



BelPres Church

Wherever You Go

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Thank you. Good morning. Buenos días. If you have your Bibles, bust them out. We're going to be in Acts 8 if you, whatever version you have. Since we're trying to use analog Bibles, I had to grab mine, dust it off a little bit because I have my electronic Bible. The only problem is the only Bibles I got at home is King James. So that's what you're all about to get. But don't worry, NIV is on on the screen. So let's turn to Acts 8, 4 Through 8 says this. Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word. Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake. I feel like using an English accent here, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did for unclean spirits. Crying with loud voices came out of many that were possessed with them. And many taken with palsies and that were lame were healed. And there was great joy in the city. God, may my words be your words. Lord, may your holy spirit lead us and guide us and open our hearts, our eyes and our ears to see what you have to say to us in your beautiful and your glorious name. Together we all said Amen. Well, when I was younger, before I was preaching and stuff, I was at a, at the Seattle center for an event and there was these cats who had these signs. Now for those of you who don't know me, I say cats for people like these cool cats, not like cat cats. If it's a cat cat, I'll tell you it's a meow cat. So these cats were people. So these cats had these signs out there of repent or go to hell and judgment is coming. And they were, you know, they were doing that whole hellstone and brim fire kind of fear mongering version of sharing the gospel. And

they were standing on this concrete bunker above everybody and I was watching them because nobody was listening to them, nobody was paying attention to them. So I observed them for a little bit until I got fed up with them because I feel like they were giving the gospel a bad name the way they were doing it. So I did what any normal person would do and I walked right up to them and started talking to them and I asked them how effective they thought they were. And is this what Jesus did to talk to people? And I. So I challenged them biblically. Well, they didn't like that. And eventually they just turned their backs on me and would not talk to me. I'm like two feet from them and I'm like, yo, I'm a brother in Christ. Let's talk about this. They had enough of me. My whole life, I've never really liked street preachers because my experience has been that. That they've always bugged me because all I've ever heard is these like angry, irritated cats who are just berating people, but not sharing the love and mercy and grace of the gospel. So I've always been fairly against it. But now what I've learned, studying for this sermon series of Holy Spirit Unleashed about historic revivals like the first and second Great Awakening, Azusa Street Revival, the revivalist reform movement, and and so on, is that women and men who trust and obey in the pouring out of the Holy Spirit are compelled to hit the streets and preach. This is new to me. It has challenged me to rethink what we call open air preaching. Not from a pulpit in a church, but somewhere out in public. Because one thing is clear, that when the Holy Spirit pours out on people, bold evangelism is sure to follow. Here at Belprez, we have been discussing about sustained, transforming revivals and that they all have something in common. Intense emotional experience of the presence of the power of Jesus, repentance and permanent change of behavior, unleashing of spiritual gifts, signs, wonders and miracles, social justice efforts that resulted in tangible change in society and lasting impact. Not just a moment, but a movement. And all revivals grew by women and men who called on the Spirit and trusted in the works of the Holy Spirit, which transformed their hearts and minds and then boldly evangelized to the community. It wasn't always easy. They faced opposition and persecution, and because of the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, they risked their lives and in some cases lost their lives sharing the gospel. Now, are some of you thinking right now, like, is this pastor about to tell me that I got to go out in the streets and start preaching? Oh, Lord, when is this over? Don't worry, I am going to tell you that. But we'll get to that. Don't worry. This is nothing new. We read about it in Acts, the first revival after the death and

resurrection of Jesus Christ. So let's turn back to Acts 8 and let me set it up. We're going to read 8:1 through 8:3. Let me set it up. Stephen, one of the newly appointed deacons, just fresh out of the session or whatever it is. What's the. How do you get deacons? Colin, what it's. What's the thing Nominating. There we go. Nominating. Just got nominated. Got his fresh badge out there. Well, he was chosen because he was filled with the Spirit and was spitting wisdom that no one could deny. And he was brought to court on some made up charges. And when they asked him, what are you doing? He proclaimed that Jesus was the Messiah and he told the spiritual leaders. And you rejected him. Well, they didn't like that. So they drug him out of town and they stoned him to death and killed him. So that's where we're starting in 8:1. And so we read. And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem. And they were all scattered abroad throughout the region of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. And devout men carried Stephen to his burial and made great lamentations over him. We got to bring that word back. Lamentations. As for Saul, he made havoc of the church. That's the King James for you. Havoc on the church. Entering into every house and hauling men and women committed them to prison. Now the NIV is up there, but I know the Holy Spirit can meld your brains and make it all make sense. The Holy Spirit can raise people from the dead. I'm sure he can make scripture work in your. In your cranium. So we see here that people who are part of the Jesus movement, the revival of the first century, are risking their lives to share the gospel because of Saul who is persecuting them. They have to scatter. They have to move to share the gospel into places outside of their comfort zone, AKA Samaria. But we find they felt called to continue to share the gospel in even while being persecuted. Which brings us to our first observation. The pouring out of the Holy Spirit gives us courage and boldness to speak the Word in adversity. On our own, it's a lot harder. But with the Holy Spirit, it gives us boldness, courage through adversity. So we go back to Acts 8:4 through 8:8 was what we started with. And there's a few key details that we have in this scripture that we have on the screen that we opened up reading with. And that is one. Philip is also one of the new seven appointed deacons like Stephen, fresh off committee, new parking spot or whatever you give to deacons or whatever. It's brand new. And. And he's out there preaching in Samaria, doing wonders and miracles. Philip was also in Samaria, not the nice part of town. According to the Jews. They did not like Samaria. It was an Ethnically and religiously mixed crew,

