

Opportunity Vs Opposition

August 4, 2024

Welcome to the Beamsville Church of Christ online ministry. The message this week is titled Opportunity Versus Opposition. Thank you to Ed, Gloria, Jon, and Paul for being part of the service. The scripture reading is Matthew 9 35 to 38. August 4th starting at 5 p.m. is Singspiration at Camp Omagh, 1014 Lower Base Line Milton Ontario. Bring your lawn chairs and your singing voice. Happy birthday this week to Sheri and to Helen.

Welcome, Announcements, Prayer

Good morning and welcome to all of you for coming and hope we have some time together today to listen to God's word and to listen to prayers and sermon and commune together that will give us a little shot in the arm so that this week we can be God's hands and feet.

Our birthdays this week, Dave's having a birthday and Annie and Mariam, no anniversaries. I congratulated Jenny this morning when she came in as a fellow Canadian and she got her citizenship papers this week [applause].

Prayer requests: Kendra Ellis, niece of Barbara and Don passed away suddenly last weekend.

We received a card from Alice and she says to my Beamsville Church family, "Thank you for the flowers, cards and comforting thoughts regarding the passing of my baby sister Dorothy. I am so grateful to be a part of your church family." Alice is lovely, she's a lovely person. If you don't know her, she's very engaging, she likes to talk to people and she's just a lovely person. Let's pray.

Our Father in Heaven, we're thankful for this opportunity that we can be together this morning. We pray Father that we'll open our minds and be challenged by the scriptures that are shared today and the thoughts that are being shared today by Paul as he preaches; through communion.

We pray Father that we might be moved by these things in our lives to move closer to you and to be your hands and feet in the community.

We pray that we will regard coming to the church building as an opportunity to be built up so we can be the church leaving the building to penetrate the culture like yeast and like salt and like light to our community.

We're thankful for each other and for the faith that we see in each other. We pray that it will grow and that we pray that we'll be more impactful in our lives in leading others to you. Pray these things in Jesus' name, Amen.

Communion

Good morning, everyone. What does being an example of Christ look like? If I stood out the front of the church building and I held up my Bible and I said, "I'm a Christian or a Christ follower, would there be enough evidence to convict me?"

In John 13, 15, Christ just finished washing the disciples' feet and he said, "I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you." In 1 Timothy 4, Paul's telling Timothy, verse 12, he said, "To set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith, and in purity." And in Ephesians 4, 1, Paul says, "I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received." We all remember Galatians 5, 22, which tells us what the fruit of the Spirit is. It begins with love. Adam sings that almost every Sunday morning for the children. I'm going to put my glasses on.

In 1 Corinthians 13, and I won't read the whole chapter, but in verses 4 to 8, it says, "Love is patient. Love is kind. It does not envy. It does not boast. It is not proud. It is not rude. It is not self-seeking. It is not easily angered. It keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil, but it rejoices in the truth. It always protects. It always trusts. It always hopes. It always perseveres. Love never fails.

In Ephesians 5, 1, and 2, it tells us, "Therefore be imitators of God as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."

Now remembering that sacrifice, that's what we're doing right now. We take the bread, which reminds us of his body, and we take the wine, which reminds us of his blood, and we give thanks to God for our freedom to love as he does. Pray with me, please.

Dear God, our Father, we thank you that Christ became the ultimate sacrifice for our sins. And we pray we will live a life that is an example to others of your love. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Scripture Reading

Matthew 9:35-38

Reading this morning is found in Matthew 9, verses 35 to 38.

Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. And he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few." Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.

Sermon

Opportunity Vs Opposition

November 1939, it's been two months since Nazi Germany invaded Poland and one month since Poland surrendered. France and Britain have declared war but there's not much fighting. An uneasy quiet has descended over the Western at Europe and neither side has taken major risks. It's obvious that quiet war, that quiet won't last and a German executive named Hans Ferdinand Meyer or Meer has picked aside. Meyer is visiting Oslo on a business trip. He doesn't look much. He's a neat middle-aged fellow in a suit who works in some sort of corporate research lab back in Germany. Nobody bats an eyelid when he descends from his room to the lobby of the Oslo's elegant Hotel Bristol and asks the head porter, "Would it be possible please to borrow a typewriter?" Meer takes the typewriter back upstairs to his room. He closes and carefully locks the

door, pulls a pair of gloves on to obscure his fingerprints. What he's about to do is dangerous. If the Gestapo ever find out, he's dead. Then Meer's gloved fingers begin to type perhaps the most spectacular intelligent leak in history.

