



Witness in Life, Word, and Deed



Witness is the identity of the church

Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.”


—John 20:21

We are a sent people, sent to bear witness to Jesus.

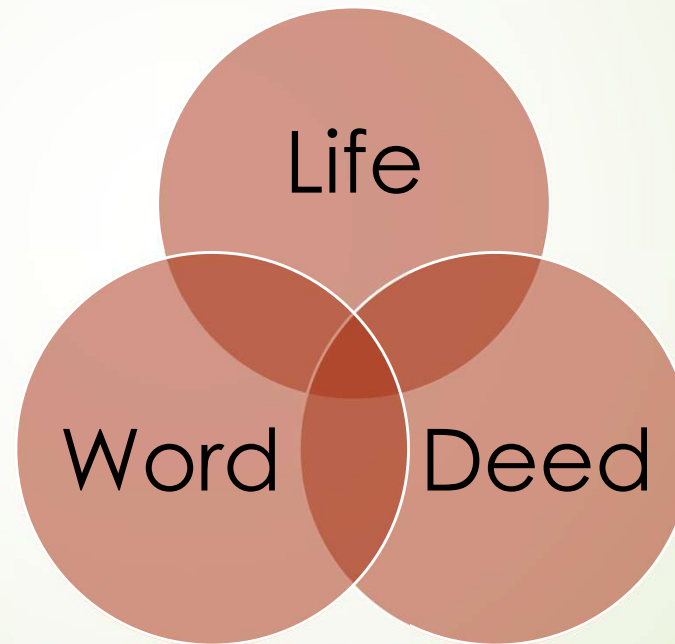
Discussion question: When you hear, in Scripture, that the church is “sent,” in its very identity, how does this make you feel, and what comes to your mind?

The Kingdom of God

- ▶ Jesus proclaimed the Kingdom of God: “Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God,¹⁵ and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.”” —Mark 1:15-16
- ▶ *God kingdom is those parts of the cosmos where God's reign is realised, where God's life-giving rule is evident. It exists with those who affirm, 'yes, Jesus is Lord'. And it exists in those places where Christ's life giving reign is present – where the environment isn't spoilt, where all people are fed, where economics benefits all people. In these people and places, Christ's kingdom is coming.*
- ▶ Jesus also enacted the Kingdom of God



“Be the Witness, Say the Witness, Do the Witness” (Guder)





Witness in **words**:

“Life, word, and deed”

- ▶ Reflection: share of a person in your life story who speaks about Jesus authentically, with coherence.
- ▶ “For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” (Romans 1:16)



Witness in **deeds**:

“Life, word, and deed”

- ▶ The church as a **contrastive community**: our deeds give meaning to our words.
- ▶ Romans 15:18-19. “For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to win obedience from the Gentiles, by word and deed, 19 by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and as far around as Illyricum I have fully proclaimed the good news of Christ.”
- ▶ Church brings signs of new age.
- ▶ Lesslie Newbigin: The Church is a **hermeneutic (interpretation) of the gospel**.



Words and Deeds Together


- Words and Deeds Together:
 - The deeds demonstrate the truth and meaning of the words
 - The words give content and personhood to the deeds
 - However, we can get deeper than this: The words mean something in the context of the biblical story. If we are not playing in our part in the story, then it isn't the story.
 - In other words, the meaning of what we proclaim is defined by our lives.
- Lesslie Newbigin: The Church is a sign, an instrument, and a foretastes of the kingdom of God
- Bass Guitar analogy



Imagination for witness in our churches


Loving a neighborhood to life in the name of Jesus.

- ▶ Examples (keep assets, scale, and capacity in mind)
- ▶ Importance of prayer
- ▶ Bubbling up from the grass roots
- ▶ Reflection time



Witness in our shared **life**:
“Life, word, and deed”

- This is the most important of the three, and it's the hardest to understand.
- “Life” refers to a shared life, oriented toward Jesus.



They dwell in their own countries, but simply as sojourners. As citizens, they share in all things with others and yet endure all things as if foreigners... They marry, as do all others; they beget children; but they do not destroy their offspring. They have a common table, but not a common bed. They are in the flesh, but they do not live after the flesh. They pass their days on earth, but are citizens of heaven. They obey the prescribed laws, and at the same time surpass the laws in their lives. They love all, and are persecuted by all... They are poor, yet they make many rich; they are completely destitute, and yet they enjoy complete abundance. . . They are reviled, and yet they bless... When they do good they are punished as evildoers; undergoing punishment, they rejoice because they are brought to life.

- The Epistle to Diognetes, c. AD 130

The church is called to be:

- *A community of justice in a world of economic and ecological injustice*
- *A community of generosity and simplicity (of 'enough') in a consumer world*
- *A community of selfless giving in a world of selfishness*
- *A community of truth (humility and boldness) in a world of relativism*
- *A community of hope in a world of disillusionment and consumer satiation*
- *A community of joy in a world frantically pursuing pleasure*
- *A community of thanksgiving in a world of entitlement*
- *A community who experiences God's presence in a secular world*



Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth:

Set up your kingdom in our midst.

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God:
Have mercy on me, a sinner.

Holy Spirit, breath of the living God:
Renew us and all the world.