not purely Jewish. So they did not like that place. But the crowd listened to Philip because they saw the results of him sharing the gospel. Signs, wonders, casting out of demons and healings. This is what we call faith with evidence, not blind faith. But look, you spoke about Jesus. I see signs and wonders. Now I have some evidence of what you're saying is true. Now I want to listen to you. Now I want to believe. And it brought joy to the people. Because the gospel that Philip was sharing meant that Samaritans and Jews are family again under the banner of Christ. They did not like each other for centuries. What we read here in Acts is what we continually see in revivals after this time, back to what we started with, unleashing of spiritual gifts. That's preaching is one of those signs and wonders and miracles. Social reform. Here we hear that there was great joy. And in the city. Belprez, let me ask you a question. If we are part of revival, if revival starts to happen here, which I believe is happening, can we bring joy to the city? I don't know if you've been out there, but it's tough times for a lot of people. And we have the message of Christ. We have the Gospel to bring joy if we follow the Spirit. But it required dedicated Christians that when the Spirit was moving, they responded with trust and obedience to boldly evangelize. And for those of you who may not know what evangelize means, it just means sharing the gospel, sharing the good news, sharing the news of Christ. In this sermon series, we've talked a lot about the Azusa street revival, which happened in the US and the 20th century. But I want to talk about a different revival movement that happened in England in the 19th century. So there was this cat, his name was William Booth, back in the day in the 1800s. And he grew up essentially in middle class until his father lost everything, lost his business and shortly after that died, which scattered them to move from the nicer part of town into the slums of of East London. And at 13 years old, that exposed William to overt poverty and despair. And widows like his mother were marginal, heavily marginalized, and had little chance of success to move out of poverty on their own. It was there that he saw the ugly underbelly of England. Alcoholism, prostitution, theft and despair. He watched children sell what little they had in order to make money. He watched grown men who were so. Alcohol was so rampant that they would sell what little possession they have. And instead of giving to their family, they would go and spend that on alcohol too. And so there was this despair that he continually saw. And to be clear, this is the end of the 19th century and high society was no better. They just had the money to justify what they were doing and, and hide it. They were heavily addicted to opioids

and alcohol, but they could afford to essentially put people in private rehabs, keeping it secret or call these addictions habits. And it was also an unjust political system that those with money wanted to keep people poor because they needed to maintain cheap labor, including child labor. It was a rough time. I think the statistics like about 80% of people were in poverty at that time in that area. And one day William was introduced to the gospel by traveling American revivalist preacher in the area. And he went to every meeting. He was just eating it up and with prayer. He eventually gave his life to Christ. But it took him a while. And William was heavily influenced by, by people like John Wesley from other revivals from the Great Awakening. And he wanted to share this gospel that he heard so much about. He wanted to share. He asked God, how can I share this gospel? But he didn't know how. He would preach in the fields by his house, by himself. But he was never convinced or convicted that that was his calling. But he badly wanted to share it. And then one day when he was in the slums, he was walking down the streets of East London and he really took a look at the despair of the people. He looked past the wretchedness of these people who were ostracized by the rest of society and marginalized and felt deep compassion for them. So he kicked over a crate and in front of, outside of the blind beggar's bar, he stood and he started sharing the gospel. Some women brought some chairs to listen to him. People started laughing at him. Somebody even threw something at him. I don't know if they hit him, but they were throwing stuff at him. But that was his first sermon and he found his calling to speak to the most marginalized. This brings us to our second observation. The Holy Spirit gives us eyes to see what is breaking God's heart. The Holy Spirit gives us eyes to see what is breaking God's heart. I don't know about you, but I get a little self absorbed sometime and sometimes I don't pay attention to what's happening. But until I start talking to people, then I realize how much pain is out there. And I'm also. I'm getting old, so I'm out of touch. And my teenage daughters remind me that of all the time. So I need to learn whatever lingo and then make them cringe when I say it in front of their friends because that's the type of person that I am. William eventually met and married Catherine Mumford in 1852. Catherine who also shared a passion for share, for helping those in need. And together they became a source of hope and healing in that area. William eventually left his job as a pawn broker apprentice and became a full time minister in a Methodist church inside the Methodist church. But he never lost his passion for helping the most marginalized people in the area. So much so