In a terse but wide-ranging pair of reports he describes Nazi Germany's most sensitive military technologies. Their bomber production, the aircraft carrier being built in a German harbor, the remote controlled gliders fitted with large explosive charges. Meer definitely outlines the Nazi autopilot system which is under development which would allow them to take down barrage balloons using unmanned planes. He keeps typing describing ballistic missiles that the German Army are developing and the name of a research center where they're being developed. He provides a location just north of Berlin of the R&D laboratories of the German air defense, the Luftwaffe, and suggests that there would be a rewarding target for the British. How did Meer learn all this? Some of its gossip from its wrong but much of what he writes is specific technically rigorous and absolutely accurate. And this he knows because he is the director of Siemens Research Laboratory in Berlin. And the scientists working for him have increasingly been producing cutting-edge electronics for military purposes. Shortly after Meer borrows a typewriter he arranges it to have his two letters delivered to Oslo's British Embassy.

For the embassy staff they're mysterious, sensational, baffling. It seems that it could be some of Nazi Germany's most secretly guarded secrets signed only by a curious name Martel. Who sent them? Can they be believed? Meer must be convinced that some deep evil lurks in the heart of the Nazi regime because he's willing to risk his life to warn the British of what the Nazi military is capable of. But will the British listen? It should have been clear that Hans Ferdinand Meer's letters which became known as the Oslo report were worth taking seriously. This mysterious writer could have been a crank but the letters or the letters could have been a fakes. A double bluff planted by the Nazis to receive to deceive the British about their real capabilities. But the Oslo report contained several paragraphs that could hardly be bluff. They gave detailed and authoritative description of German radio wave technology. At the time the British tended to be rather sniffy about British German engineering. Yes the Germans could do things cheaply but they were hardly the cutting edge.

Meer's report suggested otherwise. He explained that Luftwaffe was developing guidance systems using radio beams to help bombers drop their payload exactly at the right spot. Germany would be able to bomb British targets even at night. Meer also described Germany's defensive radar technology. Shortwave radio transmitters which bounce signals off incoming aircraft using the reflections as an early warning system. If the British sent bombers over Germany the radio stations would see them coming and German fighter groups would have easy pickings. He gave details, wavelengths that were being used, even mathematical formulas involved. This couldn't be bluff. At the very least it proved someone in Germany knew all about radar. Radar technology would be pivotal in the Second World War and Hans Ferdinand Meer's brave decision to expose the secrets of German radar could be pivotal too if the British took it seriously.

In 1937 Luftwaffe proved the point that radar was very important by laying waste to a Spanish market town of Guernica. Guernica, any Spanish speakers out there? Guernica. I was close. I was within the alphabet and one one of the major first bombings of a civilian population. When it was first attacked the British were already working on the secret defense against these bombers

for years. By 1939 that defense was fully prepared. An invisible network of radio stations blanketed the country in places with reliable electricity, supplies, good visibility over the sea, and, very important, would not gravely interfere with grouse shooting. This was Britain after all. If grouse shooting was disrupted then the Nazis have already won. These radar stations would be send out pulses of invisible light radio waves and detect the reflection of those pulses from bombers that could send fighters to intercept them. Using this radar outnumbered forces could defend against a larger force.

So, when hence Ferdinand Mayer was typing his secret Oslo report in early 1939, "Radar was old news to the British. What was new and what should have been a dramatic revelation was the fact that the Germans had radar too. Mayer's brave act of espionage could save many lives if they paid attention to it. If not they'd have to figure out the hard way." On December 18th 1939, a few weeks after Mayer had typed his report, "It was a cold bright day over the northwest coast of Germany. Naval base of..." again German place, "Welm Wiehlemshaven." German speakers out there? No, okay, it's within English. "And the Royal Air Force was a lovely day for precision bombing of the German fleet. Not a bomb would be wasted according to the British. No civilian would be harmed. Conditions were ideal. All this assumed that the bombers would attack without warning. The defenders, if the defenders knew they were coming, however clear conditions would be a double-edged sword. The fighters would also have clear skies. The German fighters stationed at the naval base said nothing was coming today because obviously the British wouldn't try such a foolish gambit. But little did the British know that on a small island outside of the naval base was a radar establishment. The British come flying over with 22 bombers and they're 22 sitting ducks.

Two years earlier, 1937, relations between German Luftwaffe and the British Royal Air Force have been cautious but cordial, pre-war. Officers from each side would visit each other chatting diplomatically about friendships between the two great nations. One visiting officer took a surprisingly frank line of questioning. "How are you getting on with your experiments in the detection of radio by radio of aircraft approaching your shores?" He asked his astonished hosts. He added cheerfully, "We've known for some time that you were developing a system of radio detectors and so are we and we think we are ahead of you." The British didn't need Meyer to warn them about German radar. Luftwaffe officer had already done that two years before but somehow they didn't recognize it.

