 chapters. By re-reading it myself, I’m encouraged to look for opportunities to give it to someone else.

Israel was placed by God strategically at the “crossroads of the world.” Israel was located where “east met west,” along the trade routes from Egypt to Mesopotamia. There’s a reason that part of the world is called the “middle east.” God put His people there so that as the traveling caravans passed by, opportunities to share the truth about God would arise. Unfortunately, Israel concentrated on the opportunities of commerce and acquiring wealth instead of the opportunities for witnessing. God has placed you where you are for a reason. He wants to put you in touch with someone this week with whom you can share Jesus. If the Lord Jesus appeared before you and asked, “My son, my daughter, would you be willing to do something for me today?” what would your answer be? Are you going on a vacation trip this summer? Pray that God will make it a ministry. Pray that God will give you the right words to say. And take Aaron.