that the church was getting irritated with him because he kept on bringing these riffraff into the church and they didn't like it and he was always helping them and they wanted him to focus on the church. But William and Catherine refused to stop helping them because they saw the effect of specifically men who he got off alcohol, who then were motivated to work, who then could raise money for their family to help them out of destitute. So they saw that they were making a real difference in lifting these families out of despair. And at one point, the church called a meeting to confront William and made a motion that said, and I quote, pastor Booth will end the work in the slums treating the alcoholics and will instead focus only on the congregation. Well, there was all the women there up in the balcony. I think that's where they, they had to sit in those times. And out of the balcony a woman yelled, never. That was Catherine Booth, his wife. And they did what any good church did. They send a bunch of men up there to remove her from this meeting. Who's making a ruckus. Well, that was William's final straw. He tipped his hat to his wife, proud of her outburst, and he walked out and resigned on the spot. Because from that point on, he leaned into his calling. His calling wasn't to be a senior pastor inside a church and his calling was to be a full time evangelist. And in the process, his wife also became a speaker. She was shy at first and timid, but with an epiphany in the calling of God and support from her husband because she didn't want to speak because that's normally what men would do. She then again, by the calling of God, she decided to and never looked back and always had the support of her husband. Over time, the Booths made radical changes in the area. People were giving their lives to Christ. They, their work would help so many people out of their desperate situations. Their ministry would continue to grow. William would refer to the ministry as being at war with Satan and called all his helpers the Volunteer army. And one day William's son, who was dictating a letter for his father, spoke up and process protest, said, I am not a volunteer, I am a full soldier of Christ. So they changed the word from volunteer army to the Salvation Army. So in 1865, the Salvation army was founded and the Salvation army continued to minister to the marginalized and made lasting social reform. But they would face trouble and criticism. Their street preaching was helping men overcome alcoholism, which meant that the bars were not making as much money because there was not as many men coming into the bars that some of them even closed down. So the alcohol industry took, took note and they paid protesters to disrupt wherever the Salvation army was preaching. They eventually made their

own army and called it the Skeleton army, who were hired to, to make a ruckus wherever they were preaching and harass them to eventually all the way to killing people of the Salvation army, the first one being a woman. And the cops wouldn't do anything. They were essentially paid to stand down. And anytime a riot broke out, after they kind of cleaned it all up, they would always take the Salvation armed people to jail and leave the Skeleton army alone. Well, eventually the Skeleton army got a little out of control and went too far and attacked the cops one time. Well, that ended that. The cops are like nah. And shut them down for good. And then we're supporting the Salvation Army. Now the Salvation army, over time, like other organization, has made its mistakes. There is no perfect organization, just like there's no perfect person. We all fall short of the glory. But in the early years of the Salvation army, they brought true revival in the East London area, bringing real social reform. People were overcoming their alcoholism. They were giving families a hand up, not just a handout. The Salvation army gave positions of power to women who were seen to be just as valuable as men. They opened up shelters for people sleeping under bridges. And they even played a pivotal role in change in the age of consent at the end of the 19th century for girls from 13 to 16. And the reason why that's important is because girls were being trafficked and forced to use their bodies to sell for sex and money. And society was just turning a blind eye. And the Salvation army stepped up to do something about it. The Salvation army, just like the first century Christians who brought radical social reform to Roman Greco society, included rescuing abandoned infants, nursing plague victims, elevating the status of women, and establishing first organized charities and orphanages and so on. And they did it by calling on the Spirit, trusting in the Spirit, obeying the call to bold evangelism. Which brings us to our final observation. Revivals bring social reform through dedicated followers of Christ. So Belprez, if we're truly going to allow the Holy Spirit to unleash in our lives and in this church family and trust the Spirit's guidance, we will need to have eyes that see and ears that hear where God is asking for change and be willing to step up to tell others. And we have already identified some issues here in Bellevue and on the east side where we are struggling. Affordable housing, affordable childcare for some people, mental health issues, especially with our youth, materialism, status and pride. The addiction in Bellevue of this is rampant. Homelessness is on the rise, helping refugees and immigrants. And let's be real, Belprez, Bellevue is a city of pill poppers, abuse of prescription drugs, opioids, fentanyl and alcohol. You may not

