TITLE: Keeping Secrets

TEXT: 2 Ki..7:1-9; Jn. 17:13-19; Rev. 2:1-7; Ps. 22:22

INTRODUCTION: This morning I want to talk about keeping secrets.

 How many of you here this morning are good at keeping a secret? If someone shares a confidence with you, you can keep that confidence to yourself without telling anyone else about it.

 Not keeping a secret has destroyed many relationships. And entire empires have been destroyed as well when secrets are shared.

 Corporate espionage, the telling of company secrets, has become a billion dollar business.

 Most of us are probably pretty good at keeping secrets.

 The problem is that sometimes we are too good!

 Sometimes we keep secrets of things that were always meant to be shared.

 This is especially true for us as Christians….

I would like to share an account from Scripture about some people who did well by not “keeping it to themselves”.

 **2 Kings 7:1-9(NIV)**  **1 Elisha said, “Hear the word of the LORD. This is what the LORD says: About this time tomorrow, a seah of flour will sell for a shekel and two seah’s of barley for a shekel at the gate of Samaria.”**  **2 The officer on whose arm the king was leaning said to the man of God, “Look, even if the LORD should open the floodgates of the heavens, could this happen?” “You will see it with your own eyes,” answered Elisha, “but you will not eat any of it!”**  **3 Now there were four men with leprosy at the entrance of the city gate. They said to each other, “Why stay here until we die?**  **4 If we say, ‘We’ll go into the city’—the famine is there, and we will die. And if we stay here, we will die. So let’s go over to the camp of the Arameans and surrender.**

 **If they spare us, we live; if they kill us, then we die.”**  **5 At dusk they got up and went to the camp of the Arameans. When they reached the edge of the camp, not a man was there,**  **6 for the Lord had caused the Arameans to hear the sound of chariots and horses and a great army, so that they said to one another, “Look, the king of Israel has hired the Hittite and Egyptian kings to attack us!”**  **7 So they got up and fled in the dusk and abandoned their tents and their horses and donkeys. They left the camp as it was and ran for their lives.**  **8 The men who had leprosy reached the edge of the camp and entered one of the tents. They ate and drank, and carried away silver, gold and clothes, and went off and hid them. They returned and entered another tent and took some things from it and hid them also.**  **9 Then they said to each other, “We’re not doing right. This is a day of good news and we are keeping it to ourselves. If we wait until daylight, punishment will overtake us. Let’s go at once and report this to the royal palace.”**

 The Northern Kingdom's capital, Samaria, was under a ruthless and relentless siege by the invading Syrian army and there had also been a famine in the land.

 Their stores of food had run out and the people in the city were starving. Animal heads and seedpods were fetching a high price from people who were desperate to eat something. Anything.

 The prophet Elisha was calm, assuring people the famine would soon be over.

 Sure enough, just before dusk the Lord caused the invading army that had the city surrounded and cut off to hear the imaginary sounds of an even greater army from Egypt. They fled for their lives, leaving their clothes, money, and food behind.

 The people in the city did not know that this had happened…

 At the city gate there were four lepers.

 People with leprosy have nothing and, therefore, nothing to lose.

 These four lepers were in even worse shape than the rest of those in the city as they were forced to be separate from the population because of their disease.

 So they say to themselves: **“Why stay here until we die?  If we say, ‘We’ll go into the city’—the famine is there, and we will die. And if we stay here, we will die. So let’s go over to the camp of the Arameans and surrender. If they spare us, we live; if they kill us, then we die.”**

 In other words these four lepers knew that they were probably dead either way but at least surrendered to the enemy offered a glimmer of hope.

So, they wentoutside the walls and discovered the enemy camp vacant.

 The army was gone but they left all their “stuff” behind.

 Their weapons, their money, their food supplies and other goods were all just sitting there ready to be carried off.

The four lepers dug in and ate their fill and made several plunder trips before a thought occurred to them and gave them pause: "**We're not doing right. This is a day of good news and we are keeping it to ourselves".**

 So, they go and tell the people of the city so that they too can be blessed by what they have found.

 We as Christians are only lucky lepers who have discovered that the siege of death has been lifted and we have had the chance to eat our fill of the gospel. We are forgiven and immortal through faith in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

 We have been spared a death sentence in hell and have the glory of Heaven in our future!

 When we accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior it is a day of good news.

 We have been forgiven! We have been saved from Hell! We have been given the keys to the Kingdom of God! We now know the way that men must be saved!

 But we are pretty good at keeping secrets, aren’t we?

 Even with things that were never intended to be kept secret….

 How often do we keep this good news that we have, the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the way that man can be saved, a secret by not telling others about it?

 Pam and I usually go down to the Kansas City area every year for a little vacation.

 This may be hard to believe but one of the primary things that we do down there is look for good places to eat.

 What kind of food is Kansas City famous for?

 Bar-B-Q!

 And we have tried all kinds of Bar-B-Q places in the KC area over the years.

 A few have been so good that we try to make sure we hit them at least once while we are down there.

 But we try other kinds of food venues also and a few years back we found a place in Overland Park that is truly amazing!

 It is a place called Cinzetti's. Cinzetti's is an Italian Buffet that is the most amazing buffet I have ever been to.

 It is a very large place and the outside walls are lined with small individual kitchens where each item is continually being prepared.

