

Introduction:

- In December you can expect evangelistic messages each week through Christmas Eve.
 - Your response should be, "Fantastic!" now I can bring my unsaved friends/family to church this Christmas season and expect Holy Spirit to speak to their hearts and for them to say, "YES!" to Jesus.
 - I am giving you advanced notice to begin the building of bridges into peoples lives.
- I want to talk to us this morning on church outside the box (the four walls). The Pharisees had a big problem with Jesus because He operated so far outside the box when it came to the Kingdom of God. Since the Kingdom of God is not bound to the box (synagogue), Jesus found that there was just as much if not more action outside the box.
 - Let's learn from Jesus today.
- *"Then Jesus went out to the lakeshore again and taught the crowds that were coming to him. As he walked along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at his tax collector's booth. "Follow me and be my disciple," Jesus said to him. So Levi got up and followed him. Later, Levi invited Jesus and his disciples to his home as dinner guests, along with many tax collectors and other disreputable sinners. (There were many people of this kind among Jesus' followers.) But when the teachers of religious law who were Pharisees saw him eating with tax collectors and other sinners, they asked his disciples, "Why does he eat with such scum?" When Jesus heard this, he told them, "Healthy people don't need a doctor—sick people do. I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners.""* (Mark 2:13-17, NLT)
 - *"Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends"* (John 15:13).
 - *"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still SINNERS, Christ died for us"* (Romans 5:8).

I. I'm Unlocking The Church

A. The dream

1. Glowing Bones Dream - The dream begins: Kelly (my wife) and I are asleep in our bed but it is in my office at church. I hear keys rattling and the door to the office area being unlocked. In my dream I wake up. I do not hear the alarm sound. Now I am alarmed and I am concerned about who is coming into the building. I get up and go down the hall. It is dark. When I get into the hall, glowing bones and skeletons start rushing past me into the church. I scream "NOooo!" and then wake up. End dream. I literally woke up with Kelly elbowing me saying, "What is wrong with you?" I was sitting up in bed yelling 'No!' When I got up to pray over this dream which troubled me I heard Holy Spirit say:

Interpretation: "From the place of rest and intimacy in your office. I have unlocked the church. Do not be alarmed. The dead are coming in."
2. Earlier this year I was focused on the 'place of rest and intimacy in your office.'
3. Of recent I have been focused on, "What does God mean in saying, I have unlocked the church."

- B. What does it mean, "I have unlocked the church!"? *"I will give you the keys of heaven's kingdom realm to forbid on earth that which is forbidden in heaven, and to release on earth that which is released in heaven."* (Matthew 16:19, TPT)
1. To unlock means to give access to. To unlock means that something is locked. IE. If you come to church and the door is locked, you do not have access to what is going on inside. There have been times I have forgot to unlock for early morning prayer. Then I wonder where everyone is....and they wonder why they cant get in. In evangelism the church says, "Why aren't people coming in and the people are saying why are they not letting us in? To unlock means to give access to.
 2. From rest and intimacy... I give access for others to come in.
 - a) This is not a works approach, it is a faith and closeness of God approach.
 - b) Evangelism is intentional and must be intentional but when done under the influence of the Holy Spirit it becomes supernatural.
 - c) When evangelism is DUI (done under the influence) of the Holy Spirit, you are unlocked, the person hearing the message is unlocked to respond, and Jesus gets the glory!
 3. It could mean that God is the one holding the holding the lost back until the church gets some things right. In other words, He is looking for some changes in us before we see the gathering of souls into the House.
 4. It could mean that we are the ones holding the lost back.
 - a) We are not equipped to build bridges into people lives. IE. Prophet Bob Jones when he was with us prophesied that he saw our nets hung up on the rocks.
 - (1) On the rocks nets will tear and fish will escape.
 - (2) On the rocks nets will get tangled and not let fish be caught.
 - (3) On the rocks nets will let what fish you have caught get away.
 - (4) The implication is that you are a bad fisherman. Mark 2:13-17 is a teaching lesson modeled by Jesus in how to be a fisher of men.
 - b) We are bound/locked up therefore the lost do not have access because of: Mt 23:13 *"For you shut the door of the Kingdom of heaven in people's faces."*
 - (1) Religious spirit.
 - (a) Pre-judges people. Often by their appearance; political stance; beliefs.
 - (b) Based on works = self righteousness.
 - (c) critical of other peoples walk with God.
 - (d) Outward holiness without inward transformation.
 - (e) Don't connect heart to heart with people, only with people like themselves.
 - (f) Leaves people feeling guilty.
 - (2) Pride
 - (a) Puts others down in order to lift up our position/view.
 - (b) Sarcasm - a laugh at someone else's expense. Lots of political stuff like this now.

- C. God is doing the work of unlocking! Will we co-operate with Him? Some are asking, "Which is it?" Answer: all the above.
1. Jesus is showing His disciples how to unlock the kingdom so that others may enter.
 2. It all begins by giving people access to the kingdom. Requires three things from us:
 - a) Show them where it is.
 - b) Show them how they can enter.
 - c) Show them the love of God through you.

