

Sermon for Sunday, May 6, 1973 by Andrew A. Jumper, D.D., Pastor
Central Presbyterian Church, St. Louis, Missouri

"HOW TO HELP A PERSON FIND CHRIST"

Romans 1:8-17

Text: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the dynamite of God, it is the power of God for salvation to every one who has faith..." Romans 1:16

You should have received in your bulletin this morning a card headed, "Operation Andrew." This card has been placed there as a part of the preparation of our church and our community for the Billy Graham Crusade that will be here this coming November. For a community to be spiritually prepared for the Crusade demands a great deal of preparation. It involves a great deal of logistics, planning and so on but it also includes a good deal of spiritual preparation. As you and I and other Christians throughout the city begin to prepare for this meeting, God's spirit through our efforts begins to work throughout our area and people's hearts are being prepared already for what God will do in St. Louis this fall. I want you to covenant with me right now that together we're going to be praying that God is going to pour our His Spirit on St. Louis--on this city--on this whole metropolitan area--and he is going to use the Crusade to bless our city. Not the least of the preparations is what it does for us as we begin to involve ourselves in the spiritual preparation. So, let's not only pray for a revival in the city--an outpouring of God's Spirit--but let's be praying together that God is going to bless this congregation as we participate, as we are a part of this great Crusade. Let's be praying that God is going to pour out the Holy Spirit on us. That he is going to bless us as a congregation and make us more useful in his kingdom.

The function of the "Operation Andrew" card is to begin praying actively for people we know and are concerned about who are not Christians or whose commitment to Jesus is at best minimal. On one side of the card is a description of the program including at the bottom five steps for you to follow in using the card effectively. Now on the other side is a space for you to write in the names of ten people who you know who are not committed to Jesus and at the bottom is a little pledge for you to date and sign and it's a covenant between you and God that you are going to be praying and working according to these steps on the other side--that you are going to be praying and working to help lead these people to Jesus Christ. The ten most wanted men for God is, of course, taken from the F.B.I. idea where many years ago they began to publicize the ten most wanted criminals thinking that if they got out information about these persons that many of them would be seen by the public and reported and captured. This has been true across the years that many of the ten most wanted criminals have been captured. Now here are ten of God's most wanted persons for you and you are to be praying for them and by the power of the Holy Spirit they are going to be captured for Jesus Christ. You may not be able to think of ten people this morning that you will want to put on that list but don't worry about that. I feel sure that God is going to lead your heart to recognize people that he wants you to include and that he wants you to be concerned about. Keep the card handy and God will make these people known to you. I intend to keep my card in my shirt pocket. Actually, I have done this for many years with a little 4 x 5 index card but I am going to use this one now and every morning when I dress I'll be putting this there and that will remind me of those persons and during the day as that card is brought to my attention I will be praying for the people whose names I put on there. Now you do the same thing. Keep it handy--keep it in some convenient place where every day you will see that card and be reminded to pray for the people that God lays on your heart. I hope every person here--I hope every person in Central--will take an active part in this program. It may be the most significant thing this church does this entire year. Now we give a lot of money to benevolences. That may not be nearly as significant as the fact that you and I are

beginning to pray actively day by day for people who do not have a personal relationship to Jesus Christ.

Throughout my ministry I have had people say, "I think religion is a personal thing and I don't believe in talking about a private thing to another person. Malarky! That is simply not the case. You will talk to them about politics, you will talk to them about your ball club and try to convert them to any other things you are interested in. What makes Jesus any different. He is alot more important than those other things that you try to convince people about. Or people say, "I will do just about any job in the church but I just don't have the gift of sharing Christ." Now my experience with people who tell me this is they say that they will do anything but just don't ask me to share Christ and I ask them to do anything and they don't do that either so I am not impressed by that. But the fact is, witnessing lies at the heart of the gospel. It is something that is laid as a responsibility on every Christian. Nobody is excepted. It's the duty and privilege of every Christian not just a select few. We do have to assume this responsibility for one another when we remember that Jesus said not to a select few but to all of us, "Go forth to every part of the world and proclaim the Good News to the whole creation" (Mark 16:15). That's us. We have to assume that we are responsible when we read words like this also from the mouth of Jesus, "and you will bear witness for me in Jerusalem"--not you might or if you will or perhaps sometime or some other special occasion, but He says, "You will bear witness in Judea and Samaria, and away to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8) We have to assume this responsibility for one another when we read such words as, "Go forth, therefore, and make all nations my disciples; baptizing men everywhere in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all that I have commanded you." (Matt. 28:19)