 In the center of the building is brick ovens where they make their Pizza’s.. At one end there is a station where they make crapes to order and next to it the kitchen where all the desserts are made and displayed…

 All the food is fresh and made in smaller batches right before your eyes and the quality is amazing….

We have told many, many people about this buffet and that if they are ever in the KC area that Cinzetti’s is a place you just have to try out…

 Possibly you have had similar experiences with food places or other attractions that you are so excited about you can’t keep it to yourself but you just have to tell others about it also.

 Now let me ask you a question…Do you ever get that excited about Jesus that you just have to tell others about Him?

 That you have found something so great in Jesus Christ that you want others to try it out for themselves?

 Sadly, sometimes we find ourselves more excited about a new restaurant we have discovered, or a new fishing hole or golf course or television show or book, than we do about Jesus and desiring to share Him with others….…

 Why is that?

Could it be that we have become so attached to the world in which we live that it dampers our enthusiasm for the Gospel of Christ?

 Scripture tells us that as a Christian we are to be in the world but not of the world….

 **John 17:13-19(NIV)
13“I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them.
14I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world.
15My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.
16They are not of the world, even as I am not of it.
17Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.
18As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.
19For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.**

Jesus said in regard to His followers: **They are not of the world, even as I am not of it.
As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.
For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.**

What Jesus is telling us here is that we are to be in the world but not of the world!

 To fulfill our calling as a Christian we need to go out into our world….We have been called to go out into our world with the Gospel message of Jesus Christ.

We are to go out into it without becoming a part of it..

 Not allowing it to influence us but we are to be influencing it for the Gospel of Christ…

Jesus says: **Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.  As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.  For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.**

The Greek word for sanctify is:

***hag-ee-ad'-zo*; to *make* *holy*, that is, *purify* or *consecrate*; to *venerate:*—hallow, be holy, sanctify.**

 Sanctify means to be set apart from by making holy….

We are to be set apart from the world by Gods holiness….

 Jesus says we are sanctified, made holy, by the truth, His word being that truth that sanctifies us or makes us holy.

 The more that we are in His Word the more “not of this world” we will become…..

 The more we are in His Word the more like Jesus we will become….

 The more that we are in His Word the less we will be “of the world “even though we are “in the world”….

 The more that we are in His Word the greater desire we will have to proclaim His Word and the Gospel message of Jesus to others…

 There is something wrong with a Church who becomes more excited about sharing the good news of a great new buffet in town or a good new movie or book or fishing hole or golf course than it does with sharing the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ with those around us who are literally dying to hear about Him and His love for them….

 When the Church finds itself in this condition it is because they have lost sight of their first love…

 I believe that the Church of today in America may parallel the Church at Ephesus that Jesus talks about in the book of Revelation in His message to the seven Churches…

**Revelation 2:1-7(NIV)
1“To the angelof the church in Ephesus write: These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands:
2I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false.
3You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary.
4Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love.
5Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.
7He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.**

I think that the Lord may very well be speaking to us today when He says: **4Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love.
5Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first.**

What is the height from which we may have fallen? What are the things that we did at first that we may not be doing now? How might have we forsaken our first love?

 Think back to that time when you first asked Jesus into your heart as your Lord and Savior…Think back to how excited you were and how you wanted others to find what you did…

 It is kind of like when you first fell in love with your husband or wife…You were excited about the new relationship and you were not shy about telling others about it….

 I believe that our lack of excitement about telling others about Jesus is often indicative of our coming to that place of forsaking our first love. Coming to a place of complacency about Jesus and sharing His Gospel message with others…

 So Jesus tells us to remember the height from which we have fallen. The height of our excitement about Jesus and desire to tell others about Him… And to **Repent and do the things you did at first.** In other words, repent and get your excitement for Jesus back…

How do we do that? We do that by renewed sanctification!

**Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.  As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.  For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.**

 If we have lost our zeal for the Gospel than we need to get back into Gods Word and allow Him to sanctify us anew, give us a fresh anointing in His Word and with His Spirit…

 Bring us back to the excitement of our First love..

Billy Graham once said something that I think can really benefit all of us as Christians today if we heed its message… *“There are those near you in your own community who need the regenerating power of Christ. You can call them by name. I suggest that you make a list and begin by spending time in prayer for them. Ask God to show you how to witness to them and how to win them. Their lives can be transformed by the message you give them. You are to share this Gospel you have received. If Christ has done anything for you, then share it. In so doing, you are showing mercy! As you have received the mercy of God by the forgiveness of sin and the promise of eternal life-thus you are to show mercy! And in showing mercy you will not only receive mercy but you will find a stimulating happiness!”*

And then Rev. Graham closed with this prayer: *As I close my eyes in prayer, let me see the faces of those who need to know You, beloved Savior.*

 Is this a prayer that we are not just willing, but desire to pray? *As I close my eyes in prayer, let me see the faces of those who need to know You, beloved Savior.*

King David cries out in the Psalms-- **Ps 22:22 I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will praise You.**

This morning, do you find that you can get more excited about sharing with others a good new restaurant or movie or book or fishing hole or golf course than you do about sharing Jesus?

 If so, have you forsaken your first love?

 If this describes us then we need to hear the word of the Lord this morning…**5Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first.**