II. Use the Right Lures

A. The dream:

1. The dream starts and I am fishing with Pastor Tony Hauck in a crystal clear lake. We are in a boat set up for fishing. I stand and throw my spinner bait out a long ways. When I pull it back in I notice that there is a bobber on the line. Not sure why it is there and I take it off saying, "You cant use bobbers on spinners. I cast it again. You could literally see the fish chase the spinner as it was being cast. It hit the water and I heard the Holy Spirit say, "Let it sink." Suddenly we see a big fish hit the bait! I real it in. It is a big bass. I do not want to touch the fish (out of protection of the fish) as I am putting the weight scales onto its lip. Then I wake up. **Interpretation:** Everything about the dream is clear, clean, and colorful...except the wrong rig. The wrong lure scares the fish away but the right lure cause them to see it before it thrown and race after it because they want it. Use the right lure! Listening to the Holy Spirit is key to catching fish and protecting the fish.
2. Websters 1828 Dictionary: Lure - *Any enticement; that which invites by the prospect of advantage or pleasure; as the lures of beauty or of gain.* dictionary.com: *The power of attracting or enticing!* IE. Fishing Poles and Lures.
 - a) Lures attract fish
 - b) Love is one of the greatest lures of all!

B. Jesus' invitation to Levi

1. Why are the disciples in scripture seen as leaving everything to follow Jesus. All boys went to school to learn the Word of God. It was every father's dream to have their son be chosen to be trained by the Rabbi. So when Jesus the Rabbi comes by and asks Matthew to follow Him it was a great honor and invitation to receive.
2. To be a tax collector basically made you the lowest of the lowest among the Jewish people. You were working for Rome, collecting taxes for Rome, and cheating people as you did it. Jesus invites a 'low life' to become his disciple! And the 'low life' invites Jesus to his house. *"Later, Levi invited Jesus and his disciples to his home as dinner guests, along with many tax collectors and other disreputable sinners. (There were many people of this kind among Jesus' followers.)"* (Mark 2:15, NLT)
3. Jesus ate with sinners. The surprise of this passage is not that Mt walked away from a profitable business following Jesus; but that Jesus would ask Levi to follow him!
 - a) Jesus ate with sinners (Mt 9:11) because He was invited too. They/sinners wanted to be close to Him.

- b) Jesus ate with sinners because He wanted them to know the heart of God. He knew they needed Him, badly!
 - c) We often forget that the world needs Jesus and they find Him through us! Just as they found God through Jesus. Part of the amazing attraction of Jesus' ministry is that the outcasts WANTED to be around Him.
- C. What does my life have to look like to call/to 'lure' sinners to repentance?
1. It can't be religious.
 2. It can't be loaded with pride-sarcasm.
 3. It has to have love that results in acts of compassion. Because Jesus was a man of love and compassion, sinners wanted to 'hangout' with him. Love stirs compassion which leads to action. Compassion sees the pain of people and its hearts breaks for them. Love and compassion makes our heart tender towards the condition of people not knowing Christ.
 - a) Read the gospels. Think about it.
 - (1) The Bible captures stories of Jesus talking with religious leaders like Nicodemus and respectable citizens like Mary, Martha and Lazarus.
 - (2) But we also find him with government leaders, shunned lepers, Roman soldiers, adulterers, the demon possessed, and folks of ill reputation.
 - (3) Folks are sick and need his help. Jesus is identifying with these people without becoming like them.
 - b) Be a good Samaritan. Practiced hospitality. Be kind, be helpful, be loving. This is really the easiest thing one can do... A meal with someone.
 4. So love must be a motivating factor for us. Non-Christians are lost. Separated from God. Spend some time looking at the Word and what it has to say about the fate/the eternity of those who die without Christ.
 - a) I don't think that fate really bothers us much anymore. It is evident when we pray.
 - b) Love compelled Jesus to come to us. To live like us. To die for us. Love did that.
 5. Be intentional about connecting with lost people. Look for opportunities.
 - a) Speak the language of the non-Christian. Get away from you "Christianese."
 - b) Practice hospitality.
 - (1) Barna report: "Faith is stimulated by hospitality and formed in community."
 - (2) xenos - Ro 12:13 *"Always be eager to practice hospitality."* The Greek word has to do with strangers and foreigners. We are aliens/foreigners passing through this life. We are different than the world.
 6. We must develop a servant spirit. Jesus did not come to served but to be a servant.
 7. Put aside our judgement that builds barriers and seek to build bridges. Ie. People will look different than us. Sound different. Act different. But we have to act just like a missionary to a new land: "How can I connect with these people." Connect!!! That is the job a bridge...connect two things/people.
- D. Bridges exist to help us overcome obstacles. Jesus built a bridges into Levi's life.

III. Enjoy New Life

A. Dream

1. I was in the barn yard at my parents home. It was very green. In front of me were a few old hens with baby chicks. The hens came and gathered before me like they were going to listen. They fluffed their wings to let the chicks gather under them. One chick came and sought to get under me as I sat on the ground. I let it get into my shirt pocket. Then there were lambs. They too were resting and expecting to hear from me. They were so cute and cuddly. I moved over by one and lay in the grass. It snuggled next to me, tucking its neck into my neck. I thought that was so neat that I wanted tell/share with my parents. I thought about how beautiful that was as I lay there with the chick in my pocket and lamb cuddled next to me. Then I woke up. **Interpretation:** God is wanting us to enjoy new life... through new lives. That we have wisdom within that others long to hear.
2. I think one of the reasons that Jesus loved being with sinners is that they loved receiving His love. When they received His love there was the celebration and appreciation of life.

Conclusion:

- Hosea 6:6 **"I desire mercy and not sacrifice...."** The Pharisees were all about sacrifice. Jesus was all about mercy!
- God is unlocking the church, use the right lure, and enjoy the catch!