

"Gospel of Love"  
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Central Christian Church, Waco, Texas  
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SCRIPTURE:Matthew 28.18-20

Several years ago when I was a second grade teacher, I had to do lunch duty every other week or so. This basically meant that it was me and about 100 eight-year-olds in our section of the cafeteria. I would roam the aisles opening ketchup packets and the such, but my favorite part was right before we'd leave to go outside. Somehow these few moments developed into a daily ritual called, "Story time with Mrs. Jack." Now, this was merely a tactic to keep the crowd to a manageable roar when the third grade students entered the cafeteria for lunch. Don't let me lead you on, though. While the second graders asked for story time each day, these stories were nothing profound. Usually they were just about something I had done the previous day, like wiped out on my roller blades or other opportunities for the students to be able to appropriately laugh at their teacher.

So, it is in their honor, that I begin today with a little story time.

[tell story about "jesus people" in downtown Fort Worth.]

Have you seen people like this on the street corner before? I recently saw the same guy with a sandwich board on the corner of Wooded Acres and Bosque one day and then out in Hewitt the next day. I have to confess that I am completely intrigued by these people. Each time I think about these people I can't help but be filled with such a wide variety of emotions. On one hand, I admire their passion for faith. I admire that they have the courage and energy to tell the world about their faith.

On the other hand, though, my heart breaks because I have NEVER heard a street evangelist "preach" what I feel and know to be the good news of Jesus Christ. We'll talk about that more in a little while, but right now, let's take a few moments to watch a somewhat comical video about many different approaches we as Christians take to share the Good News of Jesus Christ (START VIDEO: EVANGELISM)

Fortunately, I don't think that our church growth team has had any meetings recently to discuss using any of the tactics you saw in that video to help grow our church. Much like the megaphone man in the video, so often the message of the Gospel from street evangelists and others is more of a rant about "the end is near," "repent or go to hell," "you're a terrible sinner."

Is that what Jesus did? Did he want us to scare people into faith? I like to think that he would rather us preach the message as he did, "The Kingdom of God is at hand....here, now!" or "Love EVERYONE, now!"

So where do we as the Central Christian Church family stand in the midst of this spectrum? Don't worry, next week there won't be a sign up for sandwich boards and street corners. Instead, church, I say for us to listen even more closely for the voice of Love that might not be conveyed. There are so many people in this world, in this community, who just want to know that they are loved. You have heard our church encourage you to invite friends, reach out to someone you haven't seen at church in a while, seek out new people to welcome during our fellowship moments. I would add to that to simply be very deliberate about helping others see that they are loved and they are a meaningful part of this church family.

So if I had the courage, time or energy, I'd get my own sandwich board sign, strap it to me and stand on the opposite corner from these angry "preachers" and my sign would simply say, "You are a beautiful child of God, loved no matter what." OR....I'd just strive each and every day to live that message instead of proclaiming it with a sign.