

Easter 2 (2026)

Some of you will recognize the name Nabeel Qureshi. He was a Pakistani-American Christian apologist and the author of a best seller entitled *Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus*.

Sadly, Nabeel died in 2017 at the age of 34 of stomach cancer.

I once heard Nabeel speak. In this particular talk, he told about coming as a young person to this country and how zealous his parents were in teaching him the faith of Islam.

By the time he got to high school, he knew his faith upside down.

One thing Nabeel soon discovered was how little his Christian counterparts knew about their faith and their inability to defend it. In fact, he enjoyed engaging them so he could plough through their arguments.

In medical school he met someone who could speak rationally and yet lovingly about the Christian faith. It was his roommate. Eventually, Nabeel became convinced that the claims of Christ were true and became a Christian.

Last week in our Gospel reading from the 20th chapter of John, we heard Jesus give his followers a commission: **“As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.”**

The Greek word from which we get our word “apostle” is *apostolos*. It means “one sent out.”

You and I are not apostles with a capital “A”, that is, we are not members of Jesus’ original band of eyewitnesses of the resurrection whom He sent out.

Nevertheless, the commission He gave them is for us.

We are Christ's ambassadors sent out in the world.

But to be effective ambassadors, we must have knowledge. Being sincere is not enough.

Ignorance is not bliss when it comes to carrying out Jesus' great commission to make disciples of all nations.

That is why liturgy as found in the Book of Common Prayer is so important. It equips us mentally and spiritually for witness and service. It forms our faith and gives us knowledge.

That is why the ancient Creeds recited in our services are so important. They give us in shorthand form a list of those things that have been believed and taught from the very beginning of the Christian era.

This is why scripture publicly read in our services along with sermons drawn from them are so important. They give us our script.

All three – liturgy, creeds, and an orderly reading of scripture – equip us to **engage** with those outside the church. Some of these will have a script of their own as did Nabeel in his pre-Christian days, while others will be committed to no particular ideology, nevertheless seeking what all seek, meaning and purpose in life.

By “engaging with those outside the church,” I do not mean positioning to win arguments. Rather I mean possessing the tools to speak confidently and meaningfully about Jesus and the Gospel.

You can't share what you don't know.

What could you have told Nabeel about Jesus if you had been one of those with whom he spoke in his pre-Christian days?

I want to turn now to this morning's Epistle from the 2nd chapter of the First Epistle of Peter. Here is one of those passages which gives us fodder for sharing the Gospel.

Here, Peter highlights three key aspects of Jesus' person and mission. They include:

- Christ our example,
- Christ our sin-bearer, and
- Christ our Good Shepherd.

I want to say a word about each, beginning with **Christ our example**.

Here, Peter is addressing Christian believers scattered throughout the Roman provinces of Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey), including Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.

It appears believers in this region were undergoing persecution for their faith.

Peter in response writes:

“Christ . . . suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.”

Here He directs their attention to Jesus who submitted Himself to the humiliation and suffering of the cross, yet who was vindicated on that first Easter morning when God the Father raised Him from the dead.

The same vindication, says Peter, will be yours if you follow Jesus’ example.

Over this past Holy Week and Easter, radical Islamists kill some 130 Christians in Nigeria. Peter’s words here about letting Christ be your example must speak powerfully to those in the communities where these atrocities took place.

The example of Jesus gives them hope and reason to persevere.

What God the Father did for Jesus, He will do for their fallen.

Peter's words should speak powerfully to us as well. At this time, we may not be experiencing what those in Nigeria have experienced, but at some point in the future, we may. So, we need to be prepared.

Jesus our example points us in other directions as well.

Think of Jesus' concern for the sick, the hurting, the outcasts, those the religious elite of the day shunned – tax-gathers and lepers, for example. Let's follow His example by having the same active concern.

Living the way of Jesus is very provocative. It may well catch the attention of those outside

the church and provide opportunities for sharing the Gospel. Be open to these opportunities. Seize them when they come.

But “Christ our example” is not the only image of Jesus Peter gives us in today’s passage. He holds up a second: **Christ our sin bearer.**

“Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree,” he writes.

“Tree,” here, of course, refers to the cross and the sacrifice Jesus made on it.

As I have said many times, we shall probably never understand fully the meaning of the Christian doctrine of the Atonement (God in the person of Jesus becoming One with us and dealing with human sin and the alienation which followed from it), nevertheless, we must embrace that doctrine personally and make it part of our pitch to others. To them we say:

“You don’t have to let the failures of the past define, defeat and destroy you. You can have a new start, a new slate on which to write life’s story. Look to Jesus the sin-bearer.”

If you think about it, this is a very radical message in today’s world where people are ready to ‘cancel’ others at the drop of a hat.

Hymn writer Elvina M. Hall catches the spirit of what Jesus did on the cross when she writes:

Jesus paid it all,
All to Him I owe;
Sin had left a crimson stain,
He washed it white as snow.

Christ our example. Christ our sin-bearer.

But Peter sets before us yet a third aspect of Jesus' person and mission: **Christ our Shepherd:**

“For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls,” he writes.

When I give tours of this church, I often end in the Narthex (the front foyer) and point to the stained-glass window in the stairwell.

It depicts Jesus bringing the lost sheep back to safety.

Jesus the seeking and caring shepherd is a powerful image.

It is filled out more fully in today's Gospel.

These two readings have caused the Second Sunday after Easter to be called Good Shepherding Sunday.

Speaking of Jesus as Shepherd is a powerful tool for evangelism. We live in a world where names have been supplanted by numbers. If, for example, you want to speak with someone about your retirement benefits, you will need to know your social security number.

Well, Jesus knows and calls us by our name, just as a shepherd does his sheep.

In a depersonalized world, the knowledge someone knows our name and cares, and that that Someone is the One who called the heavens and the earth into being in the beginning is very powerful and compelling.

Make use of this aspect of Jesus when speaking to others who have no faith.

Tell them that there is a God above who loved them into being and that Jesus puts a human face on this God. Tell them that whatever their past, there is hope and rescue.

Tell them that like a Good Shepherd He cares for them, knows their name, has a purpose for their lives, is there for them.

These three images – Christ our example, Christ our sin-bearer and Christ our shepherd – have a place in the story we tell. Make use of all three in responding to the Nebeels you meet.

In closing, I said that you can't share what you don't know, and that is true. But an equally important truth is that at the end of the day none of us know it all. The wonderful thing is that the Holy Spirit can and does work through our often stumbling efforts and feeble words.

Know your script, tell what you know, and leave the results to God. This is Evangelism 101 continued.