Since each of us, then, does bear a responsibility for our fellow man to tell him of Christ; and since there are many whose names are on the rolls of the church who do not know him; and since there are many outside the church with whom each of us comes in contact every day who do not really know Jesus, how shall we help such a person find Christ? And that is what I want to talk about this morning. We're asking you and God is laying it on your hearts, I hope, that each one of us is going to participate in "Operation Andrew" to reach the unreached for Jesus Christ.

I want to deal with the question this morning, "How can I help a person find Jesus?" I want to help you in using this card and give you some suggestions.

The first thing we have to say about helping a person find Jesus is that conversion or salvation is an act of God. I cannot save you nor you me. To be saved is the work of the Sovereign God. God is the only one who can bring a person to salvation and you know that gives me a lot of comfort as I go out to pray for people and to talk to people about Jesus. All I have to do is be faithful. I just have to be responsive to God, and it's His job to do the converting and it's His job to do the saving. I'm not responsible for that and you are not either. God brings a person to salvation and this is, of course, the work of the Holy Spirit. That is, the Bible teaches us that God saves a person through the Holy Spirit working on the hearts of men. On the day of Pentecost, Peter stood up to preach and God's Spirit was at work in the midst of those who heard. The Bible says of those men, "When they heard this they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the apostles, 'Friends, what are we to do?'" It was not Peter who cut them to the heart, but it was God. It was His Spirit working within them. Time and time again in the New Testament we find this to be true. Remember the story of the Philippian jailer. Paul is in prison--he is in the innermost cell. He is locked in the stocks. An earthquake occurs and the doors are sprung, the prisoners are freed and the jailer thinking that they have all escaped is on the point of attempting suicide and St.

Paul cries out, "Do not harm yourself, we are all here." The man comes in and I know the Bible says that Paul and Silas had been praying and singing at midnight and I know that jailer heard them and he comes in and falls down on his knees before Paul and says, "What must I do to be saved?" Now what brought him to his knees for that moment was the Spirit of God working in his life through what he had seen and what he had heard in Paul. Therefore, first of all we have to say that you and I can save no one. Salvation is always a work of God. That ought to give you some comfort now as you go out. You are not responsible for saving anybody you are simply responsible for being responsible to God to speak of Jesus. God will do the converting.