see it, but it is here and the state of Washington. We're one of the top five of the crisis of opioids in the entire country. These are just to name a few things that could use some social reform brought through by a revival. So I know y' all need action steps because that's how sermons end in Presbyterian churches. There's no action steps. What am I supposed to do? Well, don't worry, I'll get you some action steps. But first let me say this. If you're new to this whole thing, you're like, pastor, I'm, I, I'm just learning about Jesus, right? I don't even know if I have faith yet. Don't worry that this may not be the place where you want to start. But if you're new to the idea of Jesus, what I would highly recommend is reading the first eight chapters of the Book of Acts. It gives a good overview of what early Christians did right after the death and resurrection of Jesus. And then come and talk to a leader. Let us help you to get into a Bible study or into a community group so we can introduce you more to Jesus. And second, preaching is a spiritual gift. And it is not the only ways that that people can call or call to evangelism. There are different forms to do so. Bel Press has partnered with so many ministries that are helping to bring social reform like the boosted of the Salvation Army. You can go to our website@bellpres.org local and there you will look at the partners that we have that we've been working with, such as Acres of Diamonds and Duvalls Bridge Disabilities Ministries in Redmond, Matt Talbot, center in Seattle, and so many more. There are other ways to evangelize as well. So action steps. Y' all ready? Yeah, let's see. You're like, oh, Lord, please don't tell me what I'm about to tell me. First of all, if you're new to the whole thing, read Acts 1 through 8. If you're old, read it anyways. Acts 1 through 8. Second, pray. First, pray for the Holy Spirit to enter into your life and be ready to respond. Let me say that again. Pray to the Holy Spirit to enter into your life and then be ready to respond. Third, ask the Spirit where you need to speak out boldly and evangelize. It may not be out on the street. It may be in your neighborhood. It may be in your home, maybe at your work or at your school. But pray, ask the Spirit. Where do you need to be bold right now and share the gospel wherever you go? I recently had a couple of other encounters with some street preachers. Just a few months ago, I was in New York and there was this black woman who was evangelizing in the middle of Times Square. There's all these people. And I stood there and I listened to her. Cause I wanted to see if she was like, you're going to hell and God hates you and all this kind of stuff. But I was pleasantly surprised that she was actually sharing the love of Christ without fear and shame, but not compromising the need to repent from sin, give

your life to Jesus. In my eyes, she was truly sharing the gospel the way that I believe that Jesus would have us do with truth and love. And then the other one was just last week I was at Folklife Festival and these cats again with their signs, repent and go to hell. And one of them said, God hates divorce. And I'm like, that's what you're gonna lead with. You're gonna introduce people to Jesus with God hates divorce. That felt like Phil was like late to the meeting and he just grabbed whatever sign he could get and he just showed up. He's like, I don't. This is. He's like, dang it, Phil, whatever, here we go. And so my daughter, my 16 year old daughter was with me, badly wanted me to talk to them because she knows my story of me talking to these street preachers before. But fortunately there was these. There was this young cat, this young blood who was talking to the two of them and he was asking, he was talking to him, says, why not share the love of Christ instead of fear mongering and instead of my experience of them ignoring him and turning their back, what gave me hope is that they actually sat there and listened to him. And so these street preachers, this. This brought me up because these street preachers who were trying to evangelize by fear were, in return, being evangelized by love. Belprez I don't want to sound militant or off the rails, but it's gonna be a battle out there. Many of us in this room at one time, we have rejected the gospel. And people trying to share it with us was not something that we wanted to hear, but somebody in our lives or multiple people in our lives patiently and boldly kept at it. And we are here today because of them. So I'm afraid to say it, Belprez, but don't be surprised if the Holy Spirit continues to pour out on this church family that some of us might have to hit the streets. But like all revivals in the past, those who trusted and obey will be filled by the Spirit and filled with good news, signs and wonders. And we will be bold where before we were timid. Bow your heads with me, Father in heaven. Thank you so much for your word, Lord. We will go where you send us, Lord. May we call upon your spirit. We wait on your Holy Spirit to send us, to guide us, to strengthen us, to give us words that we don't have on our own, but wisdom that comes from you, Lord, that to share your love, your grace and your mercy with all who we meet and we all said together, Amen.

Scripture Reflection Questions: Read this week's scripture together and discuss the following:

- What do we learn about God (e.g., traits, personality, what matters, priorities) in this passage?
- What do we learn about people, and ourselves in particular, this week?

Sermon Reflection Questions: Reflecting on this week's sermon, discuss the following:

- Share about a time when the Holy Spirit has given you strength and courage to face adversity with boldness? How did you respond?
- What comes up for you when you consider that bold evangelism is part of revival? What might that look like for you?

Closing Question and Application: Given what we've discussed together today, how might God want you to apply these learnings to your life or in the life of your community this next week? Who might you share this with?

Closing group prayer: Spend a few minutes together in your group sharing prayer requests and then praying together for each other. Take the challenging parts of your conversation to Jesus. Thank God for the time together, the conversation shared, the other people in the group, and for encouragement in the week ahead.