In December 39, the same month as the disastrous raid on the German harbor, six weeks after Meyer's letters, another German named Hans would present the British with another opportunity to learn what they'd faced. This is the captain of the Gaffspree German battleship. Anyone know the Gaffspree? It was in the waters of the South Atlantic sinking merchant ships and the British got lucky with the shot and knocked its fuel refinery offline. It had to make an urgent stop and a neutral port. The local British ambassador fooled the captain and thought that they were British battleships coming and the captain of the Gaffspree scuttled her just outside the harbor to prevent the British from getting a ship. However, the bottom of the sea was only 12 yards down. Most of the ship remained above surface. The photographs of the burning wreck went around the world gleefully exploited by the British press. A quote across the river, "Smoke from the Gaffspree be undeclared," and as it did, an observer of British intelligence noticed something curious about the photographs. What was that mysterious network of crisscrossing wires on the Gaffspree's forward tower?

January 1940, a British radar scientist named Robert Hill-Bainsbridge Bell, and that's in English, he thought that the array on the Gaffspree looked suspiciously like a radar system. He flew to Uruguay to find out more. When he arrived, his James Bond style cover story was that he was a scrap metal dealer. British intelligence had in fact just bought the ship as scrap metal. He went out and examined it and found that yes indeed it was a German radar system, complete, installed, and functioning. Bainsbridge gazed and saw an amazement that detailed an advanced technology that was there. His report was filed and it seems like no one ever read it. Not only had Meyer had worn the British, the Germans had radar, the Bell had seen the radar with his own eyes, but the official position of the Royal Air Force, however, was the Germans definitely didn't have it. By February 1940, it should have been obvious the Germans had radar, but the British refused to believe it and the delay was costly. Over and over again, the British would lose aircraft because they refused to believe that the radar was there.

This pattern continues. I could go on a chap named R.V. Jones just listened to the radar coming across the channel, recorded it, figured it out, reported it to his superiors. They discovered actual, they captured pilots, interrogated them, who told them about radar that the Germans had, refused to believe it. The very end, finally, it seems they understood the Germans had the radar. This was all put in front of Churchill and Churchill said this is after the fall of France. "Oh, surely the Germans captured some of our radar sets when we abandoned France, when we left France." The fact was the Germans had captured some radar sets of the British left behind, they looked them over, said, "These are rather crude," and left them.

The British in the early years of the war had a belief system about German radar. They chose to interpret the evidence that they saw to support that belief system. This could have been an amazing opportunity to understand the German capabilities. The Oslo report gave the British some very good ideas of places to strike that would have set them back massively. But the British leadership only looked at the evidence one way that supported their beliefs.

This principle can be applied in our lives in many ways. Today I want to think about how we view our individual faith lives and corporate faith lives in our society. The evidence we choose to accept, the evidence we choose to discard.

How do we view our faith journeys individually and collectively in the context of where we live and how we live? Unlike the British who ignored a fairly conclusive set of evidence that was pretty one-sided, how we live out our faith and interact in our society is often more complicated. There is both evidence of opposition and evidence of opportunity. But it's so easy to have an hardened belief that there's just one side or the other. Often that there's just opposition. To focus on the rejection, the criticism, maliciousness, and to forget that the person who might be willing to listen. The open door of the invitation that we might come across. How do we approach our society? Do we approach our society as an opportunity or as an opposition in our faith lives? Both of these approaches are evidenced in Matthew 9.

Let's turn there now and start at verse 1. As we read through Matthew 9, I want us to notice each passage and how people relate, react to Jesus. The opportunity and the opposition he faces, as such we're not really looking in-depthly at each passage, but rather we're looking at the context and the trend as he goes through chapter 9. Starting at verse 1.

"Jesus climbed into a boat and went back across the lake to his own town. Some people brought to him a paralyzed man on a mat. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralyzed man, Be encouraged, my child, your sins are forgiven. But some of the teachers and religious say to themselves, saw to themselves, that's blasphemy. Does he think he's God? Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked them, Why do you have such evil thoughts in your hearts? It is easier to say your sins are forgiven or stand up and walk. So I will prove to you that the Son of Man has the authority on earth to forgive sins. Then Jesus turned the paralyzed man and said, Stand up, pick up your mat and go home. And the man jumped up and went home. Fear swept across the crowd as they saw this happen and they praised God for giving humans such authority."