But having said that, we must go on to say secondly that God uses various means or various instruments to save people. There are some tools you have at your disposal for helping you in your witness and I want to share with you what several of them are. For example, one of these instruments is Holy Scripture. God uses this word as a powerful instrument of the Holy Spirit to convict men. Most of you are familiar if you travel any of the fact that in every motel room in the country there is a Gideon Bible, and the Gideon's have many wonderful stories to share about people who have found a living relationship to Jesus Christ by just reading the Word. One particular example recorded in the Bible is that of the Ethiopian Eunuch. You will remember that story in the early chapters of Acts. He is riding along in this chariot, he's an official under the Queen of Ethiopia and he is reading from Isaiah. God sends Philip to attach himself to the chariot and he says to the man, "Do you understand what you are reading?" and he says, "How can I unless somebody tells me," and so the disciple opens the scripture to him and Philip tells him about Jesus. As the Word is open to him, the Word is used by the Spirit to convict his heart and he says, "What is there to prevent me from being baptized?" God used the written Word to raise that searching question of the cut heart, "What shall I do?" There are many instances on record where men have been brought to Christ as they read the Bible. Those of you who have kept up with our returning prisoners of war know how important the Word of God was to them. They didn't have access often to Bibles at all. Men would get together and they would share verses they had memorized and write them down and they tried to reconstruct the Bible from memory. I'll tell you what, if some of us here today had to do that it would be a mighty thin volume. But the Bible was important to them. God was speaking to them through it. Back in April of 1942, you will remember, those of you who were active during the second World War, when Doolittle's raiders struck Japan for that first air attack and it was kind of a token thing but still it was a great morale booster for us although almost every plane was lost and many of the pilots. One of the pilots was Jacob de Shazer and he was captured. During the long months of his imprisonment he began to wonder why he hated the Japanese and why they hated him. He asked for a Bible and finally was given one by a guard who said, "Three weeks. Then I take it away." True to his word, the guard took it away three weeks later and de Shazer never saw it again. But God, using Holy Scripture, had done His work. In 1948, three years later, Jacob de Shazer and his family returned to Japan as missionaries. Those three weeks with God's Word had changed his life. If you have a friend or loved one who does not believe, urge upon him the reading of God's Word. Give him a copy of a modern translation that is easy to read. God uses it as a powerful instrument to bring men to Christ.

By the same token, it is important for you and me to read our Bibles. God has chosen it as an avenue to come into our lives. Now people say, "Well, you know, the Bible bores me, I'd rather be out in nature, God speaks to me through that." Well, not very loud he doesn't or very regularly. God has chosen the Word as his chosen means of coming into our lives and if we are not reading the Bible we are simply shutting the door in God's face; we are not permitting God the opportunity to come to us in a way he has chosen. Read your Bible daily, read it in spare moments, set aside a

brief period each day and without fail read a few verses. Commit some scripture to memory every day. You may not be aware of it all at once, but over a period of time, looking back, you will see what a great difference it has made in your life. And then when you are sharing with other people and you have the scriptures at hand to share with them, God's going to use that scripture in their lives. Now that is one tool that God has put at your disposal.

Another way that God has especially chosen to come to men is through preaching. God has always used preaching as a powerful means of salvation. My liberal friends have begun to make light in recent years in the pulpit and said, "You know it is not really relevant for one man to get up and carry on a monologue with a group of other people. What you really need is a dialogical situation where you can have dialogue and also you need modern worship and all of the various things that they've tried and I'll tell you what--their churches are pretty empty. Now you look at some of the crusade films on television of Billy Graham and here is a man preaching the Word of God. God is using the ministry of preaching to cut the hearts of people, and when he gives the invitation, hundreds and thousands of people come forward to make a public profession of Jesus. God has used preaching to reach into their lives and cut into their hearts. So preaching is one of God's chosen means. On the day of Pentecost, as we mentioned earlier, as Peter preached, God used that preaching to cut the hearts of people and bring them to salvation. In the book of Acts we are told how disciples went about preaching and how the faith was spread across the face of the earth. God used preaching. Through the Holy Spirit he took preaching and drove the words like arrows into the hearts of the people.

If you would lead some person to Christ and help him find a meaningful relationship to Jesus, you should bring him to preaching services, because through the ministry of preaching, God reaches out by the power of the Holy Spirit to cut men's hearts. As we sit under the preached word, that is what God does. By the same token, those of us who are already members of the church and who claim Christ as our Saviour need this ministry of preaching ourselves. We cannot long maintain our balance, our Christian perspective, unless we open our lives to the Holy Spirit that comes to us through the ministry of preaching.

