2011-2012 MISSIONS THEME

INSPIRATIONAL SERMON Outlines
For Missions Sundays and Banquets

COMPILED BY OWEN WILKIE
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MISSIONS SUNDAY SERMON OUTLINE

THE GREAT COMMISSION
George O. Wood

INTRODUCTION
Since the inception of the Assemblies of God in 1914, the number of missionaries appointed and sent out exceeds 4,000. Let us be grateful to the Lord that this Movement has had a heart for Jesus and a disposition to obey His Great Commission.

Jesus has a word for us. It is the same word He gave the 11 disciples when they met Him on the mountain in Galilee. It was His commissioning message to them, and it’s His commissioning message to us.

Text
Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:18-20).

I. The great claim
Jesus’ bold and audacious claim, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me,” lets us know we can’t go wrong when we invest our lives with Him.

His authority embraces all of heaven and earth, angels, archangels, saints in glory, the created order in space and time. The devil and his minions, powers, principalities, thrones, dominions are subject to Him.

He has the final word. Jesus claimed “all authority.” No power has been left out.

II. The great responsibility
The great responsibility flows from the great claim. The commission to us arises out of the power claimed by Christ: all power is given; therefore, go make that power a reality.

If we do not recognize the therefore, we may never go.

Too many have looked at their small resources rather than at God’s and said, “We can’t do this.” When you look at the Lord’s resources rather than your own, you are impelled into the Great Commissions.

“Make disciples” is the responsibility given. The business of the Great Commission is not just to get people ready for heaven; its task is to get heaven into them — to make them like Christ — and involves the transformation of life while on earth.
A. As you go — Evangelism is integral to our faith. Jesus did not demand us to take trips but, rather, to make disciples. It isn’t a question of whether we go. That is assumed. But as we go, we are to make disciples.

Our mission of going embraces near and far. The Church must be active at the extremities or it becomes chilled at the heart. We must go to all nations. No person is to be left out.

B. Baptizing
The focus of Jesus is not about ceremony but surrender. Living the gospel is not a matter of convenience but commitment. Jesus’ focus is not on self-fulfillment but self-denial, not on cross-avoidance but upon cross-bearing.

Baptism constitutes an initial act of obedience to Christ which should be followed by a lifelong obedience to all of His commands. Into His life we are placed, baptism bearing witness of the invisible and spiritual reality of our presence in Him. We are saved when we die to self and lose ourselves in God, raised by Him to walk in newness of life.

C. Teaching
Going and teaching are the show-and-tell of the gospel. Jesus instructed His followers to teach as He commanded. Our Lord never foresees a time or circumstance when any part of His teaching will become antiquated or untrue, inappropriate or needless. We are to teach all things. No precept is to be left out.

III. The great assurance
Obedience to the Great Commission is based on His universal and complete authority and encouraged by the promise of His unfailing and sustaining presence. We are more than sent. We are accompanied and companioned by the Lord himself.

A. His presence is personal.
More than resources or material blessings, Jesus promised us himself.

B. His presence is abiding.
Jesus assures us He will remain with us: days of call, days of responding to the call, days of cross-bearing, days of revival, days of evangelism, days of sorrow, days of laying down our lives. No period of time is left out.

C. His presence is victorious.
We have the word of a Gentleman of the most strict and sacred honor: “I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

George O. Wood is general superintendent for the General Council of the Assemblies of God.
MISSIONS SUNDAY SERMON OUTLINE

THE IMPOSSIBLE TASK
Alton Garrison

INTRODUCTION
On September 12, 1962, President John F. Kennedy declared the United States would send a rocket to the moon. When he spoke those words, some of the metal alloys necessary to build a rocket had not been invented.

It seemed like an impossible task, but on July 20, 1969, Neil Armstrong stepped onto the moon and gave his famous line, “One small step for man, one giant leap for mankind.”

Reaching a world ravaged by wars, poverty and hunger is a daunting task. The world is open for business 24 hours a day, yet 24 percent of the world lives on less than a dollar a day.

More than 32 percent of the gross world product is related to the “structures of sin.” (Money laundering, gambling, organized crime, drug traffic, pornography, sex trade).

Islam is challenging Christianity at every turn.

To reach a world that is spinning out of control, we must be committed to the task of introducing the gospel to billions who have never heard. How can we accomplish what sometimes feels impossible?

I. See with the eyes of faith

A. In Numbers chapter 13, Caleb and Joshua disagreed with the 10 spies who thought conquering Canaan was impossible. They saw grapes when the others saw giants. Caleb said, “We should go up and take possession of the land for we certainly can do it” (Number 13:30).

B. Isaiah 43:10 reminds us that God will help when it looks impossible. “You are witnesses,” declares the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me.”

II. Touch with the heart of compassion.

Jesus walked in the same kind of world as we walk. What would Jesus do? Look at what He did.

A. Mark 1:41 declares: Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man.

   1. First, He turned to see the leper.
2. Secondly, he listened to the leper.

3. Thirdly, He was willing to feel. The Greek word for compassion is derived from the word for intestine, suggesting His stomach went into a knot when He saw the leper.

B. We must do what Jesus did. Compassion is about helping people become who they were always meant to be: loved by God and changed by Jesus. If we are moved as Jesus was we will attempt what appears to be impossible.

C. Jesus touched a leper who was considered an outcast and broke the Jewish law to exhibit compassion. If we follow His example, we will be committed to take a risk to exhibit compassion.

III. Never quit even when it looks impossible

A. Charles Spurgeon once said, “One man says, ‘I will do as much as I can.’ Any one can do that. He that believes in Christ does what he cannot do, attempts the impossible, and performs it.”

B. We can’t quit because one day we will stand face-to-face with One who didn’t quit — Jesus Christ.

C. Jesus is still calling people to fulfill His Great Commission

1. Some are called to pray.

2. Some are called to preach.

3. Some are called to pay.

CONCLUSION
God will not ask you to give what you do not have, but He will frequently ask you to give what you would like to keep. You do what is possible and God will do what is impossible.

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MISSIONS SUNDAY SERMON OUTLINE

JONAH’S JOURNEY AND OUR COMMITMENT
James Bradford

I. What’s the real story?

A. Jonah is one of the most famous and yet misapplied stories in the Old Testament.
   1. In the first two chapters, Jonah is asked by God to preach to the people of Nineveh, but he runs the other way.
   2. To stop him, God has Jonah swallowed by a large fish and spit up on the beach three days later. A remarkably attention-getting story!
   3. It is so dramatic, in fact, that we often stop at the fish part, reducing the moral of the story to: “Don’t run from God or He will get you.”

B. However, it takes the last two chapters of Jonah to understand the first two.
   1. Jonah tried to run as far from Nineveh as he could get because the people God was calling him to preach to were not only “Gentiles” but sworn enemies of Israel. Jonah hated them.
   2. But he also knew the heart of God. If he did preach to the Ninevites and they responded, it would not be beyond God to have mercy on them and spare them — a totally unacceptable scenario to a loyally Jewish prophet like Jonah!
   3. So here is the real Jonah story: Jonah earnestly tried to avoid preaching to people that he didn’t like because he was afraid that God would be true to His nature and save them. Jonah was not ultimately running from God’s call; he was running from God’s heart. We can all identify.

C. When Jonah finally gets to Nineveh, via the belly of the fish, he is still in no mood to make it easy for the Ninevites.
   1. His sermon is one sentence long: “Forty more days and Nineveh will be overturned” (Jonah 3:4). That’s it! No compassion, no hope, just doom and gloom for Nineveh. That’s what Jonah wanted.
   2. However the fear of God came upon the city. They humbly repented and God had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened (Jonah 3:10).
   3. Jonah angrily protested — “O Lord, is this not what I said when I was still at home? That is why I was so quick to flee to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity” (Jonah 4:2).
4. In other words: “I just knew this would happen. I know you too well. Given half a chance I knew you would spare these lousy people! That’s why I ran the other way in the first place.”

5. Then Jonah sat himself outside the city and waited to see what would happen (Jonah 4:5). He was still hoping that God would decide to wipe the place out. Our own indifference towards people, let alone our dislikes and prejudices, make us really no different.

6. That sets the stage for an amazing glimpse into God’s heart. In the very last verse of the book God says to Jonah: “Nineveh has more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left, and many cattle as well. Should I not be concerned about that great city?” (Jonah 4:11).

7. That’s the point. End of story.

II. So why missions?
A. Jonah may be one of the most famous stories in the Old Testament, but John 3:16 is one of the most famous verses in the New Testament. Both are about the heart of God for people: “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

B. As we do with the second half of Jonah, this verse is so striking that we often overlook what comes next: “For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him” (John 3:17).

C. That says it all. It is the New Testament version of the last verse of Jonah. Ultimately we are committed to missions because of the loving heart of God that cares about people and therefore seeks to save our world. His heart is what ultimately takes us to our neighbors, our cities and the nations.

D. The apostle Paul put it this way: For Christ’s love compels us. Why? Because we are convinced that one died for all (2 Corinthians 5:14).

E. Just like the question God posed to Jonah, so God asks us concerning the towns and cities that make up our world today: Should I not be concerned?

F. Missions is all about the caring heart of God — nothing more, nothing less.

G. If our commitment to missions is based on anything other than the very heart of God, then it will become a fickle and flaky commitment.
1. It will be more affected by our personal prejudices than by God’s unconditional love.
2. It will be more influenced by our personal priorities and preferences than by the urgency in God’s heart to get the gospel to every person.

3. It will be more determined by our own selfishness than by the selfless, serving heart of Jesus who died that others might live.

H. If our commitment to missions is based on anything but the love of God for this world, we will likely end up keeping our time to ourselves, our money for ourselves and our focus on ourselves.

III. What about my commitment?
A. Jonah teaches us that missions is not about doing something that fulfills us or that makes us feel good or that relieves our guilt over doing nothing. Missions does not start with us or even the lost. It starts with the heart of God.

B. This is the God who sent His only Son to be the very first missionary. Jesus embarked on the most unbelievable cross-cultural journey imaginable — from heaven to here, from rulership to servanthood, from life to even death itself.

C. It is that love that now compels us.
1. It makes us give away our money and be willing to go out of our way to befriend a non-Christian, or give up a vacation for a missions trip, or spend time praying when we could be watching TV.

2. It compels us to make personal sacrifices for the sake of loving people with the heart of Jesus — like Lillian Thrasher who broke off an engagement and lived single for the rest of her life to reach orphans in Egypt with the tangible love of Jesus.

3. It motivates missionaries to relocate geographically, culturally, vocationally, linguistically and relationally — and be willing to raise their own salaries because love compels them.

4. It even causes people like Jay Tucker and Jim Elliot and a host of others to be willing to leave America and never come back — martyrs for the cause of Christ but compelled by His heart for people.

E. God asked Jonah: “Should I not be concerned about that great city?” (Jonah 4:11). Jonah wasn’t concerned, but God was.

F. That is why we need to be less driven by our own preferences and priorities and more driven by the heart of God. His heart does not let us exist for ourselves or consume all of our resources on ourselves.

G. In the words of that great missionary pastor Oswald J. Smith: “We should have kept before us our Lord’s post-resurrection commands. We should have evangelized the world. Otherwise we have no ground for our existence as a
church … We must either go ourselves as missionaries or send out substitutes.”

IV. How can I be that way?
A. That is also why we need the power of God’s Spirit. How can we love with God’s love? Romans 5:5 has the answer: *God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.* That is His love for us personally and for our world globally — His love, in our hearts, by His Spirit.

B. No wonder, then, that Jesus promised: “*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth*” (Acts 1:8).

C. Jonah did not carry God’s heart for people. In fact he ran away from it. But we can have God’s heart for our world by His Spirit as we receive and then step out in faith.

D. That is where our commitment to missions begins, first seeking God’s Spirit and then doing something tangible that set us in the direction of God’s heart:
   1. Making a missions faith promise commitment
   2. Giving away some of our time for a missions trip, or financing someone else to go if we can’t
   3. Personally involving ourselves in reaching outside of ourselves as a lifestyle commitment wherever we are

E. A fish may not swallow you if you don’t, but there is no better place to be in life than to be running towards God’s heart and reaching our world with His love.

*James Bradford is general secretary for the General Council of the Assemblies of God.*
MISSIONS SUNDAY SERMON OUTLINE

COMPASSION IN ACTION
Doug Clay

TEXT
Luke 10:25-37 (NLT)

25 One day an expert in religious law stood up to test Jesus by asking him this question: "Teacher, what should I do to inherit eternal life?" 26 Jesus replied, "What does the law of Moses say? How do you read it?" 27 The man answered, "'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind.' And, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' " 28 "Right!" Jesus told him. "Do this and you will live!" 29 The man wanted to justify his actions, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

30 Jesus replied with a story: "A Jewish man was traveling on a trip from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he was attacked by bandits. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him up, and left him half dead beside the road. 31 "By chance a priest came along. But when he saw the man lying there, he crossed to the other side of the road and passed him by. 32 A Temple assistant walked over and looked at him lying there, but he also passed by on the other side. 33 Then a despised Samaritan came along, and when he saw the man, he felt compassion for him. 34 Going over to him, the Samaritan soothed his wounds with olive oil and wine and bandaged them. Then he put the man on his own donkey and took him to an inn, where he took care of him. 35 The next day he handed the innkeeper two silver coins, telling him, 'Take care of this man. If his bill runs higher than this, I’ll pay you the next time I’m here.' 36 "Now which of these three would you say was a neighbor to the man who was attacked by bandits?" Jesus asked. 37 The man replied, "The one who showed him mercy." Then Jesus said, "Yes, now go and do the same."

INTRODUCTION
There are two great stories in the New Testament that reflect God’s heart for people:

1. Prodigal Son — unconditional love

2. Good Samaritan — unselfish love

A. Within the story of the Good Samaritan four types of individuals are called into question regarding their motives and compassion capacity.

B. If you Google “Good Samaritan,” it comes back with more than 2.5 million results. There are Good Samaritan hospitals, retirement centers, churches, non-profit organizations and other agencies and ministries. There is even a Good Samaritan law designed to protect those who choose to help the injured or ill without fear of legal repercussions for unintentional injury. When Jesus told the story of the Good Samaritan, who could have foreseen that name becoming universally synonymous with kindness, gratitude and compassion.
Let’s take a look at the cast of people involved in the story and see if there are some takeaway thoughts about compassion and how to express it.

