Introduce Squark to the children and adults.

Squark is sad --- he is being teased at school.

They won’t leave him alone --- every break and every lunchtime they gather round him and call him names and sing nasty songs about him.

**He doesn’t know where to go for some peace.**

What can **we** say to him?

What advice can **we** give him?

*Wait for answers*

When Jesus sent out the seventy followers, he told them to say:

**‘Peace be upon this house’**

He didn’t tell them off for being rude.

If they shut the door in his face, he told them to shake the dust out of their sandals and go on to the next house. God would deal with them in his own way.

It’s not Squark’s fault that they tease him --- he must try to understand that it is them that has the problem --- perhaps they are unhappy about their own lives.

Jesus has something to say about children. When the disciples try to stop them crowding around him and interrupting his talk, he says:

 **“Let the little children come to me. Don’t stop them. The kingdom of God belongs to people who are like these little children. 15I tell you the truth. You must accept the kingdom of God as a little child accepts things, or you will never enter it.”** **16**Then Jesus took the children in his arms. He put his hands on them and blessed them

SERMON:

What comes to mind when we hear the word "evangelism"?  For many of us, it brings to mind a knock at the door and an unwelcome visit by a sectarian group. We don't want to be rude but we resent the intrusion––and we wouldn't want to intrude on other people in that way.

So we’re not talking about a program of door-to-door evangelism!

But the word, evangelism, is a good New Testament word. The New Testament, of course, was written in Greek, and the word was *euangellion* meaning "good news" or "telling good news."

The idea is simple.  When you find something that brings you joy, you want to tell other people about it and so, in the New Testament, evangelism is **sharing joy!**

Some years ago, D.T. Niles, a missionary to Ceylon, put it this way. He said:

Evangelism is one beggar

telling another beggar

where to get food.

It’s got ring about it, hasn’t it!

Evangelism is one beggar

telling another beggar

where to get food.

In those days––during the Great Depression––those words had special meaning.

Poor and hungry people would search rubbish bins for food and sometimes knock on someone’s door for help.

Some people thought of those people as "bums," but others felt compassion. They said, **"There, but for the grace of God, go I."**

They answered a knock at the door with a sandwich and a cup of cold water.

When that happened, often the "bum" would put a mark on the fence––a mark that meant, "You can find food here." It was one beggar telling another beggar where he could find food.

EVANGELISM is one beggar

telling another beggar

where to get food.

We live in a world full of people who are starved for attention––people desperate to find something more than another pound or another cheap thrill––lonely people––Teen-agers hooked on drugs––people with an empty space at the centre of their lives.

**We who have Jesus at the centre of our lives need to share the good news.**

Evangelism is one beggar

telling another beggar

where to get **spiritual** food.

In our Gospel lesson today, Jesus sends out seventy disciples to spread the good news -- something that all Christians can do––not just preachers.

What does he tell these seventy disciples to do?

* Firstly, he tells them, when they enter a house, to say**,"Peace be to this house!"**
* Then he tells them to respond to people's hospitality, by eating what is set before them.
* Then he tells them to cure the sick.
* And, finally, he tells them to say, **“The Kingdom of God has come near to you"**

What a wonderful program of evangelism!

First, **ENTER GENTLY!** saying ,"Peace be to this house!"  Let them know that you come as a friend––as someone who respects them and comes in peace.

Then, **BE GRACIOUS!**  When people extend hospitality, accept it graciously. Eat what they set before you. Make appreciative noises.

**DO SOMETHING SUBSTANTIVE TO HELP**. "Heal the sick," Jesus says -- We might or might not have the gift of healing, but we do have gifts:

* Who among us cannot visit a friend in the hospital?
* Who cannot contribute money to help flood victims?
* Who cannot take a moment to ask, **"How are you doing?"** in a way shows that we care?
* Who cannot take time to listen to someone who is hurting?
* Who cannot extend a bit of hospitality to a person in need?

There are a good many people today who think that they cannot do those things:

* "This is a dog-eat-dog world," they say.
* "You have to be tough," they say.
* "Take care of Number One," they say.
* "No time for charity," they say.
* "Nice guys finish last," they say.
* "Show me a good loser," they say, "and I'll show you a loser!"

We live in a world that celebrates coarseness––that rewards aggressiveness

So what must Christians do to stand out––to be noticed?

* To stand out in a COARSE world, BE CIVIL!
* To stand out in a TOUGH world, BE KIND!
* To stand out in an AGGRESSIVE world, TURN THE OTHER CHEEK!
* To stand out in a SELFISH world, LEND A HELPING HAND!

 And THEN––ONLY THEN––does Jesus tell us to say, “**The Kingdom of God has come near to you."** Once we have EARNED their trust, we can share our faith story. We can invite them to church. We can tell them where to find spiritual food.

Theres a story about John Mackey, the President of the Church of Scotland.  The World Council of Churches had given money to help people in the Balkans, and wanted to see if the money was doing any good. They sent Mackey and two other clergy to check.

One afternoon, the three of them visited an Orthodox priest in a small Greek village.

The priest brought out a great treasure, a box of Havana cigars, and offered them to his guests.

 Dr. Mackey took one, bit off the end, lit it, and told the priest how good it was. The other two were horrified. When offered a cigar, they said, "**No thanks! We don't smoke!**"

The priest realized that, somehow, he had given offense, so he tried to put it right. He went to the other room and returned with a bottle of wine.

Dr. Mackey took a glass, sniffed it, sipped it, and told the priest how good it was. The other two pulled back and said, **"No thanks! We don't drink!"**

After they finished their meeting, the three men returned to their jeep and drove away.  The two of them turned on Mackey and asked, "Do you mean to tell us that you smoke and drink?" Mackey, furious, said, "**No, I don't! But somebody had to be a Christian in there!"**

Let us be serious about evangelism––about sharing our faith––about telling people where they can find spiritual food.

But let us first be serious about **loving people**. Once they know that we love them, they will be ready to hear that **God loves them too.**