

“Evidence of Encounter”

Introduction

- Continuing series, “Unleashed”

Tension: Focusing on the Conversion story of Saul, when Saul, who had been persecuting the Church/the Way, encounters the Lord in a BIG way on the Road to Damascus. Saul’s heart is dramatically changed. What happened to Saul on the INSIDE is greatly evident on the OUTSIDE - his actions change, as well. In what ways should a heart changed by Christ impact one’s actions? How did Paul’s actions change?

Acts 9:1-9

Acts 9:10-19

- Ananias
 - Not the Ananias from chapter 5, who lied to Peter and the Holy Spirit
 - Disciple in Damascus
 - Paul later in his speech to the tribune in Acts 22 calls him a “devout man according to the law and well spoken of by all the Jews living there”
 - May have been one of the “70” sent out in Luke 10, according to church tradition
- Vision
 - The Lord desires to talk to his children
 - Disciples seek the Lord
 - Ananias answer “Here I am”
 - Samuel
- Call
 - Lord lays it out
 - Go to street called Straight, Saul, lay hands on him
 - **Matthew 7:13-14 (NRSV)**
13 “Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the road is easy that leads to destruction, and there are many who take it. 14 For the gate is narrow and the road is hard that leads to life, and there are few who find it.
 - Called have objections
 - Lord, I have heard about this man, evil done to saints in Jerusalem and is here on authority of the chief priests to do the same here
 - Lord reissues the call and the why
 - GO, he chosen instrument
 - Called obeys
- Ananias doesn’t let fear, or Saul’s past reputation prevent him from following the Holy Spirit and giving Saul the benefit of the doubt
 - Don’t hold past sins against others
 - Quick to forgive
 - Allow the Holy Spirit to guide opinion about others
 - Let their current fruit speak for itself, not their past fruit
 - Judge not, lest you be judged
- Saul
 - Praying
 - Seen a vision, same as Ananias and in it saw a man named Ananias laying hands on him to restore his sight
- Sent that you might regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit
- Scales falling off eyes
 - Can now truly see
 - **John 9:25 (NRSV)**
25 He answered, “I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.”
 - Changed
 - **2 Corinthians 5:17 (NRSV)**
17 So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!

- Shazam
- Baptized
 - Next step
 - Holy Spirit
- Disciples in Damascus
 - Not alone, Ananais or Saul/Paul

At this point in the Scripture, we begin to see the Evidence of Paul's Encounter with the Lord, and there are some big changes:

Acts 9:20-22

- Biggest change - In 3 days time, Paul goes from persecution 'the Way' to perpetuating 'the Way';
 - It's gotta be the Lord!; Encounter led to a greater love of God and a passionate pursuit of the things of God
- Saul is now THE Jesus spokesperson; a herald for the Gospel
- 'Herald' - one who proclaims openly and with authority so that all may hear (a reluctant, bashful, timid herald would be fired)

"Would you get fired if you were hired as a 'herald' for Jesus? How are you heralding the truth about Jesus in your own life and personal mission field?" As awesome as Jesus is, and the change of heart he has made possible for us, why are we timid when it comes to sharing the name Jesus?

Acts 9:23-25

- When read this, I wondered aloud, "Is that pretty much the only play that the Jewish leaders have

Acts 9:26-29 Again with the killing...

- Notice also, because of the Evidence manifest in Saul's life, here Barnabas, undoubtedly through the provoking of the Holy Spirit, gives Paul the benefit of the doubt and has Saul's back
- When there is evidence in our lives, other believers who have encountered Jesus will have our back

Acts 9:30-31

- Through these verses, we see Saul begin to align himself with other people who are perpetuating the Good News of Jesus; this is more evidence of the encounter
 - Sometimes, when Jesus changes your heart, there's a need to change peer groups
 - Are you surrounding yourself with other believers who are living for God?
 - Are there people in your life that are toxic and only comfortable with you and be around you if you are living in ways that make them feel good about their own
 - College
 - At this point in my life, I only surround myself with people who are supportive of that end and who are also trying to live for God;
 - If you're in middle school, high school or college- Friend group
 - If you're an adult in need of Christian friendship and accountability, bring that to the Lord - I had a season about 5 years ago

John Wesley often used the phrase, "holiness of heart and life," which spoke to the fact that when God's grace renews the heart inwardly, then the believer is transformed by living out a practical Christian life in the world. [What happens internally becomes evident externally] Wesley believed that there is a real difference between the "almost Christian" and the "altogether Christian." When we truly encounter Jesus our faith in Jesus and love for Jesus can't help but be worked out in our day-to-day lives. Would the evidence of our lives lead others to know we have encountered Jesus?

Because our encounters with Christ, we are to be different than the world around us.

- Armoured Car story on I-285 [see below]
 - Less than \$10,000 has been given back...we should be different; if all church folks who got the money, should have all \$175,000 back within days...
 - There should be external evidence of what has happened on the inside through Jesus
 - How we handle money; How we treat people; How we spend our time, what we allow to enter our brain through our eyes, and more...

If you are looking at your life and realizing there is not enough evidence in your life for a jury to convict you of being an "Altogether Christian", pray for a new Encounter..

- Story of Pascal praying, "Lord, I want a Damascus road encounter", and the Lord met him in that plea; God will meet you in that request - keep knocking on the door...