TALK #3: PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS

Guidelines for Preparation: As you read through the outline, highlight places where you would be able to personalize the talk within the framework of the main purpose and points to cover. It is important to put your own personal stamp on the main points without simply reading the outline. Once the talk is written, read it out loud several times to be sure that it is not longer than 15 – 20 minutes maximum.

Overview: In the Priority Talk, the pilgrims are challenged to live up to their human potential and choose their own priorities. In the Prevenient Grace Talk, they are challenged to become aware of God’s grace drawing them into relationship with Jesus Christ. In this talk, they are invited to be part of the active fellowship and ministry of the Christian community.

The word priesthood can be confusing. The priesthood of all believers means that all Christians, lay people and clergy alike, are called and given authority to be priests to one another – instruments of God’s grace in each other’s lives.

This talk introduces the theme of lay people in action, in and through the church. This theme is then further developed in the subsequent talks throughout the weekend.

Main Purpose: The main purpose of the talk is 1.) to show that all believers are given authority to be priests to one another; 2.) a priest is God’s representative to the world and the world’s representative to God; and 3.) to make Christ real for people in all circumstances.

Introduction: The Priesthood of All Believers is a Biblical concept that is important for understanding the church and the role of lay people in the church. It means that ALL believers are called and given authority to be priests to one another – instruments of God’s grace in each other’s lives.

Main Points:

I. Introduction
   a. Society wants to live as though God does not exist (the Bible calls this living in the world).
   b. Humanity seeks happiness and fulfillment through technology, power, wealth, fame, self-indulgence, etc. But we as Christians know that true joy, peace, contentment and hope come only through a life lived in Christ.
   c. Evidence abounds of how today’s world lives apart from God. (Note: Speaker gives examples of inhumanity in the world).
   d. While the situations around us can be discouraging, God calls Christians not to be passive (to merely complain) about the problems in the world,
but to be partners (to act) in finding solutions – in other words, to be the church. This is what it means to be the Priesthood of All Believers.

e. Through Christ, God has bridged the gap of sin and death that separate people from God and from another. (2 Corinthians 5:18-20). God calls people like you and me to bridge the gap between God and people and make Christ real to the world.

II. What is the Priesthood of All Believers?

a. The Priesthood of All Believers is a Biblical concept that is important for understanding the church and the role of lay people in the church. It means that ALL believers are called and given authority to be priests to one another – instruments of God’s grace in each other’s lives. It means that the popular notion that the clergy do ministry and lay people are the consumers is wrong and unbiblical.

b. What is a priest?

   i. A priest is God’s representative to the world. A priest pronounces God’s Word of forgiveness and healing grace. A priest communicates God’s Word, and sheds light on God’s will in peoples’ lives.

   ii. A priest is also the peoples’ representative to God. A priest intercedes on behalf of the people, goes to God for the sake of the people and offers sacrifices of love on their behalf.

   iii. A priest is anyone who has experienced the love, acceptance and forgiveness of God, and who helps others experience that grace.

c. Jesus is the great High Priest, the supreme mediator between God and people. (Hebrews 7:23-25). In Christ, the separation between God and humanity is overcome.

   i. Jesus is God’s representative to us. He is the Word made flesh, revealing God’s grace and truth to us.

   ii. Jesus represents us to God by sharing in our humanity, making His own life a sacrifice of love for our salvation and interceding for us before God. “The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” (John 1:29)

d. Do not misunderstand – this phrase does not mean every person is his or her own priest. Rather, we are given the authority of love to be priests to one another. Christ laid down His life for others in ways that made God’s grace real. This is what we are called to do.

e. This then, is what it means to be the church: people who have experienced the love, acceptance and forgiveness of God, and who have committed their lives to Christ’s ministry of sharing that grace with others.

III. The Mission of the Priesthood of All Believers

a. All believers share in this priesthood in partnership with Christ. The members of the Christian community are a royal priesthood. Read: 1 Peter2:4-5, 9-10.
b. Your mission is:
   i. To make Christ real for people and to demonstrate Christ in all circumstances of life – family, work, leisure, etc. The church is not a building or an institution, but a ministry of love. The church is the community of believers in ministry, the royal priesthood and the Body of Christ in the world. We don’t just belong to the church, we **ARE** the church, wherever we are.
   ii. To be channels of God’s grace. God has put in our hands the keys of the kingdom – the power to bind up people or to unbind people (Matthew 16:19) by how we share or withhold the grace God has given us. The words “God loves you”, “You are forgiven” or a simple prayer can be a word from God to someone in pain. A hand on the shoulder, the company of a friend, or an offer of help can be the presence of God to someone who is drowning in difficulty or despair.
   iii. To “declare the wonderful deeds of God” (1 Peter 2:9) with the character of our whole lives. This may mean reflecting light in the midst of darkness, promise in the midst of problems, or overcoming deadly attitudes of narcissism, cynicism, fatalism, and hopelessness that are prevalent among people in our world today.

*Note: Speaker should give examples from your own experience.*

IV. Characteristics of the Mission
   a. It is personal. Start with yourself. Jesus struggled in the wilderness with His own temptations before setting out on His mission. Be real. Avoid religious words and stereotypes. Be a Christian witness in a way that is natural to you.
   b. It is spiritual. The spiritual is not life after death, but the wholeness of life in this world according to God’s will. Jesus worked for God’s deepest desire for people in this world – life in the fullness of God’s grace and truth. This is our mission for God. The priest helps interpret God’s will for peoples’ lives.
   c. We are servants and representatives of our Master who do not act on our own authority. Our mission is to serve as Jesus served. (John 13:3-5)
   d. It is shared. The mission requires team work. This includes lay people and clergy as working partners. None of us can accomplish Christ’s ministry alone. Jesus’ first action in ministry was to call together twelve others who would share His life and mission.
   e. It calls for our best. This is not something we leave to the last, it calls for our best in attitude, ability and action. Jesus Christ gave His best for us (John 3:16) and we in turn are called to give our best for Christ.
V. Conclusion
We have been given the opportunity to be living translations of the Gospels. Each of us has a personal and non-transferable mission – to make Christ real in our situations so that others may know God’s salvation. Let us be the church where we are and contribute to resolving the crisis of spiritual leadership in our world today.