**Series:** Throw Out the Lifeline

**Title**: Lifelines for Saying and Praying

**Theme**: Helpful verses and themes to form our Gospel Vocabulary

**Scripture**: Matthew 9:35-38, Ephesians 2:8-10, Philippians 1:3-6

**Date:** 2019-03-17 (AFCC)

We continue our theme of throwing out lifelines for rescue today-- a way of thinking through the helpful tools and attitudes we need in order to share the rescuing gispel of Jesus with the hurting people around us.

* There is a world out there that is drowing and in need of help-- what are we going to do about it?
* In our series together, we’ve looked at:
  + Some basics of sharing our faith,
  + The importance of authenticity,
  + How Grace works in our lifelines,
  + The insightful ways Jesus witnessed to those around him,
  + And the importance of asking the Lord for open eyes as we seek to rescue others.

In studying for today;s message, I was reminded of several years ago, taking a CPR class. We learned all about the techniques, timing, and steps to take to breath life back into someone.

* But there was one very critical first step that we were to do, and it was easy to forget in the rush to take action.
* In fact, if we didn’t do this first step consistently and clearly every time, we wouldn’t pass the class.
  + That first step? We were to shout as loudly as possible “CALL 911!”
  + It was kind of funny at first, because the class was about a dozen people in a quiet conference room. I wondered what everyone walking past us might have thought!
  + But by the end of the day, everyone of us was shouting “CALL 911” before beginning our “staying alive” rhythm and routine.

Rescues are filled with different shouts and sayings: “SOS!” “MAYDAY MAYDAY MAYDAY”

* We might even hear “HELP” or “STOP, THIEF.”
* That leads into our theme for today: “Lifelines for saying and praying.”
* We need a kind of “Gospel vocabulary” or faith language to help us when we pray about helping the lost, talk with the lost around us, and even encourage ourselves through the ups and downs of life in Christ.
  + Maybe this Gospel Vocabulary shows up as an internal monologue to encourage yourself in a stressful time:
    - *“Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself” from Matthew 5.*
  + Perhaps It shows up in my thoughts when I’m seeing a beautiful mountain sunset before me-- almost reflexive or second nature.
    - *From Psalm 24 “The earth is the LORD’s, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein…”*
  + I remember another time that my gospel vocabulary reflex kicked in
    - I was bicycle camping with Harrison and my dad-- Harrison was 5 or 6, totally dependent on me for his safety…
      * as we rode our metal bikes with our metal tent poles and metal bike trailer on an exposed open levee around one side of the 93 square mile 5 miles from the trailhead and safety of our car…
      * A huge lightning storm came up… like the kind you see on a nature documentary or or a news report of an idiotic dad getting killed while camping!
        + I found myself praying out loud as I pedaled “Our father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name…”
        + I didn’t know what else to say or do other than to pedal fast and to pray loud.

Saying and praying lifelines are good for us as well ast the people we’re tryuing to reach. Afetr all, if Christians aren’t saying and praying the good news of God’s Woerd-- who will?

* Who else is going to say “have a blessed day” or “do you mind if I pray for you?”
* So we say it, pray it-- shout it-- sing it-- however we do it, we must be verbalizing the gospel on a regular basis it:
  + *As the Psalmist says in Psalm 19: “****May the words of my mouth and the meditation*** *of* ***my heart*** *be pleasing to you, O LORD,...”*

So let’s look at 3 passages for you to add to your Outreach toolkit-- These are things to say to yourself or to others.

* These are Scriptures to feast and pray on at length or to take morsels from for later.
* Things to pray when you’re spiritually famished and don’t have the energy to do anything else, or passages to point others to when they ask you for advice
  + We’ll consider just a few today, but I hope you already have a few “sayings and prayings” in your heart that can bubble up when you need them most
  + So first up, let’s start with Grace-- that’s always a good place to begin in Jesus Christ!

Let’s look at Ephesians 2:8-10 for how we can say and pray things about Grace this week. We covered this in depth on February 24th, so today I just want to pick up on 2 essential themes:

**Ephesians 2:8-10 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.**

* You could really “say and pray” about 20 different things in this chapter, and you might want to do just that-- take a 1 verse a day for 10 days and see how it goes.
* But for today, verse 8-10

**#1 “By grace I have been saved.”**

***For by grace you have been saved through faith...it is the gift of God* (Eph. 2:8)**

* Say it for yourself ‘By grace I can be/have been saved”. Pray it with someone else. “By grace, you can be saved”
* I’m not sure that there is a single believer who hasn’t questioned grace at least once --
  + “I’ve fallen too far, I’ve stooped too low. Jesus could never save me.”
  + “I’ve got too much making up to do, too much to change, too much to finish or too much to start before Christ could ever receive me.”
    - These are the comments you may have said for yourself and these are the comments you’ll hear in many of your gospel conversations.
    - So we say it and pray it: We call it Amazing grace, undeserved grace, grace upon grace-- and at the heart of it all that simple truth
      * “By grace I have been saved”
      * It builds into the other “say it and pray it” for this passage:

**#2 “This is not my doing”**

***This is not your own doing...not a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are his workmanship...* (Eph 2:8-10)**

* “Not my own doing” is an important phrase to remember. This is the cure for:
  + Self-righteousness--
    - If it’s not my own doing, I can’t take credit for it, brag, or boast about it.
  + Self-Doubt--
    - If it’s not my own doing, I can’t lose it, I can’t sin so bad that God takes it away.
  + Self-defeat--
    - If it’s not my own doing, then I’m not discouraged when I gave that lost person my best Gospel talk, bought them a bible, sent them the greatest good-new email ever written and left them prayerful voice mails with no clear response on their part.
      * I invited them to church and even took them to lunch and they STILL don’t believe!
      * But it’s not my own doing, or my own works-- It is God who makes the increase.
* Say it and pray it this week: Be reminded of God’s grace in YOUR life. Remind someone else of God’s grace in THEIR lives, and remember that it is Jesus Christ at work in all of the successes and set-backs that we’ll face in life.

Let’s move to another NT Letter and see what we can be saying and praying about how we share life together with those around us, whether past, present, or future.

**Philippians 1:3-6 I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, 4 always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, 5 because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. 6 And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.**

**#3 “I thank my God in my remembrance of you”**

***I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, 4 always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, 5 because of your partnership in the gospel* (Phil 1:3-5)**

* God is always at work. He is on the move. Therefore, his people are also on the move.
* Paul, especially, seems to talk a lot about moving on and leaving behind:
  + He mentions running towards a goal (Phil 3:14), old things passing away (2 Corinthians 5:17) and being poured out unto the Lord at the end of life (2 Timothy 4:6-9)
* As we walk together side by side for Christ, not all of us will see each other every day on the journey.
  + When we have a shared faith with someone else, it’s not uncommon to grow together much more quickly than we might expect
  + Think of spiritual growth at a summer camp or a week of service on a mission trip and how quickly you may bond with other believers you’ve never even met before.
    - Then, all too soon, it’s over and we may never see that person again this side of heaven, save for an occasional update on social media or news we hear.
  + This applies to so many experiences as we serve the Lord:
    - That child you ministered to at Vacation Bible School before they moved away at the end of the summer.
    - That teacher that meant so much to you and showed you God’s word in a special way before they were transferred.
  + I often think about students I ministered to in my short life as a youth director, or people I counseled long ago.
    - I think about Mrs. Giles, whose sunday school class opened my eyes to the gospel in elementary school.
    - Mr. Laplue who first suggested I teach a bible lesson on one of our ministry trips while I was still in middle school.
    - Mr. Pierce, who gave me opportunities to lead in music in chapel services
      * We move on, move away, whatever it may be, but for a season we had a “partnership in the gospel” together.
* When those bitter sweet remembrances come up, I “thank God in my remembrance of them.” I look forward to seeing them again in Heaven if I can’t find them on Facebook!
* But there is another component here and I want to apply this specifically to our calling to toss our gospel lifelines to those aorund us. Let’s look at the other side of this idea:

**#4 “He who began a good work in you will complete it”**

***And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.*  (Phil 1:6)**

* To be clear, When Paul talks about “remembrance” in verse 3 he’s talking specifically about remembering fellow believers we’ve lived and served with. But I think we can apply it some degree to say it and pray it in regard to non-believers.
  + Not to thank God for their faith, which we my not know for sure,
    - but to thank him that we got to share the gospel with them and that He will be faithful to keep working in them according to his providence.
      * Think of the person at Urban Ministry you prayed with that you’ll never see again.
      * Think of the business person you shared a lunch on a trip who has since been transferred
      * Think of the young child that came to Vacation Bible School for just a few days before they moved away that summer.
* When you’re living a gospel life and planting gospel seeds, you’ll encounter 100s of people you may never see again--
  + What became of their faith? What became of their prayer need? How did God work in their lives?
  + It’s a great comfort to take the spirit of Philippians 1 and adapt it in our praying and saying:
    - I thank God for our remembrance of them and thank God that when Jesus is indeed in their hearts, then *he who began a good work in them will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ* (Phil 1:6).
      * If we are fellow-christians and partners in faith, then we will be there together at the “day of completion” for a glorious homecoming together.

Say it and pray it for God’s ongoing work: in the lives that have touched US, in the lives WE have touched, in the lives we weave together with every one that we partner with in the gospel with, even if just for a moment.

Now, let’s look at Matthew 9:36-38 for how we can say and pray things about God’s Work in the world and God’s work through you in the world. I’d like to get a bit more pointed here, so buckle up!