I. Lawyer (attorney)

   A. This guy represents someone who only saw compassion as a subject to explore.

   Verses 25-29
   *One day an expert in religious law stood up to test Jesus by asking him this question: “Teacher, what should I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus replied, “What does the law of Moses say? How do you read it?” The man answered, “You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind.” And, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” “Right!” Jesus told him. “Do this and you will live!” The man wanted to justify his actions, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”*

   B. This guy is a piece of work. First of all, he’s a religious lawyer. He knew the answers to each of the questions that he posed to Jesus. He was skilled in his profession as an expert in the Law (the first five books of Bible).

   So, right off the bat, you see his motive. Compassion wasn’t something he was interested in participating in — it was just a subject he wanted to discuss, debate and possibly even try to challenge the way Jesus was showing compassion.

   C. These kinds of people bother me. They criticize methods without ever getting personally involved.

   D. It’s interesting that Christ refused to allow this lawyer to define who a neighbor was from his so-called intellectual perspective. So, Jesus tells this story.

Enter the second cast members.

II. The Robbers

   A. These guys saw the tragedy of the situation for their own gain.

   Verse 30
   *Jesus replied with a story: “A Jewish man was traveling on a trip from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he was attacked by bandits. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him up, and left him half dead beside the road.*

   These people were looters, taking advantage of a tragic situation for their own good.
B. It’s one thing to see this in a city or country that is in turmoil, but when you see it in the body of Christ, that is plain horrific.

C. Be careful to whom you give your support. Not everybody who shoots video footage and makes appeals are legitimate. Know the organization to which you give!

III. The Priest and Levite
Verses 31-32
“By chance a priest came along. But when he saw the man lying there, he crossed to the other side of the road and passed him by. A Temple assistant walked over and looked at him lying there, but he also passed by on the other side.

A. They didn’t want to get involved — they wanted to avoid the situation altogether.

B. They were probably on their way to Jerusalem. In those days, the priests were divided into 24 groups. Each group served the Lord in the Temple at Jerusalem once a week, two times a year. They would serve a week, go home, come back later and serve another week.

C. The priest didn’t know whether or not the man was dead or alive, and he really didn’t want to find out. You see, if he was dead and he touched him, he would be considered ceremonially unclean (Leviticus 21:1,11,12). If he was unclean, he would have had to forfeit his two-week service in the Temple. Getting involved would have interrupted his agenda.

D. Here’s a thought—

Why did God tell priests not ever to touch the dead? It’s easy to understand when you realize that when He gave that Law, Israel had just come out of Egypt. Egypt was a society whose religion centered on death. The pyramids are a testimony to the fact that the vocation of a person’s life was to prepare for death. The priesthood of Egypt was designed to minister to the dead. But the Lord says, Not among my people. The focus is not going to be on death — it’s going to be on life. And I’m not going to allow you to have elaborate funerals attended by priests with long periods of mourning, and by building statues and monuments. Your priests are going to minister to the living. That’s the reason for the prohibition.

So, that day the priest and Levite passed by.

Jesus knows what He’s doing in telling this story. He’s engaging people in a moral, theological and ethical question. Two things appear to be contradictory. There is the ceremonial law, which says, Don’t touch the dead. And there is the moral law, which says, Love your neighbor. Maybe the man isn’t dead and you ought to help him. When those two laws are in conflict, which one do you go with?
All of our tough decisions come when two laws are in conflict and we don’t know if this moment is the one God is calling us to. The classic example of that is the ethical question of World War II.

Say you are living in Germany and you are hiding Jews in the attic. The Nazis appear at the door and ask, “Are you hiding any Jews?” Do you say yes to not break the Commandment that tells us not to lie? If you said yes, you break the Commandment that tells us not to kill, because if you tell the truth, you know you will forfeit their lives. So which Commandment should you break? I should not lie or I should not kill? Which would you choose?

Two things in competition: The ceremonial law — don’t touch the dead — is in conflict with the moral law — love your neighbor as yourself. The position of the Scribes and the Pharisees was plain … the ceremonial law comes first! Jesus’ position was also plain — the moral law comes first.

The moral law is superior to the ceremonial law. In fact, Jesus is saying in His ministry: God is doing away with the ceremonial law; He is ending the priesthood and ending the sacrificial system because He’s the great High Priest, and He’s the sacrifice being offered once and for all. All the ceremony of the past is done away with. God’s law goes straight to the heart and touches upon our direct relationship with Him and with our neighbor.

Jesus’ stand is clear. It’s on the internal rather than the external application of the Law. His answer had to set a few people on edge.

Here’s the deal — to Jesus, it’s all about people!

IV. Good Samaritan

His compassion was seen, not as a subject to be debated or an issue to avoid, but rather something to get involved with.

He saw the need — he got emotionally involved (the need went right to his heart). He took a risk because he was a foreigner, a Samaritan. The Jews hated Samaritans. Also, the robbers may have still been around to attack him.

To him, compassion was a verb — not a noun!

A. He put his compassion into action.

Verse 33
"Then a despised Samaritan came along, and when he saw the man, he felt compassion for him."

He saw and felt! The others looked at him, but the Samaritan saw him. Well, how can you look at people and not see them or feel for them? We do it all the
time with people on street corners. (It’s a part of human nature — we’re all prone.)

B. He proved his compassion by making contact.

Verse 34
Going over to him, the Samaritan soothed his wounds with olive oil and wine and bandaged them. Then he put the man on his own donkey and took him to an inn, where he took care of him.

1. He got involved. He touched the hurt man with his hands — his hands of kindness. He poured wine on his sores as an antiseptic. He bandaged him up and put him on his donkey.

2. Real compassion makes points of contact with the hurting.

C. His compassion cost him something.

Verse 34
Going over to him, the Samaritan soothed his wounds with olive oil and wine and bandaged them. Then he put the man on his own donkey and took him to an inn, where he took care of him.

He used his own wine, his own donkey. He probably missed some time at work because he helped this man.

Verse 35
The next day he handed the innkeeper two silver coins, telling him, ‘Take care of this man. If his bill runs higher than this, I’ll pay you the next time I’m here.’

Two silver coins — denarii; 1 denarii represented two days’ wages.

You cannot love somebody without it costing you something. He gave more than money. Think about it ...

The Good Samaritan gave his eyes — when he looked at him.  
The Good Samaritan gave his heart — when he allowed himself to feel.  
The Good Samaritan gave his donkey — for the man to ride.  
The Good Samaritan gave his feet — when he walked alongside the man.  
The Good Samaritan gave his hands — when he cleaned and bandaged the wounds.  
The Good Samaritan gave his time — he postponed his own schedule.  
The Good Samaritan gave his money — when he paid for his stay.

When we love somebody, it costs us something.
CONCLUSION

A. The secret to compassion is not found in religion.
   1. All the players in this story were religious. (Some even suggest the robbers were religious because they didn’t kill him.)
   2. I pray that as a church we don’t ever become too busy or too consumer oriented that we miss an opportunity to respond.

B. The motivation for compassion is not guilt.

C. The result of compassion is being Christ-like and obeying His commands.

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MISSIONS SUNDAY SERMON OUTLINE

PENTECOST AND MISSIONS
Wayne Cagle

TEXT
John 4:34-38

INTRODUCTION
In 1806, five students at Williams College in Massachusetts gathered in a prayer meeting called the “Haystack Revival.” They committed themselves to “evangelize the world in our generation.” That student prayer meeting began one of the most successful missionary pushes in the history of the Church.

The Christian movement saw its most vigorous advances around the world during the 19th century. However, despite sending thousands of missionaries and spending millions of dollars, the number of converts were meager given the investment: 3.6 million converts on the foreign fields by 1900.

When the great century of missions came to an end and a formal beginning of the modern Protestant era began in 1910 at the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference, there was great confidence in the future of missions.

One of the participants, Jonathan Goforth, a missionary to China, hoped for a “new Pentecost.” However, only a few of the speakers highlighted the power of the Holy Spirit. Goforth knew from experience that only supernatural, Holy Spirit-anointed ministry could bring closure to the Great Commission.

But most of the presenters focused on corporate unity, missionary preparedness and communications. Though Edinburgh showed some positive achievements, missionaries like Goforth judged that church and missions leaders had prioritized relationships and mechanics over the pursuit of spiritual dynamics.

While Edinburgh ended with a triumphant sense of unity, cracks soon appeared in the foundation of the mission enterprise. Issues like:

- Salvation solely through Christ’s redemptive work
- The authority of Scripture
- The lostness of humanity
- The fundamentalist/modernist controversy in the United States.

Was it not also significant that about that time, in 1906, people gathered at Azusa Street in Los Angeles for the continued and new outpouring of the Holy Spirit? They came from all over the nation and eventually the world to experience a new Pentecost.
I. Pentecostals expected the supernatural.

Amid the changing scenario, a new pattern of missions appeared. They had the unprecedented belief that supernatural demonstrations of power would accompany the preaching of the gospel.

As a radically innovative movement of the Holy Spirit, Pentecostalism remained loyal to the historic truths of the faith. These Pentecostal radicals turned the cessationist argument upside down by showing that miracles had not ended with the last of the apostles.

They empowered and gave a great impetus to the missions movement that grew out of the Student Volunteer Movement at the end of the 19th century.

II. Pentecostals were accomplishing much on the mission field.

Pentecostals and Charismatics were so busy doing the work of missions that until recently no one took much time to report on what God was doing. While the mainline and evangelical missions were writing academic and scholarly works about missions, the Pentecostals — especially by the 1920s — were actually accomplishing much on the mission fields of the world.

Pentecostals are action people. (At the same time we have contended with a parallel anti-intellectualism in the Pentecostal movement.)

Now, just more than 100 years after that early 20th century Pentecostal revival, 500 million Pentecostals and Charismatics from all over the world are activated for revival in the 21st century.

III. Pentecostals are now impacting the world like never before.

In 2010, the 100-year centennial of the 1910 Edinburgh missions conference was held in that same historic city. However, today we face a vastly different world than in 1910. For one thing, the Pentecostal/Charismatic force of the Christian church, some 500 million strong, is impacting the world like never before.

For most of the 20th century slight attention was paid to the significance of Pentecost by those engaging in missions in the mainline church-sending bodies.

If this factor is compared to the emphasis on Pentecost by the apostles and the Early Church, the differences are huge. On one hand, the modern missionary movement has placed great emphasis on the Great Commission while the Early Church hardly made it an issue separated from Pentecost!

IV. Pentecostals are seeing exponential growth.

Is it any wonder that after 100 years of Spirit-empowered missions work, we see exponential growth. Harvey Cox, author of Fire From Heaven: The Rise of
Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the 21st Century, called it the “Third force or wave of Christendom”? As we are into the second decade of the 21st century —

A. Let’s remember:
   1. This is our heritage
   2. This is our vision
   3. This is our future

B. Let us not be:
   1. Weary in well-doing
   2. Fearful of the future
   3. Forgetful of the past
   4. Lax in the use of Spirit-empowered gifts

CONCLUSION
YES, we will receive the training.
YES, we will hone our skills.

But we will continue to depend on the Holy Spirit-empowerment as our forefathers and the first century church have done.

Then Jesus explained: “My nourishment comes from doing the will of God, who sent me, and from finishing his work. You know the saying, ‘Four months between planting and harvest.’ But I say, wake up and look around. The fields are already ripe for harvest. The harvesters are paid good wages, and the fruit they harvest is people brought to eternal life. What joy awaits both the planter and the harvester alike! You know the saying, ‘One plants and another harvests.’ And it’s true. I sent you to harvest where you didn’t plant; others had already done the work, and now you will get to gather the harvest” (John, 4:34-38, NLT).

Closing Prayer

AGWM missionary Wayne Cagle is director for Asia Pacific Center for the Advancement of Leadership and Missions.
TEXT
Matthew 9:35-38

INTRODUCTION
When missionaries go to their country of ministry, it’s important they identify with the people so they can better share Christ’s life with their new culture. That’s what Jesus did when He came to earth. The Word [Jesus] became flesh and made his dwelling among us (John 1:14).

Just as Jesus identified with us, we are to identify with Him. What does that mean? We are to discover what is important to Him and make that important to us.

In our text we find three areas of importance in emulating Christ’s life.

1. His practice
2. His passion
3. His prayer

I. Jesus’ practice was to go through all the towns and villages (verse 35).

Here we find Jesus engaging in two primary activities: ministering to the heart through teaching and preaching, and ministering to the body through healing the sick. We must not make this an either/or issue. All aspects of Christ’s practice must be part of our mission.

A. Teaching — Training will always be a critical component of our mission.

B. Preaching — Proclamation of the story that changes lives.

C. Healing the sick and diseased — Mercy is part of His character and should be the natural practice of His people.

II. Jesus’ passion was people. When Jesus saw the crowds He had compassion on them (verse 36).

Jesus saw the true condition of the people to whom He ministered.

A. Harassed — without protection

B. Helpless — without guidance
Andrea, a student at a university in Mexico had no friends, no help, no one to look out for her. She found Jesus when her professor took time to care.

III. Jesus’ prayer was for workers (verse 37-38).
    A. This is one of the few prayer requests Jesus ever shared with His disciples. Obviously, it was His priority. We have a labor problem, not a harvest problem. The harvest is as ready and real today as it was the day Jesus said these words.

    B. Look who sends them. It is the Lord of the harvest. We can manipulate people through guilt to go, but only the Spirit of God can call them.

    C. The singular, most important challenge is to pray His prayer to send forth laborers.

    D. When you pray His prayer then you will obey His command (Matthew 28:18-20).

CONCLUSION
Take what is important to Jesus and make it part of your life. His practice must be our priority. His passion for people must be our concern. His prayer for workers must be our consistent plea.

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THREE PRINCIPLES AND CHALLENGES OF 21ST CENTURY MISSIONS

Louise Ho

THESIS
Missions is not a program of the church, but its very purpose for being! In missions, the Church is called to face the challenges of contemporary times with courage, to understand the times and know what to do, and to commit whole-heartedly to exalting Christ as King and the establishment of His kingdom.

