

The Power of Quiet Testimony

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1 Thessalonians 4:9-12

He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. (Isaiah 53:7ESV)

But Jesus remained silent. (Matthew 26:63ESV)

But when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he gave no answer. (Matthew 27:12ESV)

He entered his headquarters again and said to Jesus, “Where are you from?” But Jesus gave him no answer. (John 19:9ESV)

But he walked right through the crowd and went on his way. (Luke 4:30 NIV)

Jesus knew when to talk, when to walk away without a word, when to drive out the people from the Temple, and when to remain silent. In silence, I see the power of God working. We are not used to being silent. My message this morning is to share God’s work through your silent testimony.

Paul, a man of words and speeches, continues exhorting and teaching the newly established church of Thessalonica. Last Sunday we talked about **living a holy life**: living a holy life by **abstaining from an immoral sexual life**. I pray that you took those words very seriously. Paul warned the church that God is an avenger, and to continue living an immoral life will have consequences. It harms your body and that of others and most importantly hurts God.

This morning Paul encourages the church to continue **living a life of testimony for Christ**.

1. Brotherly Love (Philadelphia)

Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another, (1 Thessalonians 4:9 ESV)

This church was filled with love towards its members and others as well. Paul tells them they do not need to be reminded about it, because they are practicing brotherly love towards each other and others like the Macedonians. In fact, he tells them to do more and more.

Today we prayed over two groups who will go the mission field, one to Houston and one to Armenia. Why? Why should we send groups to serve the “outsiders”? Who cares? Why should we care for those whom we don’t know? (Like Macedonia for the church of Thessalonica)

We do this because we love and care. We do this not as an obligation. NO, we serve, minister, care, love, build, heal, support financially, share the gospel of our Lord as a reflection of God’s love to us. This is a command from God, and we take it seriously. And our ministry in inside the PACC and outside PACC.

Watch out, nothing can replace this commandment of God: to love Him and love each other. **“By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another”** (John 13:35 ESV).

Illustration: Last week a parishioner visited me and told me how PACC became his home. This person has experienced your love and care. What a nice testimony coming from a person who tasted God’s love in you.

Make sure to look around and see others that need to be loved. Make sure you are available to be loved and show love. Make sure that your relationships in this church are more than saying “Hi” on Sunday mornings. I will exhort you like Paul did to the Thessalonians **to continue to become a community of love, well, our associate pastor calls me Dr. Love.**

2. Aspire to Live Quietly (the power of quiet testimony)

and to aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we instructed you, (1 Thessalonians 4:11 ESV)

Here I find two contradictory words (an oxymoron): **aspire**, and **live quietly**. The Greek word for aspire is *philotimeomai*. It has several meanings: to be fond of honor, to be ambitious. So the phrase literally means, **“have the ambition to lead a quiet life.”** **Ambition** is about upgrading, advancing, and achieving. That is the exact opposite of a quiet life.

We are a society that makes news. We make a lot of NOISE. Nowadays, a home video can become a hit overnight. Do to not make “noise” is against world culture. Everything in the world is crying out to make some “big noise.”

It bothers me sometimes when pastors make so much noise about their ministry that it becomes a stumbling block instead of a blessing.

God reminds me to slow down, breathe well, read His Word, get up from the chair, go to work and be open to become His instrument silently, without “tashkhala” (Turkish word for making loud noise.)

Rev. E. Peterson’s interpretation of Matthew 6:

“When you come before God, don’t turn that into a theatrical production ... Find a quiet, secluded place so you won’t be tempted to role-play before God. Just be there as simply and honestly as you can manage. The focus will shift from you to God, and you will begin to sense his grace” (Matthew 6:5-6 MSG).

Why did Paul ask this church to live quietly? We don’t know exactly what the problem was. Remember they were being persecuted by the local authorities and the Jewish leadership. Perhaps some of the church members gave up their jobs and they were evangelizing aggressively. Perhaps they made too much noise in the public. Perhaps they were acting in a way the public started to hate Christians. We don’t know the exact thing they were doing that led Paul to ask them to live quietly.

I think there is a reason Paul talks in this section about love. “Love each other.” I think **Paul is encouraging not to stop from being witnesses for Jesus**. Paul is encouraging them to **be an instrument of Jesus** in the world, **but in the language of LOVE.** “

“Have ambitions, aspire to love without making much noise about it.”

