

Tell it Boldly

“I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, so that your faith might not rest on men’s wisdom, but on God’s power.” (1 Corinthians 2:3-5)

I did not know her as an outspoken person. She and I had never had cross words with each other. Physically she was not an imposing woman, actually rather thin and frail in stature for the ten years I knew her. Why then did she intimidate me so? Those who know me would say that I am not one that lacks in boldness in expressing my opinion or views. Yet in this relationship, I felt inhibited, even timid. I understood this at first as early jitters. But as the years went by and she became my mother-in-law, I thought that time would help me to relax and grow a little more confident. It never happened.

Maybe a lot of sons-in-law can tell the same story. There are, after all, more mother-in-law jokes than one can remember. But beyond what appears to be humorous in this, there was within me a growing burden. With every visit, that burden only intensified. The more I got to know Margaret, the less I was certain where she stood with Jesus. Was she a believer? This became the burning question—a question that I was too timid to ask. It remained this way for years. Until the phone call. The message: “Margaret has lung cancer. It is not good. Time is short.”

We packed up the kids and drove back home to visit with her and the family. We were at home for a few days. On the final day, I remember waking up that morning. As I lay in bed, I offered this prayer: “Jesus, forgive me for being timid. Forgive me for saying nothing all of these years. Give me one

chance this day and I will not blow it. I will give witness to you.”

The day went its course as I looked for that opportunity. Nothing seemed to present itself. Margaret was now in the hospital. As we went in to say our goodbyes, I was still looking for a moment alone with her. Amazing, isn’t it? I have shared the Gospel before hundreds, and yet in this moment I needed it to be with no one else around. Her hospital room was packed with family. Kids running around and everyone gathered around the bed. “It isn’t going to happen,” I thought to myself. Then one by one they all began to leave. So weird as I look back on it now. None of them knew of what I had prayed. None of them knew my burden of the last 10 years. One by one they left, until it was Margaret and me and Jesus.

I am not exactly sure how I began or even what I said. My words did not exactly flow out of my mouth. Stumble would be a better word. As I try to recall what I said, it went something like this: “Margaret, I uhmmmm. . . believe that Jesus. . . uhmmmm. . . is my Savior. Uhmmmm. I believe that we are all sinners and unable to save ourselves by what we do or don’t do. Uhmmmm. . . I believe that He died on the cross so that you and I might be forgiven.” Then there was silence. What followed was as sweet as I could have imagined. Almost as if taking pity on me, she took hold of my hand. That was the first time that I can remember our two hands joined

together in ten years. She looked at me and said, "I believe that too!"

Phewwww! I let out one eternal gasp of air that I had been holding for ten years. "I believe that too!" Those four words snatch life out of death. Those four words breathe hope. Those four words are lifegiving. They still ring the sound of joy as I write them now.

After that, I remember praying with Margaret and then we said our goodbyes. That was the last time we would speak, that is until I see her again before the Lamb on His Throne.

Looking at this event as I describe it, it doesn't appear to be a strong example for "Telling it Boldly." Yet, I see it as one of my boldest moments in witnessing. A boldness not rooted in me or even in my efforts, but a boldness rooted in Christ. I believed that should the opportunity present itself, He would give me the words and He would use those words in Margaret's life. Just as important, I believed in the very words that I stumbled to share with her. My presentation was weak, but the Spirit was not.

Remember the story of the Sunday School teacher who witnessed to a Boston shoe clerk, Dwight L. Moody? Listen further to an account of that witness:

"Kimball found Moody working in the stockroom, wrapping and shelving shoes. Kimball said he spoke with 'limping words.' He later said, 'I never remember just what I did say: something about Christ and His love; that was all.' He admitted it was a 'weak appeal.'" (p. 70).

The fire that was kindled in the heart of D.L. Moody by a modest Sunday School teacher would kindle a fire of love and hope in the hearts of thousands.

When I consider the bold acts and witnesses of the early Church, I do not see eloquent men and women. Paul admitted as much:

"When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power" (1 Corinthians 2:1-5).

I felt with Margaret what Paul felt with the Corinthians. Have you experienced that too? Boldness in those moments is not defined by what we say. It is the willingness to be God's vessels, trusting that His Spirit will reveal itself. This is exactly what Jesus asked the disciples to have confidence in. As He was preparing to leave them, they were terrified. In response He said,

"Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit" (Mark 13:11).

We may stumble over the words, but the power of God will not. Tell it boldly. Bold in the power of God. Who in your life have you been burdened over as to where they stand with Jesus? Tell it boldly! Not bold with words necessarily, but bold in the confidence that the Spirit will give you the words to say and will then work with those words long after you have finished. Tell it boldly in the confidence that what you are sharing with them is lifegiving, breathing with hope.

My prayer is that you will hear in response, "I believe that too."

Prayer: “I believe that too.” How precious those words are, O Lord, when they come from the lips of one we care for and we share together a common love for you. Help me to be bold in my witness for you—bold not so much in the words I use, because you know

how I can so easily stumble over them, but bold in stepping forward to give testimony as to my love for you, and bold in my conviction that you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. **Amen.**

Challenge: Is there someone in your life with whom you have hesitated, for whatever reason, to share the Good News of Jesus? Pray for them and ask God to give you the discernment as to what He wants you to do.

Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 2

From the Book of Concord: “We ask here at the outset that all this may be realized in us and that his name may be praised through God’s holy Word and Christian living. This we ask, both in order that we who have accepted it may remain faithful and grow daily in it and also in order that it may find approval and gain followers among other people and advance with power throughout the world. In this way many, led by the Holy Spirit, may come into the kingdom of grace and become partakers of redemption, so that we may all remain together eternally in this kingdom that has now begun” (The Large Catechism, The Second Petition of The Lord’s Prayer, p. 447.52).