TEXT
1 Chronicles 12: 1-32. Special Focus: Verses 1,8,18,32,38.

INTRODUCTION
The context of 1 Chronicles 12 is a biblical narrative about some mighty men. They had a mission and were committed to establishing David as king of Israel even though years earlier he has been anointed to be king to succeed Saul. (See 1 Chronicles 11:3.)

This narrative provides us with three great principles in missions as we seek to see the Kingship of Jesus and the kingdom of God being manifested in greater reality in our times. 1 Chronicles 12 reflected a time of transition and change — between the anointing and actualization of David as king.

In the same way, believers in Christ in the 21st century also live in a transitional period between the resurrection and Christ’s ultimate return as King of kings and Lord of lords (Revelation 19:16).

Three things mentioned about David’s mighty men highlight for us three great principles for Christians and the Church to emulate in contemporary missions.

I. Facing challenges courageously (1,8,18).

Believers and missionaries are called to face the challenges of our time courageously without shrinking from them.

A. Kinds of challenges

1. Political, social and military challenges. Israel was divided, facing political and military upheaval. David was anointed king — anointed but not yet inaugurated (verse 1).

2. Personal and spiritual challenges are always present among people in countries that are in turmoil. They are experienced in missionary life.
B. How to respond to challenges

1. By using the qualities of God’s people in action. Realizing the importance of character such as bravery, courage, and being available for battle.

2. By using the weapons of our warfare such as the shield of faith and the sword of the Spirit — the Word (verse 8, Ephesians 6:16-17). The life of the Word and the Spirit break into the situation with reassurance and hope (verse 18).

II. Understanding the times and knowing what to do (verse 32)

Leaders and missionaries need to be well aware of the cultural climate in which they live and work, so that they may become transformers rather than conformers.

A. Paradigm shifts in the socio-cultural context: In many areas Christianity is moving from a majority position to a minority position. This challenges the Church to make the necessary adjustments to live authentic Christian lives to be relevant and effective.

B. Multicultural context: The ends of the earth have come to our doorstep in many countries. God’s strategy to reach all people through us challenges us to break out of our comfort zone and to become very inclusive, rather than being insular and exclusive. Love God and love people extravagantly!

C. Significant presence of Muslims: God is allowing millions of Muslims to move out of their countries where openly living out the Christian faith is severely restricted. Their presence by the millions in the so-called free world (e.g. United States and Western Europe) could very well be God’s strategy for them to have the opportunity to experience the reality of Jesus and His Kingdom as they encounter believers.

Our response to the Muslim presence should include: learning to intercede for them, building bridges of truth, having a heart of love toward them so we can better reach them with the gospel.

III. Committed to the Kingship of Jesus and the establishment of His kingdom (verse 38)

David’s mighty men were united with a clear focus in their determination to see him crowned as king over all Israel. In missions, we are equally challenged to be united in focus, heart and purpose to see Christ as Lord by

A. Living as an authentic community of faith and partnership in missions

B. Having a single-minded focus and determination

“This gospel of the kingdom will be preached ...” (Matthew 24:14).
“Seek first his kingdom ...” (Matthew 6:33).

“As the Father has set me, I am sending you” (John 20:21).

C. Having a sense the urgency in apprehending the opportunities of the times we live in and setting right priorities willingly and joyfully. (See also John 4:34-38.)

CONCLUSION
The kingdom of God can and will break through in our time. May we face the challenges of our times with courage. May we seek to minister relevantly and effectively to our generation. May we together in heart and purpose seek to exalt Christ and extend His kingdom.

Louise Ho, and her husband, Melvin, are AGWM missionaries to the Netherlands and Europe.
MISSIONS SUNDAY SERMON OUTLINE

MISSIONS: IT’S NOT A “DROP-OFF” ZONE
Tim Southerland

Text
“Then they accompanied him to the ship” (Acts 20:38).

INTRODUCTION

How many times at an airport have we seen scenes where a taxi pulls up and a person jumps out with luggage, pays the fare, and races into the terminal?

Then we see scenes at the same airport where members of a family stand at security and weep, hug and grieve at the parting of a loved one going to a far-off destination. They wait to the very last moment to say good-bye and move through the crowd to get one last glimpse.

The first one lets the customer off at the drop-off zone; the others park the vehicle and plan to stay awhile.

The first one can’t wait for the person to leave; the others grieve the fact that he or she must go.

The first one is doing it out of duty; the others out of love. A difference in relationship and commitment.

Paul finds himself with the church elders from Ephesus. He planted this church and worked with them for three years. He is greatly loved. When it comes time to leave, they are all grieving. His departure will be painful. He will not be taken to a “drop-off” zone. These leaders will go with him all of the way. They are committed to him!

The Great Commission by definition moves us to great destinations in prayer, giving and going. A church’s attitude toward missions is reflected in its attitude toward reaching those destinations.

The attitude check of a church can be found in this short verse.

I. “They”
   A. “They” is an important word in the New Testament and even more so in the Book of Acts.
      1. They were all together (Acts 2:1).
      2. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4).
      3. They devoted themselves to … (Acts 2:42).
4. They placed their hands on them and sent them off (Acts 13:3).

B. “They” were all involved in his departure.
   1. They all prayed. They all knelt.
   2. They all grieved. They all felt.
   3. They all embraced him. They all acted.

C. “They” means everyone was involved in missions.
   1. Missions must not be a program of the church in which only a few members participate, but rather it is the very heartbeat of what the entire church is called to do.
   2. Missions allows a church to see outside of itself. When just a few people are involved, the church becomes corporately nearsighted.
   3. Missions requires church leaders to have a vision for reaching beyond its own borders and being sure that all are involved.
   4. Question: Is our church going to be at a “They” level where everyone is involved in missions, or at the level where only a few are involved?

II. “Accompany”
The Greek word that Luke uses here is unique. It carries the idea of “sending,” “go together with,” and “sending with provisions.” There’s a strong argument that they provided for Paul and carried those provisions to the ship with him. This model of missions is not the “drop-off” zone mentality of sending, but rather the true sending of a loved one.

A. “Accompany” means they were with Paul not only in the task but with him in relationship.

B. “Accompany” means they helped provide for Paul’s needs for the journey.

C. “Accompany” means we help to sustain missionaries not just for the journey, but also for the ongoing work they will be doing.

Question: What level of “accompany” will we as a church have in regards to missions?

III. “The ship”
Paul and his colleagues had to get on a ship to travel. The elders of Ephesus could not go with them. These elders understood the gospel must be preached to all nations but that their “ship” of ministry was elsewhere.

Their relationship to missions was based on their relationship to Christ through Paul’s ministry.

A. “The ship” was an essential means of transportation, yet these leaders were not called to go with Paul on his ship.

B. “The ship” reflected a destination where the church leaders were not called to go. But they were called to send Paul to that destination.

C. “The ship” the church went on was a different ship than Paul’s. Their “ship” reflected God’s ability to use them to partner with others, such as Paul, in reaching to the ends of the earth.

Question: What “ship” does God want our church on in our involvement in missions? On the “ship” that is sailing out to ministry? Or the “ship” that stays behind to sustain missionaries in their journey and ongoing work?

CONCLUSION

Are we going to be a “drop-off” zone church where a few people do missions out of duty? Or, are we going to be a passionate church that goes as far as we can in obedience to the Spirit for the cause of Christ and His Great Commission?

Are we as a church going to “accompany” missions by praying, giving, and going as the Spirit leads or only doing these things out of personal fulfillment or duty?

What “ship” are we sailing on as a church? What great destinations does God have for us as a church in praying, giving and going?

Are we taking a “drop-off” zone approach to missions, or are we committed to this cause?

_AGWM missionary Tim Southerland is area director for Northern Europe._
MISSIONS SUNDAY SERMON OUTLINE

ELIJAH AND THE WIDOW

Jay Dickerson

Text
I Kings 17:1-14

INTRODUCTION

The “Mission of God” — Missio Dei— is revealed in His Word. The story unfolds from Genesis to Revelation. Revelation 7:9-10 clearly reveals God’s plan: After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: “Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.”

God’s plan is reconciliation and restoration of fellowship with His creation — all tribes, tongues and nations. His plan, according to Matthew 28:18-20, is to use His servants as His ambassadors to reach the lost. At times this task seems impossible when you count the number of unreached in our world today. But I believe we can see how God’s plan will be fulfilled and is illustrated through a simple story in I Kings 17.

I. The context — Israel had sinned and God’s judgment was upon them. It did not rain for three years — creating a time of crisis.
   A. Elijah — the servant of God. He knew God, listened to His voice, and obeyed what He told him to do.
   B. Even in a crisis time God would take care of Elijah — and He will do the same for us

II. Kerith Ravine — verses 1-7
   A. God provided a brook called Kerith Ravine — a place of safety and provision — a refuge.
   B. Elijah had water and “raven food” — twice a day.

III. The brook dried up because God was moving him to another place. Sometimes our “brook” will dry up because He wants to take us to a new place and have us walk by faith trusting Him each step of the way.

IV. The widow at Zarepath — verses 8-12
   A. God led Elijah to the new place and had a divine appointment for him with a widow.
B. Why did God choose this widow? She was poor, unknown, a foreigner and lacked influence. We do not even know her name. Verse 9 reveals that she had a relationship with God, for God had already warned her of the upcoming events.

C. The widow struggled with obeying God’s voice — as we do at times as well. When Elijah asked her for bread, her response was, “I have no bread, only a little flour and oil. I was about to make my last meal for my son and me to eat and then die. Do you still want it?”

V. Elijah — verse 13

A. Elijah was not being selfish. He realized there was a spiritual battle going on, so he responded to her with the same two words we need to hear when we are called to step out in faith: “Fear not.”

B. Isaiah 43:1 — God says, “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine.”

The passage indicated that God knows us by name and even when we go through times of crisis — water and fire — He goes with us. We are not alone.

C. Matthew 14:27 — Jesus spoke the same thought — “Don’t be afraid” — to his disciples when He was walking on the water. They all heard His voice, but only Peter was willing to step out of the boat and walk to Jesus when He told him to come. Many were observers of the miracle, but only one walked on the water.

VI. The plan and the promise — verses 13-14

A. Elijah told the widow three things she had to do if she wanted to experience the miraculous provision of God.

B. First — make the bread — means to listen to what God is saying and obey His voice.

C. Second — Make it out of what you have. She was not to borrow, beg or steal, but to use her time, talents and resources. We spend too much time looking at what we don’t have and saying what we could do for the Kingdom if we had other things. It’s not what you don’t have that matters, but what you do with what you have.

1. David fought Goliath with a sling and some rocks. Saul’s armor did not fit him. A rock would not kill a giant, but when David took what he had and committed it to the Lord, then the Lord took it, blessed it and used it to kill the giant.
2. A little boy brought his lunch to Jesus. In the natural it would never feed 5,000, but it was what he had — all he had — and he gave it to the Lord. The Lord received his offering, blessed it, and distributed it to everyone — all were fed and there were leftovers.

D. Third — Bring the bread to the man of God. She was to follow through on her commitment — obeying the voice.

VII. The result

A. The widow followed through and then found the Lord was true to His word. Every time she used the flour and oil, it was miraculously replaced.

B. She would never have seen God’s miracle if she had not been willing to risk it all and obey the voice.

CONCLUSION

A. The need is great in our world, but God’s plan is to use His people, committing their time, their talents and their resources to Him. If you want to see the miraculous provision of the Lord, you must obey His voice and commit your time, talents and treasures to Him.

B. When all believers and churches in every part of the world take their place in committing their time, talents and treasures to the God of this universe, the needs will be met. Let’s obey His voice!

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COMMITTED TO SHARING THE GOSPEL
Randy Hurst

INTRODUCTION
Paul’s letter to the Romans is unique among his correspondence in the New Testament. Because Paul had never visited Rome, he wrote a more complete theology than he did to any of the other churches. In his other letters he mainly exhorted and taught concerning particular, unique problems in those specific churches.

It is to our benefit that Paul had not personally visited Rome, because it provided him an occasion to be especially thorough about the saving work of Jesus Christ in his communication.

TEXT
Early in his Epistle, his teaching is especially revealing concerning his commitment to proclaiming the gospel to the lost:

“I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. So, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (Romans 1:14-16, NASB).

Paul uses three terms to describe three kinds — or levels — of commitment and motivation: “obligated,” “eager” and “unashamed.”

I. Paul was obligated to share the gospel.

First, Paul says that he is obligated. The Greek word Paul used here is opheiletes, which is often translated “debt” or “owed.” This word in koine Greek described a financial obligation. A debt is not an option. If a person has a loan on a house, the bank does not send a monthly suggestion in case he has “a little something extra” to tuck in an envelope and send to them. A debt is a firm contract that can’t be escaped unless it is either paid or forgiven.

Paul’s debt to all spiritually lost people, which he describes as being to “Greeks and barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish,” includes everyone. The mission to which the Lord committed Paul was not an option. In Paul’s speech before King Agrippa in Acts 26:16-20, Paul says he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision but kept declaring Jesus’ offer of forgiveness of sins.

Paul understood that his obligation to the spiritually lost was always upon him. Nowhere in Scripture is recorded that believers have been released from that same obligation. Paul expressed our debt to the Lord in 2 Corinthians, which is among his most personal Epistles. In it he opens the motives of his heart:
We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad. Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade men ... For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again ... And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. (2 Corinthians 5:10-20).

The Book of Acts contains four instances when angels appeared. In one incident found in Acts 8:26, an angel appeared to Philip and directed him to the road from Jerusalem to Gaza, where he proclaimed Christ to the Ethiopian in the chariot. In Acts 10:3-6, an angel appeared and told Cornelius to send for Simon Peter to come and share the message of Christ with him. The results were that the Ethiopian and Cornelius believed on Jesus.

Do angels know the gospel? If so, why didn’t the angel take the message to the Ethiopian? Even more surprising, since the angel spoke directly to Cornelius, why wasn’t the message of Christ shared right then? The answer is simple. Angels aren’t responsible to proclaim the gospel. Instead, that work is the responsibility of the church. God, in His wisdom and mercy, has determined that we who have experienced Christ’s salvation should have the privilege of sharing it with others who don’t know.