-Let me clarify one thing. To live a quiet life **does not mean to be passive people.** It does not mean, “Oh, I don’t need to do anything. I don’t need to say anything, I don’t need to act, serve or witness.” Of course not, Paul is the best example. He did speak, he did witness, he did write, but he did not make loud noises.

Sometimes we Christians think **if we do not make big impact, then our ministry is useless.**

IMPACT, a big word that haunts me. Last Sunday in my quiet time I read these words from Ken Boa:

There is no higher calling than to love and worship the infinite and personal God of creation and redemption. In complete contrast to the world, God’s economy measures greatness not in terms of ability or accomplishments, but in the vitality and integrity of a person’s walk with the Lord.¹

God does not measure greatness by the impact we make; He measures it by the way we allow Christ to be center of our mission and life. Walk with the Lord in integrity and humility and see how God will be manifested. Walk in a “quiet” way, with ambition to love, so the attention is not on you but on Christ.

Let me give you an example from my life, when I had the temptation to be on the stage to “perform”; it is about my Nor Yerk band (my contemporary Christian band).

You know that Sevan and I had passion toward Syrians, and ministry towards Syrian refugees. The last two years God opened doors for me to reorganize the Nor Yerk Band and give concerts supporting local ministries in Lebanon and the Syrian refugees relocated in Canada. I was anxious and in my mind I was thinking. “OK God, Nor Yerk band with new musicians, talented, energetic, new

arrangements, a good sound system, great performance... this will impact people...right?"

Wrong. I am glad that God put in my life people who became my spiritual directors. Patti Pierce, the director of SoulCare helped me focus on God's ministry. She gave me handouts to use it every day before rehearsals. The focus of our ministry was not to make an impact. The focus of our ministry was to worship God with people who were suffering. Performance became a secondary thing. Worshiping God in truth and humility was the center of our ministry. Now that I look back, I see how God used that approach to bring His message and His love to people who were suffering. Let me repeat these verses again:

"...Find a quiet, secluded place so you won't be tempted to role-play before God. Just be there as simply and honestly as you can manage. The focus will shift from you to God, and you will begin to sense his grace" (Matthew 6:5-6 MSG).

How do you see yourself in the field of serving God? Are you thinking about how to make an impact, or you are thinking how to love and serve and leave the impact to God? In the end it's His ministry and you are only His instrument.

3. Walk Properly Before Outsiders

and to work with your hands, as we instructed you, so that you may walk properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one. (1 Thessalonians 4:11-12 ESV)

Some believers gave up their daily work thinking Jesus was coming back very soon. Why did anyone need to work anyway? Some depended on others and eventually became lazy. We all are called to work. Work is a blessing from God. In the beginning, God created the universe. God worked and He created us in His image. We continue working.

As an outcome of their hard work, the church of Thessalonica supported not only their ministry, but they also reached out to Macedonia (most likely the churches in Philippi and Beroea.) Perhaps they were wealthier than other churches and

they loved sharing with others. This does not mean some will work and others will be dependent on them. We all are called to work. To express brotherly love to each other is to work together and also help each other as well. When someone is in need, the church family steps in and helps.

How about the outside world?

Outsiders are always looking to the church of Jesus Christ. Paul demanded the church to have a biblical, healthy sexual behavior (last week's sermon). We should also have Christian work ethics, as well. **Christians should have integrity in their business. That is silent testimony.** Even if we do not make as much as other worldly people, our Christian integrity and ethics should be a testimony.

How shameful is it to find out Christians who cheat in their taxes. How shameful to see Christians who do not have good work ethics. In the church, they act with Christian manners and in the "market" they act with other standards.

What is my message to the outsiders?

Does your business reflect your Christian character or you live a double standard life?

Conclusion:

Jesus knew when to talk, when to walk away without a word, when to drive out the people from the temple, and when to remain silent.

I want to learn from Jesus to live a quiet yet powerful life, ambitious yet not noisy, arrogant or impact-oriented.

Have brotherly love towards each other and towards others who are not from your backyard.

While you love them, don't make too much noise.

Learn that it is God's grace that is working and not your ambitions and dreams. It is His work and we are His creatures representing Him.

God gave us responsibilities. We should take them eagerly, with ambition, not lazily. We should serve wholeheartedly and passionately.

“Be still, and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10a NIV).

Amen

1. Ken Boa, Daily Growth: Biblical teaching for heart and mind, June 3, 2018