

Have you heard of a man named Arthur Blessitt? Since 1968, he has carried a twelve-foot cross with a wheel at one end approximately 43,000 miles, on what the Guinness Book of World Records calls the world’s longest pilgrimage. He is 78 years old this year and is still doing it, and he does it simply to glorify Jesus and spread the gospel. He has no bodyguards, just his wife Denise driving along with supplies. On his website, he writes, “I have learned not to follow the normal but to be willing to step out and break through the walls that have been holding back the bold and daring in their journey of following Jesus and His radical callings.”

Is that how you think of your life with Jesus—as a bold and daring radical calling? Or do you play it "close to the vest" when it comes to expressing your faith? Although we may feel inadequate in our witnessing; although we may fear other's opinions of us, Jesus can remove our fear and replace it with boldness and commitment.

In Jerusalem, there are certain places of worship where the incense is very heavy. As worshippers return to their homes or meet friends on the street, other people can tell where they've been, just by the scent.

Can other people tell where you have been, where you are coming from, and where you are going? Does your life give off the scent of a holy God?

A truck driver once came to a pastor and told him about a man who went to his church who lived in the same apartment complex as the truck driver. Because of the example of that man's faith, the truck driver wanted to join the Lutheran church. "That man has a faith to live by," the driver said. "I want that faith." Could people say that about you?

They could have said it about the apostle Peter. Peter had been called out of a life of fishing the sea of Galilee and called into a life of preaching the good news of Jesus. Examples of his preaching and teaching are all through the New Testament, such as the words of today’s First Reading: “For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Just tremendous content there—and, of course, it was this man, Peter, who was moved by the Holy Spirit to stand up on Pentecost and deliver a sermon that would result in 3,000 baptisms taking place that day. He clearly had a faith to live by. His life gave off the scent of a holy God. But it wasn’t always that way.

Before Peter became the power proclaimer, he had been the courtyard coward. It only took a couple inquisitive servant girls to get Peter to lose his cool, not to mention his confession of faith. Out of a sense of, what? Fear? Self-preservation? He denied knowing who Jesus was. But Jesus had predicted it, and tied that prediction to a real-life cue, so when the rooster crowed, Peter was crushed with the awareness of his own sin. The man’s man who could pull nets full of fish to shore all by himself had wilted under pressure. He went out and wept bitterly, a strong man reduced to sobbing by his own failure. I’m guessing he shocked himself with how quickly and fully He had turned away from pledging allegiance to Jesus. Have you ever had a moment where it’s almost like you’re standing outside yourself—you’re watching and listening to yourself, thinking, “I can’t believe I just did that”?

When we examine ourselves, we must admit that we can be like Peter. We live lives that say, "I don't know the man." We need to get back on solid ground with God. Fear makes us quiet Christians, but Jesus

can replace our fear with boldness and commitment. If Jesus really means "good news" to us, we are going to share Him. It's just that simple.

Many preachers and their listeners never get beyond talking about the need to share the good news. Everyone nods their heads and says, "Yeah, I should witness more." Then they go home and nothing happens. Now don't misunderstand; I'm not saying that we need to imitate other religious groups that go door to door, up and down the streets of our town. I'm not saying you have to go to a class and learn the quote-unquote "right way" to witness. What I am saying is this: if Jesus is good news to you; more than that; if you have been led by Word and Spirit to the conclusion that you owe your life to Jesus, how in the world are you going to hide that? How could you? I'm not saying that we all need to become the next Billy Graham; but I am saying that if you truly believe Jesus rescued you from the jaws of hell, then your life is going to give off the scent of your Savior. In other words, people will see Jesus in you. Your faith will show up naturally in your everyday life. And you won't have a problem talking about the person who did all this for you, namely, Jesus, the Son of God.

In a book called *Why People Join the Church*, Edward Rauff lists the reasons people find a place in a Christian congregation: the search for community; a personal crisis; the journey toward truth; a church program or special event; the influence of a pastor; but the number one reason people come to church and stay there is that a friend or family member invited them. Other polls and studies have come to the very same conclusion: churches grow and people come to saving faith when Christians are inviting their family and friends to "come and see." Your witness can be renewed when you begin to see yourself as an "inviter." Maybe that describes who you already are. The invitation to come and see God at work is a great gift. Can you think of someone, anyone, right now that you would like to give this gift to?

The ability to do this comes from the Holy Spirit. If you're going to invite others to come to Jesus, you have to tap into the Holy Spirit. The good news is, that isn't complicated, either. It's like putting a plug into a wall socket. Plug into the Word of God. Plug into Jesus' body and blood given in His holy supper. Tap into these things and the Holy Spirit will give you what you need to be an inviter.

Dr. Howard Kelly, a famed surgeon in Baltimore, was seldom seen without a beautiful rosebud on the lapel of his coat. The flower remained fresh for a long time, and there was a reason. When people asked him the secret, he turned his lapel and showed them a little glass vial containing water. The stem of the rose went through the buttonhole into the water, keeping it fresh for a longer time. Dr. Kelly would then tell those who asked that the secret of living a fragrant Christian life lies in drawing refreshment from the water of life, Jesus Christ.

That water of life is yours—and always has been—in your baptism. Now invite someone you know to that same refreshment, in the name of Jesus.