A third instrument--you have two tools, number one you have the Bible and two you've got preaching--here is a third tool that God gives you to use in the lives of men--the instrument of prayer. Now, while I must honestly confess that I do not know why this is so. God uses our prayers for one another to break into our lives. God answers prayer. Of that I am absolutely certain. Some of you may have seen the article in the latest issue of DECISION Magazine put out by the Billy Graham Association and, incidentally, they have made copies available to this church and between now and the Crusade there will be for you free copies of DECISION Magazine in the lobby every Sunday--you pick one up. This issue has an article about one of the greatest Christians of our time--a Jewish Christian lady from Holland, Corrie ten Boom. That's a funny name--Corrie ten Boom, but she is a great Christian. She has probably led more people to Christ in our time than any other woman. In one of her books she tells the story of a woman who came to her. The woman complained of the sad life she lived, what poor health she had, and the tiny room in which she lived and also her poverty. She did not want Miss Boom to quote scripture to her but as they talked suddenly Miss Boom became aware that a dramatic transformation was taking place in this woman and so she began to quote to her great scripture promises, promises from the Bible and as she did this the woman just drank them up like her soul was thirsty. As soon as she left, Miss Boom greeted her next caller, a gentleman who had been waiting an hour to see her. He informed Miss Boom that he could overhear snatches of her conversation with the other woman and had begun to pray for her. Miss Boom asked, "When did you start to pray?" "About thirty minutes ago," he replied. She said, "Well, that is when the miracle took place. At that moment when you began to pray God moved through your prayer and she began to respond to the scripture." The man went on to explain that he was there not for himself, but for a woman in town for whom a number of Christians were concerned and about whom they had

been praying. When he mentioned her name, Miss Boom replied, "But that is the very woman who was here a few minutes ago! You will be able to reach her now for she is longing to know more about the Gospel. You have prayed for her and now you may thank God." Yes, the strange power of prayer! When you and I are praying for one another, God uses it as an instrument to break into our lives. If there is someone you are concerned about this morning, pray for him. If there is someone you know who is lost, hold his name up to God every day. Earlier I mentioned the Pentacostal experience when Peter preached his first sermon and God used that Sermon to convert three thousand persons. What I did not mention was what happened before that sermon was preached. You see that sermon was not preached in a vacuum. The Bible says of the disciples prior to that time that sermon was preached, "All these were constantly at prayer together..." (Acts 1:14) and I promise you this, you put names on here and you be faithful and pray for them every day and before the Crusade even starts you will be able to scratch off those names because God will already have moved to lead them to Jesus Christ. Look at Peter himself before the crucifixion of Jesus. Jesus knew that Peter would deny him, but he said to Peter, "Satan has been given leave to sift all of you like wheat; but for you I have prayed--I have prayed for you and I would surely like to know that Jesus was standing at the right hand of God making intercession and I know that is true because the Bible tells me it is so. Or as we read in our scripture this morning, Paul's letter to the Romans, "God knows how continually I make mention of you in my prayers." (Romans 1:9) Or again as Paul wrote to the Ephesians, "Give yourselves wholly to prayer and entreaty; pray on every occasion in the power of the Spirit. To this end keep watch and persevere, always interceding for all God's people..." (Eph. 6:18)

Now I want to tell you this. When this church really gets down on its knees and really begins to pray, we are going to see such blessings, such miracles as we never dreamed of. God uses prayer. If you would help someone find Jesus one of the greatest things you can do for them is to pray for them; hold their names up to God, for he uses our prayers and he answers them. So, to help a person find Christ we must remember that first of all it is a work of God. Your job is simply to be faithful and he gives you some tools to work with. He gives you scripture, he gives you preaching, he gives you prayer.

Now there is a third thing that you can do to help a person find Christ and in this way God uses you and me. God uses my witness to my own faith and God uses your witness to your faith. There are two ways that you and I witness to our faith. One of these witnesses that we make is the kind of life we live. Paul's letters are replete with admonitions to his fellow Christians to lead lives worthy of following. The lives they live will be a sign to the pagans. Now I want to say this--God wants you here at Central Church. Some of you are the most significant people in the community. He wants you to lead the kind of spiritual life that other people in this community can follow. As Jesus put it, "And you, like the lamp, must shed light among your fellows, so that when they see the good you do, they may give praise to your Father in heaven." (Matt. 5:16) You remember Paul was converted on the road to Damascus, but I want to tell you that the conversion didn't happen in a vacuum. Do you remember what had happened to Paul just before he set out? He had stood by holding in the cloaks as some of his fellow Jews stoned Stephen to death. Stephen was the first Christian to give his life for what he believed and Paul was standing there watching him. There was Stephen down in the dust and the dirt, face smeared and his clothes torn, the rocks raining on him and the blood already beginning to run from the wounds from the heavy stones, and what did he do--"Father, forgive them, lay not this sin to their charge." Then as he was dying he lifted up his hands and said, "I see the heavens open and the son of man standing at the right hand of God," and I want to tell you something--Paul had that burned into his mind when he started to Damascus and his mind and his heart was opened to Jesus because of the witness that somebody had made. So then, the witness that you make is important. We need to remember that the Christian lives we live are the most profound witness we can make