II. Paul was eager to share the gospel.

The second word Paul uses in this text is “eager.” The Greek word used here isprothumos, the root of which isthumos. The primary meaning of thumos relates to passion or anger and has the connotation of strong feeling. Prothumos is translated “ready” or “willing” in the King James Version. The word is found only twice in the Gospels. Both occurrences are of the same event: when Jesus was praying in Gethsemane. He said to Peter, James and John: “The spirit is willing but the body is weak” (Matthew 26:41; Mark 14:38).

It is one thing to recognize a debt or obligation. It is another to be excited about paying it.

Why are new believers generally much more active than most other Christians in sharing their faith? It is because they are still passionate about sharing the peace they have found in Christ and the joy of their salvation because their sins are forgiven.

But the joy of salvation does not naturally have to diminish in believers. We can discipline ourselves to be passionate about sharing Christ. And, we have the promise of the Holy Spirit’s help in whatever empowerment is needed. Paul says in Romans 12:11:Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord (NIV).
... not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord” (NASB).

III. Paul was unashamed of the gospel.

The third term Paul expresses in this text to describe his motivation is “unashamed.”

To be obligated involves an issue of the mind. An obligation is something we know and understand. It doesn’t speak to our emotions. Eagerness, on the other hand, is an issue of the heart and the emotions — a passion and readiness to do something. To be unashamed is an issue of heart and mind. It involves both our emotions and our intellect.

Paul’s unashamed view of the gospel was rooted primarily in his knowledge of what Christ had done for him. The central focus of that knowledge was not upon himself. The reason Paul was unashamed in his ministry of sharing the gospel was not because of self-confidence in his education under Gamaleil, one of the foremost rabbis of the day. It was not because of his eloquence in rhetoric, which was significant, or his passion, which was evident. His confidence was in the power of the gospel itself — for it (the gospel) is the power of God for salvation (Romans 1:16, NASB).

Three facts are inescapable: the lostness of humanity, the certainty of eternity and the exclusiveness of Jesus Christ.

A. Humanity is lost.

Secular culture tries to explain away man’s sin. The plagues of immorality and violence are attributed to poverty, social injustice and even genetics. The blame is placed everywhere except where it belongs — the sinful human heart. From the time of the Early Church, many have wishfully speculated that all people will eventually, somehow, reach heaven. But God’s Word clearly shows that all mankind is lost.

Even in America some people claim to be Christians but do not personally know Christ. And, they are as lost as any who fit the stereotype of “heathens.” (A heathen is one who does not acknowledge the God of the Bible).

God’s will for the lost is plain in Scripture. Jesus revealed the priority of heaven in the parables of the Lost Sheep (Luke 15:3-7) and the Lost Son (Luke 15:11-32). Whether they are wandering lost or willfully lost, the heart of the Father extends to each. Heaven rejoices more over one lost sinner who repents than over the 99 who are already safe (Matthew 18:13). Peter said that the Lord wants no one to perish, but all to come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9).
B. Eternity is certain.

Our culture is increasingly oriented to the present. Passions demanding instant gratification dominate. Our perspective on life is naturally framed in time, but God’s perspective is eternal.

“Perish” in John 3:16 and 2 Peter 3:9 does not mean physical death or even the end of existence, but rather torment that lasts forever.

God is eternal — without beginning or end. Deuteronomy 33:27 says, “The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.” While all created beings have a beginning, God’s Word indicates that once life begins, existence never ends.

Many people — including some evangelical Christians — believe that unredeemed humanity will be judged and then, like animals, annihilated. Jesus taught otherwise: “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire’ ... Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life” (Matthew 25:41,46).

Luke 3:17 quotes the prophecy of Isaiah 30:24, warning that souls of earth will be gathered as wheat and chaff into the Lord’s barn, and the chaff burned with unquenchable fire.

Each person will face a final lasting judgment. Whatever a person’s destiny, it is eternal. Everlasting reward or punishment waits for every person on earth.

C. Jesus Christ is the only way of salvation.

Jesus existed before His incarnation (John 17:5), is equal with God (Philippians 2:6), has the power to forgive sins (Luke 7:48), has provided the ransom for the sins of all mankind (1 Timothy 2:6) and grants eternal life to all who believe (John 11:25,26). After living a sinless life, Jesus offered up His life as the penalty for our sin, experienced death and conquered it (Hebrews 2:9,10).

Contemporary culture seems to have designated tolerance as the primary moral virtue. It promotes the idea that anything a person believes can be a pathway to eternal life and ultimate peace. But according to God’s revealed truth, only one way exists to peace with our holy Creator and everlasting life. Jesus is both the door and the way. He said, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6).

Jesus said: “Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it” (Matthew 7:13,14).
The issue is not religion — but relationship. *He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life* (1 John 5:12).

Forgiveness of sin and eternal life are not granted merely for believing in God’s existence and distinguishing right from wrong. Peace with God is obtained only through faith in Jesus, who broke down the wall of separation between our holy, loving Creator and sinful man. We who were enemies and far away from God because of our sin have been brought near by the blood of Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:13). In Christ’s birth, God came near to us. In His death, He brought us near to Him (1 Peter 3:18).

Peter said, “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

Only through Jesus Christ can anyone be set free from the consequences of sin and Satan’s power.

While salvation is not easy, it is simple.

**CONCLUSION**

“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent (Romans 10:13-15)?

The gospel is the “good news” through which someone can come to faith in Jesus Christ and His sacrifices for us.

The gospel itself is the power of God for salvation.

*AGWM missionary Randy Hurst is the AGWM communications director.*
MISSIONS SUNDAY SERMON OUTLINE

COMMITTED: TO GO, TO GIVE, TO PRAY

Paul Brannan

INTRODUCTION

Try to imagine the conversation that might have occurred ages ago when God, the Father, said to Jesus Christ, “Son, the world is in terrible condition. Man has sinned beyond imagination and there is no hope of redemption available on earth. There is no sacrifice sufficient to atone for the sins of the world. I want You to go to earth, be born as one of them and live among them. Heal the sick, raise the dead and reveal yourself as the Savior of the world. Most will reject You, and You will die a horrible death, hanging on a hated cross between two thieves. You will die as the Lamb of God, the ultimate sacrifice for their sins, not only for those living on the earth now but for all generations to come.”

“Father,” Jesus replied, “I am willing to do as You desire, but I have one question. How will those who do not hear me speak, or see my miracles or see me on the cross know that I have died for their sins?”

The Father replied, “You will command your followers to tell them!”

“But Father, how can I be sure they will do it?”

Let’s look at the Great Commission and then we will look at the words of Christ that may give us a hint of what the Father’s response might have been.

I. We are committed to go. Why? Because Jesus told us to go!

Jesus said, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19).

A. The Great Commission, in one form or another, appears in each of the four Gospels.

B. When these verses are quoted, it is easy to think only of the regions beyond and that only a relative few will ever go.

C. We must reach the lost in far-off lands, but we must also go to those within our own land. That includes all of us.

D. We are all called to be witnesses, but some are called to be missionaries (sent ones) to other places, nations, cultures and languages.

Just before Jesus went away He said to His followers, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).
E. If Jesus were talking to us today, He might say, “Go witness about me in your city or town (Jerusalem), and in all of your state and country (Judea and Samaria), and the rest of the world.”

F. That means that each of us should be involved in the going as well as the giving and the praying.

G. Jesus didn’t say that we should take care of home before we start on the rest of the world. Several versions of the Bible, including the King James Version, say that we will be His witnesses, “both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”

H. Every lost soul has value and every believer should be a goer.

II. We are committed to give. Why? Because Jesus had much to say about giving.

A. Jesus taught that spreading the gospel is best done through partnership. Jesus said, “Anyone who receives [entertains or assists] a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward, and anyone who receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man will receive a righteous man’s reward” (Matthew 10:41).

B. Jesus taught that it is not how much you give, but how much you have left that determines sacrifice. Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny. Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on” (Mark 12:41-44).

C. Jesus taught that we shouldn’t give just to be seen by others. “Give your gifts in private, and your Father, who sees everything, will reward you” (Matthew 6:4, NLB).

D. Giving isn’t just about money. Jesus said, “In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:33).

E. Jesus commanded us to give, but the command to give comes with a promise. “Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you” (Luke 6:38).
III. We are committed to pray. Why? Because Jesus told us to!

A. We are instructed to pray because so many remain who have not heard the salvation message and there are still too few to reach all of them with the good news.

*Then He said to His disciples, “The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest”* (Matthew 9:37-38, NKJV).

1. If we keep asking the Harvest Master, He will keep sending more workers.
2. If we keep seeking more souls, we will find them.
3. If we keep knocking on doors of possibility, seeking methods of spreading the gospel, doors of opportunity will open.

B. The command to pray comes with a wonderful promise.

“Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you” (Matthew 7:7, NLT).

C. In other words, Jesus assures us that prayer works.

CONCLUSION

Let’s return now to the conversation that might have taken place between the Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ, the Son. “But Father, how can I be sure that my followers will tell the world about my death and resurrection and about the eternal life that I have purchased for everyone who will believe in me?”

“Son, You will command your followers to go and tell them.”

“But, Father, how can I be sure they will?

This is, of course, conjecture. We don’t know the content of any discussion that may have taken place, but Jesus once said, “…for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you” (John 15:15, NKJV). Since Jesus spoke those things He had heard from His Father, could it be possible that what the Father said to His Son is reflected in these words that Jesus said to His disciples?

“If you love me, you will obey what I command” (John 14:15).

A. Jesus taught us, but He also commanded us to

1. Go
2. Give
3. Pray
B. Do we truly love Him?

C. There is one way to know for sure
   
   Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him" (John 14:21).

AGWM missionary Paul Brannan is resource editor for Missions Awareness Team.
MISSIONS SUNDAY SERMON OUTLINE

COMMITTED TO HIS WORK IN HIS WAY

Dale Coad

TEXTS
Matthew 24:14
John 1:1-18
John 15:16
Hebrews 2:1-4
Hebrews 2:10-11
Hebrews 12:1-3
Colossians 1:24-25
Philippians 2:8-10
Psalms 2:8

INTRODUCTION
What image comes to your mind when I say, “Commitment”? 

—A blushing bride looking intently into the eyes of her future husband declaring, “Till death do us part?”

—Or perhaps a lone long-distance runner in training for the next big race willing himself up a steep hill in the early morning cold saying to his weary body, “You will not give in to fatigue!”

No other image in recent history captures the heroics of the word “commitment” as the 64 Japanese nuclear power plant workers in the Daiichi nuclear power plant in Fukushima, Japan. On March 11, 2011, the perfect storm of a 9.0 earthquake, a 33-foot tsunami and the threat of a nuclear meltdown put the nation of Japan in grave peril. Sixty-four workers ignored their own safety and accepted their own death, if needed, in the ultimate act of commitment. One of their mothers said, “My son and his colleagues have discussed it at length and they have committed themselves to die, if necessary, to save the nation.” Commitment. It’s a powerful concept. It’s a powerful word. What are we committed to as believers?

At the beginning of the Assemblies of God, one of our defining commitments as a church was to align ourselves with God’s purposes in God’s way. As early as 1914 our movement sensed that our very reason for being was to discern His plans and purposes for us and to fulfill those with every fiber of strength that we possessed. In 1914, at the historic Stone Church in Chicago, a small group of delegates declared, “We commit ourselves and the movement to Him for the greatest evangelism the world has ever seen.”
In three years our movement will celebrate 100 years of ministry. Although we’ve seen great strides forward, His mission for our church isn’t complete until we finish His mission for us to preach to every nation.

After nearly 100 years of focusing on His purpose for our church, we must be very careful not to lose that focus. How do we keep our focus and stir ourselves to finish this great work?

We must constantly remind ourselves that

A. It’s His work
B. To be done in His way
C. Because it’s His world

I. It’s His Work

A. Whose work is it, anyway?

1. In recent years, there has been a phenomenal increase in ministry teams visiting the field.

2. Not all team members come with a clear focus of why they are there.

3. On a recent construction team, one of the members was complaining about the conditions.

   (a) “The food is too cold.”
   (b) “The weather is too hot.”
   (c) “The bed was is hard.”

4. The pastor of the group brought it all into perspective. He placed his arm around the disgruntled team member and gently said: “I really understand how you feel, Bob. But please remember that this work is not about you! It’s about Jesus!

B. We don’t set the agenda for ministry. God does!

1. John 15:16: You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.

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1 According to the latest statistics, nearly 1 out of every 100 people in the world have some affiliation with the world wide fellowship of the Assemblies of God churches.

2 Matthew 24:14, NIV. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

3 “Nation” in this verse is used to describe a people’s group, one that is distinct from other groups by worldview, traditions, language, culture and/or religion.
2. God setting the agenda challenges our modern church culture that places man at the center.

(a) Pastor and author, Robert Schuller, in his book *Self-Esteem: The New Reformation*\(^4\) argues that the Protestant Reformation placed too much emphasis on God.

(b) Schuller claims: “It is precisely at this point that classical theology has erred in its insistence that theology be ‘God-centered’ and not ‘man-centered’” (p.3).

(c) This kind of thinking negatively impacts the passion to reach a lost and dying world.

(d) Schuller goes on to say: “Many sincere students within the larger body of believers are turned off by a theology that offers nothing more than a classical heaven and hell proposition. The alternative theology of mission focuses on peace, brotherhood, and economic equality. And the tension between these two theologies of mission is strong in the church today. Somehow a strong fresh theology of mission must be articulated that will allow sincere followers of both points of view to merge mind, motive, method, and message” (p. 60).

C. As Pentecostal believers, it’s time to once again get a tight grip on God’s perspective not man’s.

1. It is, after all, His work!

2. Hebrews 2:1-4 (*The Message*)

   It’s crucial that we keep a firm grip on what we’ve heard so that we don’t drift off. If the old message delivered by the angels was valid and nobody got away with anything, do you think we can risk neglecting this latest message, this magnificent salvation? First of all, it was delivered in person by the Master, then accurately passed on to us by those who heard it from him. All the while God was validating it with gifts through the Holy Spirit, all sorts of signs and miracles, as he saw fit.