People with faith bring a paralyzed man for healing. Some teachers the law think Jesus is committing blasphemy, which by the way, in that place in that time, is a crime worthy of death. The crowd is afraid. There's also a mixture of amazement, but the text says primarily afraid. The faith of the people who brought the man for healing, the teachers of the law thinking Jesus is doing perhaps the worst crime you could imagine, all in the same place.

Verse 9, "As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man named Matthew sitting in the tax collector's booth. Follow me and me by disciple, Jesus said to him. So Matthew got up and followed him. Later Matthew invited Jesus and his disciples to his home as dinner guests, along with many tax collectors and other distributable sinners. But when the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, Why does your teacher eat with such scum? When Jesus heard this, he said, Healthy people don't need a doctor. Sick people do. Then he added, Now go and learn the meaning of this scripture. I want you to show mercy, not offer sacrifices, for I have come to call those who think they're not to call those who think they are righteous, but to those who know they are sinners.

Jesus and his disciples go to dinner with sinners, tax collectors, which by the way, these are tax collectors of the Roman Empire, the occupiers of Judea, of Israel, traders, and effect. Pharisees openly ask his disciples, Why would you eat with such bad people? The invitation from Matthew, the criticism from the Pharisees.

Verse 14, "One day the disciples of John the Baptist came to Jesus and asked him, Why don't your disciples fast like we do and the Pharisees do? Jesus replied, Do wedding guests mourn while celebrating with the groom? Of course not. But someday the groom will be taken away from them and they will fast. Besides, who will patch old? Who would patch old clothing with new cloth? For the new patch would shrink and rip away from the old cloth, leaving an even bigger tear than before. And so no one puts new wine in old wineskins. For the old wineskins would burst from the pressure, spilling the wine and ruining the skins. New wine is stored in the new wineskins, so they are both preserved." The disciple of John, you would think an ally of Jesus, asks critical questions. Why aren't you doing what we all agree should be done? Even the Pharisees do this. Why aren't you doing it?

Verse 18, "As Jesus was saying this, a leader of the synagogue came and knelt before him. My daughter has just died. He said, But you can bring her back to life again if you just come and lay your hand on her. So Jesus and his disciples got up and went with him. Just then a woman who had suffered for twelve years with constant bleeding came up behind him. She touched the fringe of his robe. For she thought, If I can just touch his robe, I will be healed. Jesus turned around and when he saw her, he said, "Daughter, be encouraged. Your faith has made you well." And the

woman was healed in that moment. When Jesus arrived at the official's home, he saw the noisy crowd and heard the funeral music. "Get out," he told them. The girl isn't dead. She is only asleep. But then the crowd laughed at him. After the crowd was put outside, however, Jesus went in, took the girl by hand. She stood up. The report of this miracle swept through the entire countryside.

Synagogue leader wants his daughter raised from the dead. Notice what he says. "If you just come and touch her." His faith is evident. Another woman of faith comes and she just thinks, "All I have to do is touch the hem of his garment and I'll be healed." These people of faith are off the charts. But then the crowd laughs at Jesus. The idea that he could do anything to help this young girl. Notice the faith, but notice the criticism. And the crowd, the end, again thinking, "Huh, amazement."

Verse 27, "After Jesus left the girl's home, two blind men followed along behind him, shouting, "Son of David, have mercy on us." They went into the house where he was staying and Jesus said to them, "Do you believe I can make you see?" "Yes, Lord," they told him, "We do." Then he touched their eyes and said, "Because of your faith it will happen." Then their eyes were opened and they could see. Jesus sternly warned them, "Do not tell anyone about this." But instead they went out and spread his fame all over the region. But when they left, demon-possessed man couldn't speak, was brought to Jesus. So Jesus cast out the demon and the man began to speak. The crowds were amazed. Nothing like this has ever happened in Israel, they exclaimed. But Jesus said, "But the Pharisees said he can cast out demons because he is empowered by the prince of demons."

Blind men come from healing, a demon-possessed man is brought for healing. The blind men specifically declare their faith so they can be healed. The crowd is amazed. But the Pharisees say, "Okay, fine, we admit Jesus is doing these things. But he's only doing these things because he's empowered by the devil, by the prince of demons." Notice how the different people respond and react to Jesus. Fear, criticism, opposition, condemnation, but also faith, amazement, gratefulness. People who in fact when Jesus says, "You've been healed, now go home and be quiet," they can't. In fact, they have to say to everyone they know, "He healed me." Now, imagine yourself living through the events of Matthew 9.