to the world of what Jesus Christ means to us. Let me say something to you boys and girls. A boy or girl who cheats or steals cannot make much of a witness to Jesus. A boy or girl who is running around and supposed to be at church at senior activities or youth activities who is slipping off to do other things--you're not making any witness to Jesus and you young people, some of whom are smoking pot, not necessarily in this church but many young people in this city--what kind of a witness is that to Jesus Christ. What kind of a witness are you making by the lives you are living? The man or woman who does not serve the church, who uses foul language, who cuts corners in business, who spends more at the country club than he does on the church, who make a bridge club weekly, but can't make church much more than once a month--such persons are not making a witness to very much. I think most of us are going to be surprised when we stand before God and discover the things he holds us responsible for. He is going to hold us responsible for the way we have lived, for the witness we have made, by the sort of life we have lived. Every one of us this morning ought to ask ourselves, "Is my life the example it should be? Am I living a life I would like for someone else to follow? Would I like for my children, my grandchildren to do the things I'm doing? Are the things I do the things I would tell someone else to do if they were trying to live like Jesus? God is going to hold us responsible for the kinds of lives we are living and don't think you aren't going to answer to him for every minute of it. So God uses the life I live as a part of my witness and then God uses my witness not only by the life I live, but by the witness I make of what Jesus means to me. You know we are so reluctant to tell people about Jesus. If there is someone this morning that you want to help find Jesus, the greatest thing you can do is to tell them of what Jesus has done for you and of what Jesus means to you. Do you remember the story in the Bible of Legion, the man possessed with demons? The Bible tells us that Jesus healed him and sent him home and told him to tell them what great things God had done for him. The Bible said that that man healed by Jesus went back home and he told them what Jesus had done for him and the Bible says, "And they were all amazed". (Mark 5:20)

Are you spreading the news of what Jesus has done for you? Wilbur Chapman an Evangelist of years past, tells us that he roomed with the same boy his last two years in college. When Dr. Chapman graduated, the boy said to him, "Why have you never asked me to be a Christian?" Dr. Chapman said he was flabbergasted. He said to the boy, "I didn't think you were interested." The boy said, "The only reason I asked to room with you was so that you would tell me about Jesus and for two years I've waited for you to speak of Him. Night and day I have been eager to hear about it." Dr. Chapman said then when he tried to lead the boy to Christ, it was too late. He failed.

If you would help someone find Jesus, you must remember that salvation is a work of God, he does the work, you are just the instrument and he gives you lots of tools. He gives you the Bible, He gives you the scriptures, He gives you the prayers, He gives you the witness of your life and most of all he gives you the testimony of what Jesus has done for you to share with others. Now there may be some person right now who needs not only a word of encouragement but he needs a word of witness from you. Help him find his Saviour--have his life changed. I want you to go out of here this morning with a burden on your heart, I want you to go out with this thing in your hand or in your pocket. I want you to begin to put names on it and I want God to burden our hearts in this church for the souls of men--for the lives of people. A burden for the lost for whom Jesus died--and will you tell them what Jesus has done for you? And don't let it be said on the Judgement Day that there is somebody that missed salvation who has gone to hell because you failed to say a good word for Jesus

Lord, lay some soul upon my heart,
And love that soul through me;
And may I nobly do my part
To win that soul for thee.