II. It’s His Work to be done in His Way

A. It’s a sacrificial work. (It comes with a price to be paid.)

1. Any worthy goals come with a price, a sacrifice to be made.

2. On May 25, 1961, President John F. Kennedy challenged a nation with this speech:

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“I believe that this nation should commit itself to achieving the goal, before this decade is out, of landing a man on the moon and leaving him there. No single space project in this period will be more impressive to mankind, or more important in the long-range exploration of space; and none will be so difficult or expensive to accomplish.”

3. If a president could challenge a nation to pay the price for getting a man on the moon, how much more should we be challenged by our Savior to pay the price for seeing mankind land in God’s heaven?

B. Sacrifice is at the core of our salvation. (It’s also one of our core values.)
Hebrews 2:10-11:

*In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering. Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are the of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers.*

C. It is not a burden but rather it is joy to sacrifice when we consider Jesus’ sacrifice. Hebrews 12:1-3:

*Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.*

D. His work is a privilege but requires sacrifice. For example, here is a Korean couple’s sacrificial offering.

An American husband and wife joined a party that was traveling around the world. In Korea one day they saw a field by the side of the road. In the field, a boy pulled a rude plow while the old man held the plow handles and directed it through the rice paddy. The husband was amused and took a snapshot of the scene. “That’s a curious picture. I suppose they are poor,” he said to the missionary who was their interpreter and guide.

“Yes,” was the reply. “That is the family of Chi Noui. When the church was built they were eager to give something to it. They had no money so they sold the only ox they had and gave the money to the church. This spring they are pulling the plow themselves.”

The two tourists didn’t have much to say. But when they reached home, they took the photograph to the church and told their pastor of the incident. “We want to double our pledge,” they said. “And give us some plow work to do.
We never knew what sacrifice to the Lord meant. We are ashamed to say that we have never given anything to the church that cost us anything.”

E. There is a price that we must pay if we are going to do His God’s work in God’s way.

Paul’s suffering and this passion for the church. He experienced it as a gift! Colossians 1:24-25 (The Message):

I want you to know how glad I am that it’s me sitting here in this jail and not you. There’s a lot of suffering to be entered into in this world—the kind of suffering Christ takes on. I welcome the chance to take my share in the church’s part of that suffering. When I became a servant in this church, I experienced this suffering as a sheer gift, God’s way of helping me serve you, laying out the whole truth.

F. We obey in a sacrificial way because we are under orders.

Dr. Wilder, a dynamic missionary leader in India, was dining with three naval officers. During the course of the conversion one of the officers remarked, “Why don’t these missionaries stay at home and mind their own business?”

Dr. Wilder replied, “Suppose you were ordered to take your battleship to Constantinople tomorrow. Would you choose whether to obey or not?

The officer retorted, “If we are ordered to go, we must go, even if every ship is sunk and every sailor killed.”

“Quite right,” said the missionary. “I have orders from the divine government: ‘Go and preach the gospel to every creature.’”

G. Doing God’s work in God’s way may be uncomfortable, inconvenient or extremely challenging.

Do it anyway!

1. If the work is about us, we’ll find a good reason to quit when it’s challenging.

2. The world admired Mother Teresa for her unwavering commitment to the poor.

3. How did she keep going each day? What motivated her? Was it the promise of success or fame?

4. This sign, found on the wall of her children’s home in Calcutta, reveals a secret to her commitment:
ANYWAY

People are unreasonable, illogical, and self-centered.
LOVE THEM ANYWAY.

If you do good, people will accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives.
DO GOOD ANYWAY.

If you are successful, you win false friends and true enemies.
SUCCEED ANYWAY.

The good you do will be forgotten tomorrow.
DO GOOD ANYWAY.

Honesty and frankness make you vulnerable.
BE HONEST AND FRANK ANYWAY.

What you spent years building may be destroyed overnight.
BUILD ANYWAY.

People really need help but may attack you if you help them.
HELP PEOPLE ANYWAY.

Give the world the best you have and you’ll get kicked in the teeth.
GIVE THE WORLD THE BEST YOU’VE GOT ANYWAY.

III. It’s His work to be done in His way because it’s His World.

A. A liberal theologian confronts a group of Pentecostal preachers

I will never forget the time that God confronted a group of Pentecostal pastors with the reality that this is His world. We were touring the chapel at Stanford University. We held our sectional meeting there to be able to hear a world-class organ recital of the classic hymns of the church.

Following the recital, the chaplain shared with us that he opened the chapel on Tuesday and Thursday early in the mornings for prayer meetings. One young pastor asked, “How many people attend those meetings?”

The chaplain replied, “Sometime as few as three. At other times as many as 20.”
The young pastor asked, “Why do you continue if so few attend the prayer meetings?”

His answer still is seared into my heart and convicts me of my self-centered perspective on that day. He turned abruptly to the young pastor and fixed his gaze on him saying, “Because the glory of God demands it!”

B. This is HIS world! That is and must continue to be OUR motive to fulfill His mandate and His mission.

This is His World by creation. Here are some selected verses from John chapter 1.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it (verses 1-5).

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth (verse 14).

No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father’s side, has made him known (verse 18).

C. This is not only His world by creation; it is His world by divine right!

Philippians 2: 8-10:

And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth.

D. Our passion for missions is rooted in His divine right to inherit His creation and His people!

In Psalms 2:8, the Father essentially asks the Son, “What is it that you want?”

Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession.
CONCLUSION

A. It’s His work. He sets the agenda, we don’t. Our motives must be in obedience to His Will.

B. It’s His way … it involves sacrifice. We have the privilege to pray, to give and to go sacrificially.

C. The only question is, “Will we fulfill His work in His way?”

D. What are we committed to? Better yet, to whom are we committed?

E. It is His desire to reach His world. Is it also ours?

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COMMITTED TO FINISHING THE UNFINISHED TASK
Howard Cummings

TEXT
“This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come” (Matthew 24:14).

INTRODUCTION
It could be the understatement of the 21st century to say that the task of evangelizing is not finished. In a world with more than 6.9 billion people and 16,594 people groups, it is estimated that more than 40 percent are yet unreached with the gospel of Jesus Christ. There are almost 7,000 unreached people groups, and not all of them in the so-called “10/40 Window.” Our task is clear.

People in remote areas of the globe, people in over-crowded cities, people everywhere need the gospel. And our Lord plainly said, “Go into all the world” (Mark 16:15), not just certain targeted areas. His prophetic announcement is too clear to ignore: “This gospel ... will be preached in the whole world ... then the end will come” (Matthew 24:14).

To despair would be counter-productive. The church of Jesus Christ has the tools, the open doors and the personnel.

What is needed is commitment! A commitment that declares the Church will not sleep until the job is done!

I. Commitment includes communication.

A. Proclamation, preaching, teaching, telling
   1. Jesus’ last words to the Church should be its first priority.

   2. What part of “go” don’t we understand?
   He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation” (Mark 16:15).

B. In this, the Church is making progress
   1. More countries are being reached than ever since advent of modern missions.

   2. Our Fellowship now has 2,740 missionaries and missionary associates in 217 countries and territories.

C. Yet, more than 4 billion still wait for an adequate witness
Startling statistics: One person dies every second without Christ. In the United States, we have one preacher for every 230 people. The rest of the world, it is estimated, has one preacher for every 135 million.

We have a ways to go with the communication challenge.

II. Commitment includes completion.
A. Not just dissemination of facts, but discipleship of nations
   1. Training is one of the four pillars of our missions.
   2. There is more to the task than “notches on a gospel gun.”
   3. There is more to evangelizing than simply scattering seed.
      Jesus said: “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19).
   4. We can’t force people to become Christians, but are under orders to give each one an opportunity to accept or reject the gospel.

B. The gospel is to produce conversions and changed lives.
   1. Simply recording decisions for salvation is not enough.
   2. People’s lives are to be changed, to then be reproduced in other lives — an ongoing pattern.
   3. Numbers, although important, are not the determining factor.
   4. We can reach the masses of humanity. But if their lives are not changed, we haven’t completed the task.

C. The harvest must be brought in and stored for safe-keeping and not left in the field to rot.

We believe strongly in career missionaries.

Short-term missions and projects are valid and contribute to the overall success of the mission. But they are meaningful only through the ministry of missionaries willing to stay long-term who can identify with a culture, learn a language and gain the confidence of the people.

D. Commitment can be diverted so easily.
   1. Nationalization: We must endeavor to see the lost world through God’s eyes … not American eyes.
   2. Rationalization: We can say, “Surely God must have meant someone else.”
3. Sensationalization: Particularly a challenge to Pentecostals. We need more than just spiritual emotion.
   Two questions:
   (a) Have lives been changed and anchored in the Word of God?

   (b) When Jesus comes will He find faith on the earth? See Luke 18:8.

4. Our challenge is to bring the task to completion. 
   Jesus said, “Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, like men waiting for their master to return” (Luke 12:35-36).

   Jesus added, “It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes” (Luke 12:37).

   In other words, we are supposed to be watching and ready and completing the task Jesus has given us.

III. Commitment includes a celebration.
   A. Eternity will include either joyful celebration or profound embarrassment.
      1. Keep in mind that the judgment seat of Christ is for Christians. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad (2 Corinthians 5:10).

      2. For some the Master will say, “Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness” (Matthew 25:23)!

      3. For others, the prospect will not be so celebratory

   B. There is potential for embarrassment as many American Christians stand before Christ.
      1. As we explain our priorities

      2. As we explain what concerned us most

      3. As we explain our trivialization of the gospel

      4. As we explain what commanded our time, talent and treasure.

   C. For those who seize the moment — there will be a joyful celebration.
      1. The apostle John describes the scene in heaven. After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: “Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb” (Revelation 7:9-10).
2. John explains how we got there: *You [Jesus] are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation* (Revelation 5:9).

3. Therefore, the saints sing, "*Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise*" (Revelation 5:12)!

**CONCLUSION**
Jesus did His part. He paid the price. He finished His task.
Now it’s our turn. Not to retract. Not to reduce. Not to hide in fear. But to respond as never before.

Are we committed to completing the unfinished task?

*Howard Cummings is associate Missions Awareness Team representative for Colorado.*
MISSIONS SUNDAY SERMON OUTLINE

THE MOTIVATION FOR MISSIONS
Kevin Beery

TEXT
Revelation 21:1-7

INTRODUCTION
As we travel we see many types of advertisements. These ads promise what they cannot deliver:

- Perfect home (in a perfect neighborhood, with perfect neighbors)
- Perfect family (all together and smiling)
- Perfect health (beautiful teeth, skin, hair)
- Perfect beauty (rightly proportioned body, flawless face)

None of these advertised promises are true. There is only One who can promise perfection.

Many people are drawn to the empty promises of these billboards. When life is full of poverty, sickness and hopelessness, pretty pictures are particularly appealing. But I believe it is our privilege and responsibility to share with people the true perfection that is found in God and in spending eternity with Him. This is the motivation for missions.

I’d like to draw your attention to verse 5. This is only the third time God himself speaks in the Book of Revelation. Obviously what God says is extremely important. Furthermore, He also guarantees that what He says is trustworthy and true. He says: “I am making everything new” (Revelations 21:5)!

The passage begins with “Then.” This is significant because it guarantees another chapter in your life. You have what you have now, but there will be a totally different “then.” I’d like to talk a bit about what that “then” means to you — what is to come for those who know Christ.

God is in charge of history. He is directing the affairs of this world toward a predetermined end of His own choosing.

Through the Book of Revelation, God has shown us certain events that will take place so we can be aware of end-time events before they occur. Why did He do this? I think it can be summed up in one word: Hope. He wants to give us hope in our present difficult circumstances. However, He does not reveal more to us than we need to know, so we must live by faith. Hebrews 11:1 defines faith like this: Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.
I. Presence

A. The first key I pull out of this passage is the element of God’s presence in the new heaven and the new earth.

At the beginning of this old earth and heaven, God was present and conversed freely with Adam and Eve in the garden.

But when sin entered this world and brought corruption and death with it, God could not be present in the same way.

Therefore, He sent Jesus to this earth; then He sent the Holy Spirit. But God is no longer present in the same way He was before.

However, verse 3 tells us that God will again live among His people in the new heaven and earth.

This is what God wanted all along, but for essentially all of human history, it has not been this way. But it will be this way one day not too far off. Events are moving in that direction even now.

B. What does God’s presence mean?

It means we will know Him as He really is, and we will be changed through knowing Him (1 John 3:2).

It means intense worship, as it did for Ezekiel when he encountered God’s presence. He immediately fell face down on the ground in awe and reverence (Ezekiel 1:28).

It means joy in the presence of our Creator, as David expressed in Psalm 16:11: *You have made know to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.*

We are used to comforting our kids, but there will come a time in God’s presence, when He will comfort us.

For us, even the thought of temporary relief sounds good and is what drives many people to drink, drugs and worldly pleasures — simply to escape the awful realities of this existence, if only for a moment.

In the new heaven and the new earth, our text reminds us that we will have no more tears — ever. “*For the old order of things has passed away*” (Revelation 21:4). There will be nothing to cry about.

C. When we walk with God in this new heaven and earth, there will be

No sin present
No fear in the presence of God

No shame in the presence of God

We will be like a child walking with his or her parents — complete acceptance and adoration

1. Our heaven and earth show God’s distance.

   The east is far from the west

   The heavens are high above the earth

   The seas separate peoples and family. This one really hits home for missionaries, who often go years without seeing their loved ones.

2. But the new heaven and earth will show God’s nearness.

   There will be no more seas

   There is a city where people live with God

   The city is coming down from heaven, which shows that heaven is not some other place anymore, but connected with earth. It is God’s presence in our reality (Revelation 21:2).

II. Absence

   A. What is shocking about the new heaven and the new earth is what things will be absent.

      The present earth and heaven will be gone, replaced by a world filled with God’s righteousness (2 Peter 3:13).

      There will be no death or sorrow or crying or pain (Revelation 21:4).

      There will be no grieving or bad days, not even bad hair days.

   B. But we are not there yet, so we have to recognize that although God is working out redemption now, by redeeming us through the blood of Christ, total and complete redemption will look quite different.