How would you summarize the reaction of the people if you just went through those things? What would you focus on? What would we focus on? There's opposition, certainly, but there's also opportunity. There's also faith, there's also people with invitation. But verse 35 through 38 tells us that Jesus chooses to view what he is doing and what the opportunity is around him in society as joy, opportunity, and abundance. Jesus traveled through all the towns, verse 35, and villages in the area teaching the synagogues and announcing the good news about the kingdom. And he healed every kind of disease and illness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them because they were confused and helpless like sheep without a shepherd. He said to his disciples, "The harvest is great, but the workers are few." So praise the Lord who is in charge of the harvest asked him to send more workers into his fields.

One of the things that I do in my new job, if you don't know, I do civil litigation now. A lot of lawyers are going with each other and insurance companies suing each other over things that have long, long passed. And one of the things that is sort of the most important principle is reasonableness. Did the other party, did our party act reasonably? What would be reasonable in the situation they

would be doing? And one of the thought exercises that we constantly do is if I was in this situation, this accident had happened, this whatever thing had happened, what would be normal for a normal human to do? And that's sort of the standard we got, unless we're on the other side and then we tell them they're all wrong. But you get the idea.

Me in the situation, me living through Matthew 9, I think my natural inclination would not be to conclude with verses 35 to 38. I think had I been hanging around with Jesus at that time, I would have been deciding that this was a bad place to be. There were the religious leaders of the day threatening criminality, certainly people being criticized over it. I would think probably it was a good idea to maybe move to some other part of the empire, that maybe no one had heard of this Jesus guy and live a quiet life. But that's not what Jesus did.

Jesus saw the opportunity and he said, this is an opportunity. In fact, we need to get more people involved here. We need more people to help with these people. And chapter 10, he actually goes through and gives the disciples a follow up instructions, how to actually go into the fields. In chapter 10, we won't read it at all. But he gives specific instruction, he gives encouragement, he helps his disciples to be prepared. And he gives a sense of what success looks like as they go out. They provide opportunities, invitations, and they accept opportunities, invitations from those around them. As we approach our friends, our co workers, our fellow students, our family, people in stores, people we meet, etc. What is our belief system when it comes to their likely response to our faith in whatever situation we're in? Opportunity or opposition? There's evidence for both in our lives, no doubt. But in Matthew 9, Jesus saw all that evidence. And it wasn't like he was ignorant of the bad, the negative, the opposition evidence, but rather he chose to pursue opportunity. May we live our lives in faith, both individually and collectively, looking and acting on opportunities that God gives us.

My challenge for us this week is first to notice the opportunities that we have around us as we go through life. And second, and this is a more difficult one, if we dare respond to Jesus plea in Matthew 9, and act on one of those responsibilities, invite or be invited, accept an invitation, and perhaps through that invitation or being accepted invitation, we might spread the word of God to someone around us this week.

Closing

Paul is a great example of some of the things that Paul talked about this morning, the two Pauls. So in Philippians chapter one, he talks about being imprisoned and he doesn't talk about it in negative terms. He talks about it in his, I have an opportunity to share the gospel in the circumstance. So the circumstances of life that we're faced with, we have a choice as to how we respond to those circumstances. Are we going to be God's ambassador? Are we going to shine forth or are we going to shrink back? Are we going to be afraid and fearful? So Paul's message is a great message. In the circumstances of our life, who are we going to be?

I have been concerned this last week of the passing of Kendra Ellis. I know some of you know her and know of her, a 46 year old. We went to prenatal classes together. Chad and Kendra were born and we've had a long history with her and her family. And for her passing, it's certainly a tragic thing. I would like to lead a song, it's a prayer, as a reminder that in these circumstances that we

need to be still. So I'd invite you to turn in your hymn book to 689. Use this as a closing prayer. I invite you to stand as we sing together.

*Be still my soul the Lord is on thy side
Bear patiently the cross of grief or pain
Leave to thy God to order and provide
In ev'ry change He faithful will remain
Be still my soul thy best thy heav'nly Friend
Through thorny ways leads to a joyful end*

*Be still my soul thy God doth undertake
To guide the future as He has the past
Thy hope thy confidence let nothing shake
All now mysterious shall be bright at last
Be still my soul the waves and winds still know
His voice who ruled them while He dwelt below*

*Be still my soul the hour is hast'ning on
When we shall be forever with the Lord
When disappointment grief and fear are gone
Sorrow forgot love's purest joys restored
Be still my soul when change and tears are past
All safe and blessed we shall meet at last*

Amen.

BE STILL MY SOUL - JANE LAURIE BORTHWICK | JEAN SIBELIUS | KATHRINA AMALIA VON SCHLEGEL, PUBLIC DOMAIN

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