**Matthew 9:36-38 When [Jesus] saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; 38 therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”**

* So #5 fon your outline today is pretty straightforward:

**#5 “He is Lord of the Harvest”**

***The harvest is plentiful...pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest ...*(Matt. 9:37-38)**

* There is so much work to be done!
  + Maybe you see a need for harvest in your home--
    - These kids aren’t going to raise themselves! This mortgage has another 25 years to go! My marriage needs work!
      * Jesus is Lord of that Harvest-- the planting, the watering, the blossoming. He’s got it! Look to him…
      * When you and your spouse and your kids are all growing in the same direction towards Christ, you’re all growing together.
  + Maybe you’re seeing a need in your community--
    - Who will help? How progress be made? How long will I keep waiting on the world to change?
      * But remember that Jesus is Lord of the harvest. He oversees it all.
  + Maybe you see life in this church that you call home--
    - We’ve got practical needs here: church budgets to keep, covenant children to raise, marriages to heal, youth staff to hire, detention ponds to build, a preschool bursting at the seems…
      * Jesus is Lord of the harvest right here at 5113 Mackay Rd.
      * Be encouraged, and then be challenged, beacuse there is a corresponding idea in verse 38:

**Matthew 9:37b-38 The laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”**

* Say it this week:

**# 6 “I am the Laborer”**

***The laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord….to send out laborers into his harvest.* (Matt 9:37-38)**

* I’m praying for laborers. Then I realize, I AM a laborer. If not me, then who?
* If I have a burden, a calling, a talent, a gift, a qualification, an interest, a season of time when I can do something--- *why am I not doing it?*
* At a men’s breakfast last year, we spoke of this. How so often we pray for other laborers when WE are the laborers.
  + I like to ask this in 2 complementary ways:
    - First, “Am I cultivating all that God is calling me to cultivate?
    - Second, “Am I NOT cultivating the things that God is calling me to Not cultivate?”
      * Anytime I choose NOT to serve, NOT to cultivate, or NOT labor, I must have an answer for the Lord of the Harvest.
      * “Lord, here is why I’m praying for someone else to do it instead of doing it myself.”
        + I may indeed have a very good reason. But many times, I don’t.
        + So let me ask it again in a more personal way:
* “Are you cultivating all that God is calling you to cultivate?”
  + That one may be easy to answer:
    - You can think right now of the 3-4 things that you’re doing in service and family and ministry and feel good about it.
      * Well done!
  + But the other question is just as important and a bit harder:
* “Are you NOT cultivating the things that God is calling you to NOT cultivate?”
  + You may be thinking I’m talking about NOT cultivating sin or bad habits-- but that’s not it. It’s a bit more complicated:
* It is the difference between Passive obedience and Active obedience
  + Passive: We may approach God in a neutral, passive way:
    - When God is simply not leading one way or the other on whether we should do something.
  + Active: We may approach him in an active way:
    - Those times God is saying, “Go... No Go... or Wait”
* All that is good to think about. But let’s go one step further: When you choose to not cultivate something-- and NOT be a laborer, is it truly because God is calling you to not cultivate it-- or is it simply because you hope someone else will step up and do it for you?
  + If God hasn't called you to serve in this or that, it doesn’t necessarily mean he’s calling you to not serve.
    - Not every need in your community is going to come with a burning bush to tell you to get to it!
* I see some areas of service and think: “My gifts are so far outside of those things that God is not calling me to do them, and he’s even adding:
  + “Brian please do NOT do them….you’d really mess that one up!”
    - I’d be a lousy chaplain for the Panthers
    - I’d be a terrible pilot for the JAARS bible translation ministry
    - I’d be a very poor chef for Urban Ministry
      * Make sense?
* But I see other areas of service and think: “Well, That’s not really my thing-- but I could assist for a few months, I could help get this thing off the ground, I could be the interim “whatever” just for a bit.
  + And there is a lot of ministry that fits into that:
    - When we went with the youth to Orlando last year, Toccoa and I were asked to lead a dance party at the Alzheimer's Care facility with I-kid-you-not an endless loop of “Poker Face” by Lady Gaga.
      * And what am I going to say “I’m sorry the Lord isn’t calling me to Lady Gaga dance parties with Senior Citizens.”
    - My first month or two at Effingham Presbyterian, They asked me to be in the dunking booth for a Spring Carnival.
      * I didn’t realize I was the ONLY one to be in the dunking booth for something like 2 hours!
        + “No, children the Lord is not leading me to submerge myself in your dunking booth.”

I’m sure that you’ve done plenty in the name of gospel ministry that the Lord has not necessarily compelled you or called you to do.

* There are 100s of gospel ministry opportunities that you can help with that the Lord may never call you to for a lifetime of service and commitment.
* But he is certainly not calling you to “sit this one out” or “let someone else have a turn”
  + Because there is never a day when he’s not calling you to share the gospel in word and deed.
* When Jesus says The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few, he’s looking right at us.

Say it and pray it this week:

* “He is Lord of the Harvest” “I am the Laborer.
* “He who began a good work in you will complete it. I thank my God for every remembrance of you.”
* “By Grace I have been saved. This is not my doing.”
  + We need not call 911 or shout SOS, but we call upon the rescuing name of the Lord to be the saving lifeline.

**---HANDOUT/ INSERT---**

Intro:

Ephesians 2:8-10

1. “By \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ I have been \_\_\_\_\_\_\_.”
2. “This is not \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_.”

Philippians 1:3-6

3. “I \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ my God in my \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of you”

4. “He who began a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in you will \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_.”

Matthew 9:35-38

5. “Jesus is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_”

6. “\_\_\_\_\_\_ am the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.”