      Creation is still groaning, waiting to be redeemed (Romans 8:22).

      We also are waiting for the redemption of our bodies from sin and suffering (Romans 8:23).
While we are redeemed and awaiting the new heaven and the new earth, we still face pain and sorrow and death every day.

We are shocked by pain, but it characterizes our existence. We cannot fathom a life without pain.

These things are a part of this sin-filled world. But one day, all sorrowful and painful things will be gone. God will make all things right.

C. Take a moment to think about two or three things that are the most painful for you in your life right now. If you like, you could write them down on paper. Imagine if these situations were fixed, healed, restored, and made completely new. This is what the new heaven and the new earth are all about. This is just what God is going to do for us, not just in two or three areas of our lives, but in every aspect of our lives.

III. Completion

A. God speaks from His throne and says “It is done” (verse 6), He has made everything new. There is nothing left undone.

You will remember that Jesus cried, “It is finished” (John 19:30) from the Cross. All that was required for the redemption of humanity had been accomplished. The work Jesus had come to do was finished.

But Jesus’ “It is finished” really means a new age was beginning. But God’s “It is done” means that His purposes for creating are complete. The old will be totally gone, the new will be totally inaugurated. There is nothing else coming.

God is a creative God; it is not unexpected that He makes something completely new. He doesn’t remodel or upgrade — He starts over and does something completely new and different.

God had to make a new heaven and a new earth so He could live with His people. The old heaven and earth had been corrupted by sin. God, being a Holy God, could not live here. So He will destroy this current earth, with the heaven, to wipe out the disaster sin wrecked on His creation. He had to make a new place, a pristine place, where He could comfortably live with His children. That is what the New Jerusalem is.

The old Jerusalem was fought over and occupied by various peoples through the ages. The New Jerusalem will be perfectly suited for God’s people and His presence forever.

B. The point is, we cannot allow ourselves to feel comfortable with this earth, and life here, because in a moment, it will totally change.
Relationships will change.
Work will change.
Governments will change.
The economy will change.
Our bodies will change.
Nature will change.

Everything as we know it will be changed completely. God will bring about the kind of world He always wanted. Those who love and serve Him will be a part of that, while those who constantly rebelled against God will have not part of it.

CONCLUSION
God says, “To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life” (Revelation 21:6).

That sounds like Jesus who offered “living water” to the woman at the well (John 4:10).

In John 7:37-38, Jesus promises living water will flow for those who are thirsty. This water is a reference to eternal life and the Holy Spirit living within. The promise is given to everyone. Whoever is thirsty may come and drink.

Isaiah 55:1 tells us: “Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat!”

God offers the living water to you.

But there is one condition; to be victorious. All these blessings will be available to the victorious, but not to others.

So what does it mean to be victorious?

Victorious means that you remain loyal to Christ. Remember in Revelation chapters 2 and 3, how Jesus spoke to the seven churches and critiqued them?

Ephesus: You have lost your first love

Smyrna: in their suffering ad poverty they were on the way to being victorious

Pergamum: False teaching

Thyatira: False prophet
Sardis: You are dead.

Philadelphia: Though they had little strength, they were obedient.

Laodicia: Neither hot nor cold, but lukewarm

But to all, no matter the critique, Jesus holds out hope of being victorious, although they may need to change their ways.

Entrance to the new heaven and the new earth is not awarded by chance. The promise is for everyone, but only those who remain loyal to Christ may enter.

CLOSING

The requirement to enter the new heaven and earth is to be true to Jesus. The questions today are

Are you being true to Jesus?

Is the focus of your life getting to know Him better, so that heaven will feel like home, and you won’t feel like a guest or visitor because you already are comfortable in His presence?

Are there things in your life that make you squirm when you think about meeting Jesus in heaven face-to-face?

Are the things you are giving your time, resources and energy to things that He values?

He says that where we put our resources shows where we have our hearts. Let us be true to our Jesus. Let every aspect of our lives declare that He is the center of our being.

ALTAR CALL

Bow your heads. I would like to invite all of us to think over our lives in light of eternity. We want to be with God, to experience His perfect presence in an environment that is brand new, absent of any pain, tears or suffering. We will know a perfect existence.

Are we also making it possible for others to hear about this eternal joy? Are we praying and supporting God’s work so that heaven will not only be a place we celebrate, but also share with those whose lives we have touched by our praying, giving and going?

Let us pray.

AGWM missionary Kevin Beery works with CaringConnection.
MISSIONS SUNDAY SERMON OUTLINE

COMMITTED
Norm Campbell

INTRODUCTION
“Committed” means “sold out to the task,” or “make sure the task is complete.”

I. God’s desire is to reach the whole world with the gospel, and He does it through you and me.

II. God has called all of us, without exception, to extend His Kingdom.
   A. We can go ourselves.
   B. Or, we can help send others financially through faith promise giving, and pray for them. Our tithe of 10 percent belongs in the local church. Faith promise giving is in addition to our tithing.

III. God’s provisions always come after we have obeyed His commandment.
    We can expect to see signs and wonders, demons cast out, people speaking in new tongues, the sick recovering as hands are placed on them. See Mark 16:15-18.

IV. God’s blessing
   One man gives freely, yet gains even more;
   Another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty.

   A generous man will prosper;
   He who refreshed others will himself be refreshed.

   People curse the man who hoards grain,
   But blessing crowns him who is willing to sell
   (Proverbs 11:24-26).

   A. If we scatter — we will increase (verse 24)
   B. If we are tight and withhold — we will end up in poverty (verse 24)
   C. If we are generous — we will prosper (verse 25)
   D. If we refresh others — we will also be refreshed (verse 25)
   E. If we withhold — we will be cursed (verse 26)
   F. If we are generous — we will be blessed (verse 26)
CONCLUSION
“What right has any man to hear the gospel twice until every man has heard it once.” — J. Oswald Smith

Retired AGWM missionary Norm Campbell is Southwest Region representative for Missions Awareness Team.
INTRODUCTION
On November 23, 1914, at the Stone Church in Chicago, the following resolution presented by Brother L.C. Hall was unanimously adopted by the General Council of the Assemblies of God: “As a Council, we hereby express our gratitude to God for His great blessing upon the Movement in the past. We are grateful to Him for the results attending this forward Movement, and we commit ourselves and the Movement to Him for the greatest evangelism that the world has ever seen. We pledge our hearty cooperation, prayers, and help to this end.”

Since that time, we have built our Movement on this priority of world evangelism. Today we want to focus on how this core value applies to us individually.

Our theme: Every Christian should be involved in reaching the nations.

Text
Matthew 21:12-14

Prayer:
Every Christian should be involved in reaching the nations.
This doesn’t mean that everyone has to be a missionary.
It means that everyone needs to participate somehow in the effort to reach the nations.

I. Review of the story based on our text
A. Jesus went to the temple.
B. Jesus saw the money changers.
C. Jesus threw them out.
D. Why did Jesus throw out the money changers?
The common answer: Because they were selling sacrificial animals in the temple.
This is how we usually understand the story. But, while Matthew’s account is correct — it is incomplete.
We get the idea of the story — but not the full meaning.

II. Mark 11:11-17 gives details that clear up three major false assumptions we often have.
A. False assumption #1: Jesus was surprised when He entered the Temple.
Fact: Mark 11:11 tells us He visited the day before and knew exactly what He would find.

B. False assumption #2: Jesus was enraged and reacted in heated (but righteous) anger.

Fact: Certainly it can be seen that He was focused and even acting with controlled anger, but never is it even hinted that He was enraged or fighting to stay in control.

Actually, Mark tells us (Mark 11:17) that as He overturned their tables and cast them out, He “taught them.” This is the key. He was not focused on judging. He was focused on teaching — on correcting things.

C. False assumption #3: The reason for His actions — we assume He did this because they were selling sacrificial animals in the Temple.

Fact: This was not wrong in itself. Historians explain that since the sacrificial animals had to be perfect, it was difficult to travel to Jerusalem with the animals. Instead, they purchased the necessary sacrifice for their offering. This was allowed and probably just what Joseph and Mary did at Jesus’ birth (Luke 2:21-24).

The problem was not what they where doing, but where they were doing it. Not the market but the market place.

Explanation:

Before one enters the Temple, one passes through the outer “Court of the Gentiles.” This was the outer area designated for non-Jews.

This was precisely the place the venders set up their tables. Imagine a Middle East open-air market, filled with people, animals, tables and supplies. This is what Jesus found as He entered.

But the Court of the Gentiles had a clear purpose; it was more than just an entrance. Gentiles were not allowed to enter the Temple proper (cf. Acts 22:27-29). But they could occupy the courtyard. This was the only area where Gentiles were allowed to come to worship God. By filling this area with merchants, there was no place left for non-Jews to come for worship.

And this is what Jesus was focused on correcting.

Mark’s Gospel quotes in full what Matthew only records in part: 
“ ‘My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations’? But you have made it a ‘den of robbers’ ” (Mark 11:17).
Jesus here “teaches” by quoting from two Old Testament prophets: Isaiah 56:7: “My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations.” Jeremiah 7:11: “Has this house, which bears My Name, become a den of robbers to you?”

The context of these passages is focused on reaching the nations, and Jesus saw the truth clearly. The “nations” found no place in the Father’s house. The Jewish leaders had committed robbery:

1. They robbed God of the worship due Him.
2. They robbed non-Jews (non-believers) of their right to learn of and worship God.

And they did it all for financial profit and convenience.

Jesus’ response: He cleaned house deliberately and systematically. No one fought back. They knew He was correct in His teaching.

But, too often today, we find ourselves doing the same thing. We meet to worship. We enjoy fellowship. We study Scripture for personal growth. But have we made room for the nations?

We forget that there is a world in need, and we are the ones called to meet that need.

Quote from Robert McQuilken: The Great Omission. “When all has been said that can be said on this issue, the greatest remaining mystery is not the character of God nor the destiny of lost people. The greatest mystery is why those who are charged with rescuing the lost have spent 2,000 years doing other things, good things, perhaps, but have failed to send and be sent until all have heard the liberating word of life in Christ Jesus. The lost condition of human beings breaks the Father’s heart. What does it do to ours?”

Illustration from Charles Spurgeon: He was once asked if it was true that people who haven’t heard the truth about salvation would be condemned. Spurgeon’s answer was this: “The question is not whether people who haven’t heard about Christ can be saved. The question is Can a person truly be a Christian if he or she doesn’t do anything to tell them?”

This is our calling and our responsibility. Every Christian should be involved in reaching the nations.

III. There are four clear, brief and very simple lessons that we can learn from this story that apply to all our Christian life.

Lesson 1. Find out what makes God angry.
Lesson 2. *Don’t do that.*

Lesson 3. Find out what makes God happy.
Lesson 4. *Do that.*

*It makes God happy when we reach out to the nations.*
So, how do we do that?

IV. How to make room for the nations

A. Make room for the nations in your prayers.
   Many talk about the need to pray for the nations. Few actually pray.

   Some ideas that make room for the nations in our prayers are these:

   1. Recruit and *train* people to lead prayer groups for the nations.

   2. Get a world map. Use it to systematically and strategically pray for the countries of the world.

   3. Get a list of the missionaries your church supports and pray for them and their countries. Schedule monthly world prayer meetings at our church.

   4. Teach your children to pray for the nations.

   Every Christian can pray — and prayer makes a difference.

   Make room for the nations in your prayers.

B. Make room for the nations in your financial giving.
   Regardless of what we say or think, we can tell what is truly most important in our lives by reviewing what we spend our time on and what we spend our money on. If reaching the nations is truly a priority, our giving should reflect that.

   Some ideas that make room for the nations in our giving are the following:

   1. Teach that giving to missionary support is not an option, it is a responsibility and privilege. Missionaries do not go out on their own. They are sent by and serve as an extension of local churches. Financial support should not be seen as a “random act of kindness” but a “responsible obligation of partnership.”

   2. Include missions giving in your personal budget and church budget as monthly offerings.

   3. Utilize and emphasize participation in established missions program such as BGMC and Speed the Light. Fill out an annual Faith Promise.
Make room for the nations in your financial giving.

C. Make room for the nations in your church.
Hardly a community in America exists that is not experiencing challenges due to the influx of foreign-born residents. We are surrounded by a diversity of languages and cultures. God has brought the nations to our doorstep. Should we not clear a space in the courtyard for them? Ministering to the nations is tedious. It requires time and patience. But that which was important to Jesus then is still a priority today.

Some ideas that make room for the nations in our church include the following:

1. Begin informal ESL (English as a Second Language) classes for those in the community who want to learn English. Use simple Christian books as texts.

2. Learn about the culture and history of those from other nations that live in your community and build relationship with them. Go to them (Matthew 28:19). Don’t wait for them to come to you.

3. Participate and support short-term missions trips.

4. Gladly make room in your church calendar for missionary speakers. Ask them to explain the unique culture and challenges of the people to whom they minister.

Make room for the nations in your church.

CONCLUSION
Our Father’s house is to be a house of prayer for the nations.

Every Christian should be involved in reaching the nations.

It makes God happy when we reach out to the nations.

Make Him happy today.

Prayer

*AGWM missionary Dave Greco is area director for Mexico in the Latin America/Caribbean region.*
MISSIONS SUNDAY SERMON OUTLINE

OBEY AND NEVER GIVE UP
David Ellis

TEXT
Mark 6:45-56

INTRODUCTION
Let’s review the previous 12 months prior to our text.

A. A year earlier, Jesus and the disciples entered the region of the Gerasenes (Mark 5:1-20) where they were confronted by a demon possessed man who lived in the tombs (verse 3). Jesus set the man free from a legion of demons. Because of the special circumstances that surrounded this incident, Jesus and His disciples were asked to leave. The man who had been demon possessed asked to go with them, but Jesus told him to “Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you” (Mark 5:19).

The disciples learned that He had the power to drive out evil spirits!

B. Then Jesus left and a large crowd gathered around him at His next stop. A synagogue ruler came to him and pleaded with him to heal his little daughter who was dying. But Jesus was delayed by the large crowd and by a woman who managed to touch His cloak. She was instantly healed of a hemorrhage she had suffered for 12 years (Mark 5:21-34).

The disciples saw that Jesus also had the power to heal the sick!

