

A MESSAGE WORTH SHARING

Isaiah 40:21-31

1 Corinthians 9:16-23

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~A Message Worth Millions~

Last Sunday, well over 100 Million people tuned in to watch the “Big Game”. Every year, more and more people turn their televisions to the Super Bowl. While plenty of diehard fans are watching, for some, this may be the only game of football they watch all year. But let’s be honest, some don’t watch for the game...and no, I’m not talking about watching just for the half-time show! There are plenty of people who watch for the commercials. Yes, that’s right, the commercials, the very ads I try to avoid by recording shows to my DVR, so that I can fast-forward through them. But with well over 100 million pairs of eyes gazing at the screen, advertisers notoriously turn up their game to offer clever, entertaining, funny, shocking, and heart-warming commercials. It has become such a big deal, that advertisers will actually debut their commercials before the Super Bowl to build up the hype. NBC even posted commercials to their website immediately following their airing, in case you stepped out for a bathroom break and missed the commercial your friends were talking about upon your return.

With so much exposure you better believe these commercials come with a hefty price tag. On top of any development and filming costs, just a 30-second spot aired during the Super Bowl cost 4 million dollars. And the full 60-second commercials cost 8 million dollars. 8 million dollars for a minute of screen-time means that some advertisers find it is worth the cost. Yet some do not and I’m not talking about the companies who choose not to advertise during the Super Bowl. What about the commercials aired during the Super Bowl that bomb or fall flat?

While certain beer commercials win us over with Clydesdales rescuing a cute puppy, some commercials fail to hit their mark. This past week was full of outrage as people spoke out against Nationwide Insurance’s commercial. Did you see the commercial?

It opens with a young boy recounting all the things he will never do. He will never learn to ride a bike. He’ll never get kissed by a girl and get cooties, or get married. The list goes on until the boy finally reveals that he will never grow up because he died from an accident. The commercial goes on to state that the number one cause of childhood deaths is from preventable accidents. This depressing commercial immediately started a snowball of social media reaction as people took to their computers and smartphones to share their distaste with the morbid commercial in the midst of the Super Bowl.

Why such outrage? It wasn’t that people disagreed with the message. Certainly we should all find it important to bring awareness to childhood accident prevention. It is a worthy message, but every message has its time and place. Where Nationwide failed, was to properly consider the context. The context is key to the proper delivery of any message. When the stakes are high, contextualizing your message becomes even more important.

~Paul Has a Message Worth Sharing~

Considering the context is exactly what we need to do as we ponder Paul's words in his first letter to the church in Corinth. As Cynthia mentioned last week, Paul is writing to a church full of divisions. In an effort to bring unity Paul tries to center their attention upon a common purpose, sharing the good news of Jesus with the world. This is a very important message that brings us all together. This is a message worth sharing and Paul goes to great lengths to share it!

When we join Paul at verse 16 he is already sharing some of his motive. He proclaims that he has "*no ground for boasting, for an obligation is laid on me,*". In other words, he is not doing this voluntarily, it is simply something he must do. The Greek word used here is *oikonomos*, meaning steward, who is a slave or servant entrusted with the care of his or her master's possessions. This is not Paul's message but a message entrusted to him to share for the sake of others, not for himself.

So important is this message that Paul goes on to state that, "*I have made myself a slave to all, so that I might win more of them,*" Professor Stan Mast suggests that the term "winning" has fallen out of favor in our pluralistic postmodern culture where everyone has a right to his or her own beliefs. "Winning' people sounds like cultural imperialism. 'We're right, you're wrong, so come over to our side.'"

Paul and the early Christians would not have seen it in this way. Paul believed us all to be lost, but Jesus came to seek and save the lost and bring them to himself. All of this is because the lost are all a part of another kingdom doomed to fail, and must be won way from that kingdom into a new kingdom where Christ is King. It is not about proving others wrong, but saving the lost. This is a message worth sharing, but how should such a message be handled? We don't want to end up like Nationwide, falling flat with a serious message that failed to understand the context do we?

~Paul's Method to His Madness~

Paul continues by sharing how he seeks to save the lost. At first it may seem to be that Paul is either over confident in his own abilities or facing a serious identity crisis. The next few statements seem odd at first glance and end with quite the poignant statement "*I have become all things to all people*".

Paul was indeed a Jew and understood Jewish culture and understood what it meant to be under the law of Torah. Yet when Paul was with Gentiles, he ignored those same ceremonial and civil parts of Torah, but never the moral parts. That's what he means when he adds, "*though I am not free from God's law, but am under Christ's law.*"

Paul was not losing himself in other's identities. He merely sought to understand their way of life and walk along side of them. In other word, to win people to Christ, Paul didn't stay in his own little world. Rather, he entered into the lives of those outside of the church. To take a few steps further, Paul was obligated and compelled to share the message about Jesus and he knew that sort of information travels most effectively over the bridge of relationships. Relationships are built when we enter someone else's life

and identity with them as much as we can without losing our own identity as Christ followers. This is what Paul is discussing with all of this talk about becoming a Jew, one under the law, one outside the law, or weak. Paul is becoming "all things to all people," not for his own sake but for the purpose of sharing the Gospel. He is trying to ensure the Gospel has its maximum effect.

~A Message Worth Sharing~

Perhaps Nationwide would be profited by following Paul's example. If they had better understood their audience, things could have been different. But, before we pick on Nationwide too much, let's turn the attention upon ourselves. Have we taken the time to understand our audience? Have we taken the time to consider how beneficial this message of Christ can be to the world and our community? Are we too caught in our divisions that we have forgotten the life-changing message that binds us together?

It is easy to lose focus. It is easy to focus inward instead of outward. But the Gospel and the God of that good news demands we look outward. If we fail to share Jesus, then we really don't understand Jesus at all. Jesus is a message worth sharing!

If we learn anything from Paul we should glean that this message, any message, is best shared over the bridge of relationship. We should take every opportunity to get to know the people around us. That may and often does mean we must step outside of our comfort zone. God has commissioned us to share great news to the single mother balancing career and family...to the dual-income family over-committed to activities...to the unemployed worker downtrodden and forgotten...to the addict seeking escape in a substance...to the executive with the big paycheck and a broken heart...to the families who seem to have it all together. This message, this good news, this Gospel is for them.

Will you make every effort to share it, not for your own sake, but for theirs? Just as Jesus love you, Jesus loves THEM! This is a message worth sharing!

~Works Cited~

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