C. Meanwhile, word reached Jesus that the little girl had died. But the Lord reassured the grieving father and went to his home where he raised the young girl to life.

Everyone was “completely astonished,” realizing that Jesus had power to raise the dead (Mark 5:35-43).

D. Finally, in Mark 6:30-44, the disciples participated in the miracle of feeding a multitude of thousands with only two fish and five loaves.

It was an additional lesson to them of the power of God, of His compassion, and His abundant provision as He meets our needs.

I. Disciples are asked to go

A. The disciples set out by boat across the lake and must have been amazed at all they had experienced regarding this most recent miracle. But, as they rowed
toward where Jesus had sent them, a strong wind began to blow that was
keeping them from making progress.

B. As they strained at the oars they must have wondered if they’d ever get to
where they were told to go.

II. Disciples face opposition

There might have been times when they wondered whether they could, or should,
keep rowing as they grew weary and the task seemed more and more impossible
to reach.

A. I appreciate, however, the picture of the disciples rowing together. When one
was getting to the point of quitting there was another to encourage him to keep
going and not give up. This is the way it should be in the church and in
missions. We each do our part so that we might all accomplish the
commission of the Lord.

B. Also, the disciples didn’t realize that they were never alone. Mark 6:48 tells us
that Jesus saw them straining at the oars from the mount where He had been
praying. At just the right time He descended to the lake and went to them,
walking on the water. He will do (and has done) all that is necessary to get to
us and help us get to where He has sent us.

III. Disciples understood He was always with them

Mark 6:48 says that Jesus was “about to pass by them.” This seems like a strange
thing to do if Jesus was going to the disciples to comfort them. But I believe this
comment is tied to verses 51 and 52 where it says, “They were completely
amazed, for they had not understood about the loaves; their hearts were
hardened.”

A. What is it that the disciples had not understood? How difficult was it to
understand that Jesus had the power to multiply the fish and loaves to satisfy
the needs of 5,000 men?

B. What they had not yet realized was who Jesus was. They were possibly so
focused on the miracles and on the things that Jesus did, that they lost focus of
who Jesus was. “With God all things are possible” (Matthew 19:26).

C. Could it be that the text is saying that God’s glory, His presence, was among
them when Mark writes He was about to pass them by (Mark 6:48)? We also
read in Exodus (34:6,7) and in 1 Kings (19:11) about the glory of God passing
by Moses and Elijah.

D. With the assurance of His call and His power working in us, we can go to
where He asks and do all He has shown us to do. We may face opposition and
at times feel that we are straining at the oars. But, we will get to where God
has called us if we remember that He has promised that His presence will always be with us.

CONCLUSION
Jesus and His disciples reached the other shore, the place where He wanted to meet them, and as we conclude reading chapter 6 it is obvious that revival has broken out. The people of the whole region were coming to hear Jesus and all the sick were being healed. This region known as Gennesaret is the same place where a year earlier the people had rejected Him.

A. There is no place too difficult for the gospel to transform lives.

B. For one year a formerly demon possessed man had testified of God’s mercy toward him. In this period of time, this difficult, hard place of rejection had become a place of openness, hunger and of revival.

C. What would be the conclusion of this chapter if the disciples had not obeyed and gone to where the Lord of the harvest asked them to go?

What would have happened if the disciples hadn’t worked together against the opposing wind to get to where Jesus had indicated?

What would have happened if the disciples had given up as they faced the winds of opposition?

Prayer: Obey and never give up.

AGWM missionary David Ellis is the area director for the Southern Cone in the Latin America/Caribbean region.
TEXTS
Luke 9:51; Isaiah 50:5-7

INTRODUCTION
The work of the gospel is advanced by men and women who willingly commit to find their places of service and faithfully fulfill the responsibilities the Lord expects of them.

**Commitments are a standard part of daily life**

When a driver turns left in the face of oncoming traffic, whether there is adequate time or not, he or she has committed. There is no turning back. When a diver leaps off the diving board, whether there is sufficient water below or not, he or she has committed. There is no turning back. When the parachutist steps out of the plane, he or she has committed, whether the parachute works properly or not. There is no turning back.

I. The gospel revolves around commitments

A. Jesus committed
   1. Luke’s short statement that *Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem*, (Luke 9:51) succinctly conveys the depth of Christ’s commitment. Christ made a commitment when He left heaven to come to earth and live among us. He knew from the beginning that the plan of redemption would require unbearable suffering on His part. He would face intense physical agony and the unspeakable burden of sin’s weight for the entire world. Yet He made the supreme commitment.
   2. Isaiah elaborated more details of the commitment that would be required of Jesus. Seven centuries before the event, the prophet wrote of the Messiah’s commitment: *I have not drawn back. I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard; I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting. Because the Sovereign Lord helps me, I will not be disgraced. Therefore have I set my face like flint.* (Isaiah 50: 5-7).
   3. Although He knew in advance the horror that awaited Him, Jesus set His face like flint. There would be no turning back.
      (a) Christ could have said “no” while still in heaven. Instead He committed.
      (b) He could have called it off when religious leaders hated him. Instead He committed.
(c) He could have stopped the plan when the unbearable suffering began in Gethsemane and continued all night, ending with His cruel crucifixion. Instead He committed.

(d) He could have miraculously come down from the cross. Instead He committed.

4. The people jeered, a soldier snarled, the thieves mocked, but Jesus followed through with the ultimate commitment. No turning aside to prove to those who taunted as He hung on the Cross that He had more power than Satan.

5. No turning aside at the insistence of His friends who wanted to save Him from the suffering they anticipated (John 11:16).

6. No turning aside because of the unworthiness of mankind. One of His closest friends who ate at His table the final night betrayed Him. His disciples deserted Him. He was crucified by those He came to save.

7. No turning aside although He knew that the pain would be unbearably brutal and inhuman.

B. Paul committed

1. Saul/Paul, who was warned repeatedly as he traveled from city to city of the imprisonment and persecution that awaited him if he went to Jerusalem, said: “And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the gospel of God’s grace. Now I know that none of you among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom will ever see me again” (Acts 20:22-25).

Paul committed to continue preaching the good news of Jesus knowing that it would result in his unjust sufferings, imprisonment and likely death.

2. Paul’s commitment was unwavering as he was tested once again when Agabus prophesied similar treatment. Paul’s response was unequivocal: “Why are you weeping and breaking my heart? I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 21:13).
C. Elisha committed

1. **Elisha** was plowing the field with a team of oxen when God called him. He responded to God’s call on his life by killing his oxen and burning his plow (1 Kings 19:19-21).

2. His commitment was steadfast. He had no intention of turning back.

D. The disciples committed

1. The tax collector, **Matthew**, was seated at his place of business when Jesus walked by and simply said, “Follow me.” The Gospel writers state that Matthew stood up and followed Jesus. Luke is the only one to provide any detail. He says that Matthew arose, *left everything* and followed Jesus (Luke 5:27-28). At this time neither Matthew, nor any of the other disciples, knew who Jesus was, other than that He was a traveling teacher who was beginning to perform miraculous healings in public. Jesus invited Matthew to join Him. Matthew committed.

2. Jesus found commercial fishermen, **Peter and Andrew**, busy as work. He told them to follow Him and He would make them *fishers of men* (Matthew 4:18-20). They did not know who He was and likely had no idea of what He meant by the expression, *fishers of men*. Nevertheless, they left everything behind and followed Jesus immediately. When Jesus called to Peter and Andrew, they committed.

3. Next, Jesus saw two brothers, **James and John** — also commercial fishermen, seated in a boat with their father preparing the nets (Matthew 4:21-22). When Jesus called them to follow Him, they immediately left the boat and the broken nets to their father and the hired hands so they could follow Jesus. Jesus extended an invitation to James and John. They committed.

4. Jesus made it clear from the beginning that He expects commitment from us when He said, “If anyone will come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me” (Luke 9:23). For 2,000 years Jesus has been inviting men and women to join Him in mission to a lost world of humanity. He still looks for followers who will willingly commit to Him.

**Commitment: Find what God wants you to do personally and then do it.**

Find out what your purpose is in life then commit to do it so that when you come to the end of your days you will have made a meaningful difference in your world.

II. To join Christ in His missions to rescue lost humanity, God allows us three primary responses we can commit to.
A. By going
1. As Jesus surveyed the condition of the world, He commissioned His followers to “go and make disciples of all nations ... teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19-20).

2. The New Testament church took this as a personal command for all believers.

3. It is generally believed that a person must receive a call from God to enter missionary service. However, God’s call may well be more general than commonly thought.

4. Consider the Isaiah’s experience. He overheard a conversation between God the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit about what action to take for a lost world (Isaiah 6). Isaiah heard the Father say, in verse 8, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” Notice that God did not say, “Isaiah, will you go?” This was a general appeal. Isaiah responded by volunteering, “Here am I. Send me!” God then told him, “Go and tell this people.”

5. God’s call to service remains as clear today and often as general as in the days of Isaiah when God was appalled that there was no one to intervene (Isaiah 59:16).

6. With the world around us today devastated by sin, surely God’s call to service is as poignant now as when He said, “I looked for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap ... but I found none” (Ezekiel 22:30).

7. May it always be that choice servants of the Lord will voluntarily commit to stand in the gap between lost humanity and a loving Savior, and take the good news of salvation to all areas of the world.

Antonio, chief of the Ashaninka-Nomatziñguenga in the Amazon jungle, married Raquel, a Quechua. Due to ethnic animosities, some of the tribal people attempted to kill Raquel by poisoning her. She did not die but became unable to have children. After she led Antonio to the Lord, he committed to serve God in ministry. Thus he was not only the chief but also the Assemblies of God pastor of many tribal jungle encampments along the banks of Amazon River tributaries. Many times Antonio and Raquel were miraculously delivered from murderous attempts against their lives by killers of the Shining Path, the cocaine cartel of the region. Antonio’s high level of formal education and graduate degree qualified him to leave the jungle and serve God in a modern city, but they committed to stay where God had placed them regardless the hazards.
For many years the drug lords slaughtered adults who refused to join them in drug growing and trafficking. Antonio and Raquel took the orphans left behind and raised them as their own. Unable to have children, they became parents to more than 150 children. When Antonio died at age 60, Raquel, who had gained the love and respect of the tribal people, continued to faithfully serve God as pastor, counselor, loving helper and mother to many. Her commitment is firm.

B. By giving
1. Giving to the work of the Lord is a voluntary commitment that each believer makes. Paul gives clear instructions: Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver (2 Corinthians 9:7).

2. The commitment of the believers in Macedonia was so genuine that Paul writes: They urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints. He elaborates even more: Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability (2 Corinthians 8:1-4).

3. Paul’s admonition to the Corinthians to see that you also excel in this grace of giving (2 Corinthians 8:7) serves us well as faithful partners with the Lord in His mission in the world.

4. Paul acknowledged the response of the church at Corinth to his appeals for committed giving: I know your eagerness to help, and I have been boasting about it to the Macedonians … your enthusiasm has stirred most of them to action (2 Corinthians 9:2).

5. One man gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty. A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed (Proverbs 11:24, 25).

6. Jesus’ method of counting the offering received in the Temple was quite different to common thinking. The rich walked by and deposited sizeable amounts. When the poor widow dropped two cents into the offering, Jesus said she had given more than the others. She gave more because she gave all she had. It would seem that the only way to interpret this assessment is that the Lord counts not the size of the offering given but the amount remaining with the giver.

7. Our giving to the work of the Lord is an act of personal decision, a commitment.

8. God graciously allows us the opportunity of partnering with Him and with those who go as missionaries by means of our financial giving. The more
cheerfully and generously we give, the greater the rewards of that partnership (2 Corinthians 9:6).

George and Susan, a middle-class working couple, wanted to become partners in missions by giving financially to support missionaries. They exercised their faith far beyond their ability, reasoning that faith allows God an opportunity to work. They committed to give more than $2,000 monthly as God would provide. Imagine their joy, now in the fifth year, and God’s monthly supply has never failed. Only God knows how much of the fruit of missionary effort is attributable to those who “go” and to those who “give.”

C. By praying
1. Matthew records that Jesus issued a direct command for us to join Him in His mission: *When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then 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”* (Matthew 9:36-38).

2. Jesus commissions us directly to pray that more missionaries and ministers of the gospel will be sent out around the world. By so doing, He allows us to participate with Him in the work of missions.

3. Just as Paul committed to pray for all the churches, so are we called to commit to pray for missionaries around the world.
   
   (a) Missionaries can share countless testimonies of how the faithful prayers of Christians back home have strengthened them in times of great need and spiritual battle.

   (b) All persons can pray, including those who are physically unable to go, those who are convinced that God would have them stay and support those who go, and those of limited financial ability who cannot give as much as they would like to give.

   (c) By praying for missionaries, a person shares in the fruit of the labor.

4. God alone knows how much of the success of world missions is attributable to the faithful prayers of committed partners back home.

Advanced in years and caring for his wife who has been in a comatose state and slowly dying for more than a year, retired superintendent of the Assemblies of God of Cuba, Humberto Sabó, can no longer minister in churches. He recently wrote to tell me that he had felt an unusual burden for me and had earnestly prayed for me. His letter came at a time when I was facing serious oppositions in ministry. No longer able to go himself, Sabó remains an active part of missions efforts through committed prayer.
CONCLUSION
Missions is a teamwork effort by committed people.

The missionary who *goes* commits to take the gospel message to another country or culture.

The support partner who *gives* commits to make it financially possible for the missionary to go.

The team member who *prays* commits to uphold those who go by lifting them up in prayer.

*AGWM missionary Larry McNeill is the president of the Latin America Theological Seminary (Facultad de Teología).*
MISSIONS SUNDAY SERMON OUTLINE

LET’S GO FISHING
Bill Moore

SCRIPTURE
One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, the people were crowding around him and listening to the word of God, he saw at the water’s edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat.
When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch.”
Simon answered, “Master, we’ve worked hard all night and haven’t caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets.”
When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink.
When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus’ knees and said, “Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!” For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon’s partners. Then Jesus said to Simon, “Don’t be afraid; from now on you will catch men.” So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.

THEME
To enable the world to be reached with His message, individuals need to answer the call Christ is making.

As the days of Christ’s coming nears, it is imperative that we listen to His voice rather than the world’s voice so we will do our part in reaching this world.

In these Scriptures we see several significant things happen.
1. Christ was using this opportunity to teach the multitudes.
2. Christ made significant contact with one individual, Simon.
3. Simon made himself available to be used by Christ.
5. Christ gave Simon a great reward because of his obedience.

Through these significant things that happened, we can learn several valuable lessons.
I. As Christ did, we must spread His message to both the multitudes and the individual. *This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come* (Matthew 24:14).

A. In missions today, there is no single way to spread the Word. There are multiple ways.

B. No one way always works.

C. Be it large open air crusades where the Word can be freely preached, or in difficult areas where ministry is one on one, or in places where only compassion ministries are accepted, we must share His love.

II. We must make ourselves available to be used by Christ. *Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” And I said, “Here am I. Send me!”* (Isaiah 6:8).

A. In these last days, *He* is looking for individuals who will accept His purpose for their lives and who will say, “Here am I. Send me!”

B. We live in a world that is hurting, that is sin-filled. People are hungry for an answer to their problems — and we have the answer to share.

C. Our purpose in life is not to obtain wealth, become famous, or simply to better ourselves. But rather it is to follow Him whether it leads us across the street or to the ends of the earth.

III. We must do what Christ instructs. *He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation”* (Mark 16:15).

A. Following Christ is not always easy.

B. Simon and the other fisherman had been working all night long. But when Christ gave the order, they followed His command.

C. Many missionaries of the past and also today have left lucrative careers because there was a higher purpose.

1. Missionary Bill Moore was involved in business, planning to be the president of General Motors. But when Christ called, he left his own desires behind and followed the higher call. He has started hundreds of churches and today leads Africa Tabernacle Evangelism — a ministry that has build more than 2,000 churches.

2. Missionary Dean Galyen left a successful pastorate in St. Louis, Missouri, took a huge pay cut, left his comfort zone, and became a missionary in Africa. Today, as the only AGWM missionary in Zimbabwe, he has started many churches, trained many pastors, and is a sought-after speaker, evangelist, and teacher.
IV. Christ will give the reward. *I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow* (1 Corinthians 3:6).

A. When you follow Christ, and do His will, He will give the results.

B. No doubt Simon thought he would not catch any more fish because he had worked for hours and caught nothing. But God rewarded his obedience.

C. There is a season for all things: a time to plant … a time to water … and a time to harvest. It is now harvest time, because He has given the increase.

**CONCLUSION**

The work is not yet completed. There are still fish in the water that need to be caught. The boats of our missionaries are becoming full. They are signaling their partners in the other boat — that’s you — to come and help them. Answer the call if you want your boat to be full too.

In Africa alone, the need is great. Currently there are about 65,000 Assemblies of God churches. At the current growth rate, there will be approximately 120,000 churches by the end of this decade.

Answer the call. Currently there are about 16 million Assemblies of God members in Africa. By 2020 projected number of AG believers is 26 million.

Answer the call. We are believing for 10 million spirit-filled believers in Africa before 2020.

The word *safari*, simply interpreted, means a journey. Christ wants to take you on the journey of your life — both spiritually and physically. He wants to transform you from complacency to action, from spiritual laziness to spiritual activeness, from your comfort zone to a place that will really stretch you. But as you follow Him, He will give the reward.

Answer the call!

A song by Ray Boltz says: “Take up your cross and follow Jesus. Take up your cross every day. Don’t be ashamed to say that you know him. Count the cost. Take up your cross, and follow Him.”

I ask you today, will you take up your cross and follow Jesus … to the ends of the earth? Answer the call!

*AGWM missionary Bill Moore is coordinator for Africa Tabernacle Evangelism.*
MISSIONS SUNDAY SERMON OUTLINE

COMMITTED TO GOD
Bob McGurty

TEXT
Blessed are those whose strength is in you, who have set their hearts on pilgrimage
(Psalm 84:5).

INTRODUCTION
First, we need to think about the word itself: committed. The definitions of the word
carry the notion of pledging or obligating one’s own self, to entrust, to do or perform.

On a lighter note we also talk about people who “were committed,” meaning they were
officially confined or put in custody such as in a mental health hospital. Either way, it’s
intense and it’s total.

Seven key reflections on a life committed to God

I. It is a journey
   A. Psalm 84:5: Blessed are those whose strength is in you, who have set their
      hearts on pilgrimage.

   B. We say that we accept Jesus as Lord and Savior. Perhaps it would be better
      stated that we accept Him as Savior, and we spend an entire lifetime on a
      journey making Him the Lord of our lives by how we live and spend our lives.

II. It is a promise
    A. A wedding could be the greatest earthly example of a promise. Before family,
       friends, ministers, key officials and other guests, we repeat words of
       commitment. We make promises to our new spouse.

    B. Our word should mean something today. Remember the quote from the movie
       Hook? Robin Williams, who plays Peter, says, “My word is my bond.” The
       boy, Jack, returns the words, “Yeah, junk bond.” Our word must be more than
       a junk bond.

III. It is 100 percent to God
     A. It is amazing that we get lost in the 10 percent game. Do we give a tithe of 10
        percent or not? That’s the wrong question. The question should be, “Do we
        give 100 percent or not?”

     B. It’s not about Sundays, attending church or not. It’s about the other six days of
        the week — what we do with them, how we live, how we conduct ourselves.
C. As we are 100 percent committed to God, we will naturally be people of prayer and who read God’s word; people who commune with God and seek His will.

D. People know when we are not fully committed — just playing church, just faking it. Mohandus Gandhi spoke strongly when he said to the church: “I like your Christ. I do not like your Christians. Your Christians are so unlike your Christ.”

IV. It is focused on the important
   A. Our home church focuses on what it calls the four global giants:
      1. Disease
         (a) Life changes when we look beyond our own doctor bills and over the horizon to those who’ve never had a doctor bill because they will never see a doctor.

         (b) Clean potable water is a dream to so many in the world.

      2. Poverty
         (a) The Scriptures are full of promises for those who will remember the poor. AGWM Executive Director L. John Bueno wrote a book titled, Remember the Poor — a reflection on Scripture verses where God spoke about the poor and promises of favor to those who will remember them.

         (b) We must act as if poverty is not a part of God’s plan for humanity. It’s not!

      3. Illiteracy
         (a) Still so many people in developing countries cannot read or write.

         (b) We empower people, especially women and children, when we can replace illiteracy with literacy.

      4. Spiritual emptiness
         (a) Jesus proclaimed that He came to give life and to give it more abundantly (John 10:10, KJV).

         (b) All across the world, millions and millions have turned to religion to fill the void that can only be filled by God himself. He put the void in us and we are only satisfied when we find the abundant life God has intended for us.

B. We must remember the widow and the orphan. Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows (James 1:27).
C. Justice issues - *Two critical passages*

1. We must speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves and judge people fairly (Proverbs 31:8-9).

2. Isaiah 58 speaks about God’s kind of fast — to loosen the chains of injustice.

V. It is holding lightly the unimportant

A. We are often guilty of majoring in the minors — *You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel* (Matthew 23:24). This is perhaps one of the greatest illustrations of what it means to focus on what doesn’t really matter.

B. Those who have suffered traumatic events in life, such as those with near-death experiences or disaster survivors, often experience a dramatic shift in their worldview because so much is ultimately not worth worrying about. Jesus tells us in Matthew 6:25-34 that we cannot add a single hour to our life by worrying. So we are to stop worrying!

C. “IF” by Rudyard Kipling is a good poem on holding things lightly

*IF*

If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you;
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance for their doubting too;
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
Or, being lied about, don’t deal in lies,
Or, being hated, don’t give way to hating,
And yet don’t look too good, nor talk too wise;

If you can dream - and not make dreams your master;
If you can think - and not make thoughts your aim;
If you can meet with triumph and disaster
And treat those two imposters just the same;
If you can bear to hear the truth you’ve spoken
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
Or watch the things you gave your life to broken,
And stoop and build ‘em up with wornout tools;

If you can make one heap of all your winnings
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,
And lose, and start again at your beginnings
And never breath a word about your loss;
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
To serve your turn long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you
Except the Will which says to them: “Hold on”;

99
If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with kings - nor lose the common touch;
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you;
If all men count with you, but none too much;
If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds’ worth of distance run –
Yours is the Earth and everything that’s in it,
And - which is more – you’ll be a Man my son!

VI. It is living a crucified life
   A. *I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.*
      *The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me* (Galatians 2:20).

   B. A crucified man cannot crucify himself — others do it for him. We must learn to live with the criticism, finger pointing and accusations that are supplied in plenty by others to us. We must accept it all as part of God’s purifying process.

VII. It is about *Go, Give, Pray, Do and Be* everything … regardless
   A. *Go* — no one is exempt from the willingness to go where He calls.

   B. *Give* — all have something to give.

   C. *Pray* — prayer has the power to change the world and bring glory to God. Prayer is the most powerful weapon that we don’t use enough.

   D. *Do and Be REGARDLESS*: regardless of cost, self-interest, or other matters that get in the way of God’s perfect plan.

CONCLUSION
A missionary society wrote to David Livingstone and asked “Have you found a good road to where you are? If so, we want to know how to send other men to join you.”

Livingstone wrote back: “If you have men who will come only if they know there is a good road, I don’t want them. I want men who will come if there is no road at all.”
(Taken from *Good News Broadcaster*, April 1985, page 12)

Friend, there may be no road at all to accomplish what God has called you to do; to be who He has called you to be. If you are committed to God, you will get there with or without a road.

*AGWM missionary Bob McGurty is area director for India.*
DEDICATION
John Flower

TEXT
John 21

INTRODUCTION
After the resurrection Jesus appears

A. First to Mary Magdalene (John 20:10-18)

B. Then two appearances to His disciples
   1. In a closed room with Thomas absent (John 20:19-22)
   2. Again to the disciples with Thomas present (John 20:26-29)

C. Now, by the sea, seven disciples were present. They had fished all night but had caught nothing (John 21:1-5).
   1. Jesus stood on the shore and called out, “Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.” When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish (John 21:6).

I. Dedication means to devote oneself to a special task or purpose — devoted single-mindedly to a goal — to be consecrated, surrendered, to be committed!

Let’s read John 21:15-22.

A. Do we love Him?

B. The Great Commission is taking care of His sheep; of following Him in complete devotion.

   Here is one of the heart-searching passages of Scripture; a real pastoral challenge.

   My friends ... love for Christ is the great motivation of the Christian way; the impetus for our missional directive! If we love Him we will keep His commands and He has commanded us to go! Here is the heartthrob of dedication.

C. But there is a dedication which is not divine or based on heavenly love or for holy interest.
Illustration: Vladimir Lenin, creator of the Soviet Communist Party and founder of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) said, “Give me a handful of professional men and I will turn the course of world order.” He wanted those who would not ...

1. Give second best

2. Devote second interest

3. Expend second concern to the work at hand. Lenin wanted people who would devote more than a spare evening to the task at hand.

D. Jesus calls for our best: *This was* the great purpose of John 21!
   It was a time of reevaluation, of heart dedication, of *devotion based on love*!

   The question was addressed to Peter, “*Do you love me?*” But this question was also addressed to John, Thomas, Paul, Mark Buntain. It is addressed to you and me. *How deep in our love?*

Here are some men who have made a mark:

1. Abraham … “*Do you love me?*”
   (a) Enough to turn my back upon neighbor and family
   (b) Enough to see a country, not known
   (c) Enough to seek a people, yet unborn
   (d) Enough to see a God, yet untried?

2. Moses … “*Do you love me?*”
   (a) Yes, Lord … enough to spend 40 years in a wilderness awaiting Your word
   (b) Enough to walk by faith and lead a people from bondage through the wilderness and barren land
   (c) Enough to suffer through complaining and other problems

3. Joshua … “*Do you love me?*”
   (a) Enough to command my household to follow You and serve You
   (b) “*But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord*” (Joshua 24:15).

4. David … “*Do you love me?*”
   (a) With all my heart, in total surrender and yieldedness
   (b) Through the wearying night vigils … alone on forced marches
   (c) Whatever else comes my way
II. But now, dear friends ... *What about you?* As the Lord most assuredly does, He is asking you ... *‘Do you love me?’*

A. We must never forget that love and devotion and personal commitment to the person of Jesus Christ is and ever must be the highest law of our lives.

   It is a relationship — not merely a functional identification!

B. Love for Christ is the great motivation of the Christian life ... of the Christian walk ... and our missional efforts and labors!

   And though I order my life by Christian principals and Christian practices I cannot allow it to end there ...

   I must love

   I must worship

   I must pray

   I must give

   I must go

   I must be committed to HIM!

   In Luke 10:41-42, Jesus said: *“Martha, Martha ... you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed.”*

   What is needed is a time to give your heart and your love.

   Jesus did not rebuke Martha for her service, but rather tried to help her to see that *first things first.*

   Mary had chosen the necessary thing. She had chosen this time to sit at the feet of the Master and hear the Word.

C. No person can ever live victoriously nor serve effectively who has not learned to stop and love and listen and worship and pray.

   Peter, *‘Do you love me?’* Jesus asked (John 21:17).

   Peter responded: *‘Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.’*

   Then Jesus replied: *‘Feed my sheep.’*

   Judas had a job for the Master. But his love quotient was very low and he betrayed Christ (Luke 22:47-48).
Demas had his opportunity. But his love for the world crowded out his love for Christ and he forfeited it all (2 Timothy 4:10).

III. So today Christ asks us ... “Do you love me?”

Beloved, let your love show

A. To the Lord
   1. In your worship and praise
   2. In your labor of love
   3. In your prayer
   4. In your sacrifice
   5. In your giving

B. To the world
   1. By this shall all men know that you are His disciples; if you have love for the lost, for the sinners, for the backsliders, for the poor … See John 13:35
   2. Speaking the truth in love
   3. Manifesting the gifts of grace in love
   4. Praying in love
   5. Giving in love

C. In the church

D. In the home

E. With other believers

Oh, let it be said: “Behold how they love one another”

CONCLUSION

Hear the Great Commission in the words “Do you love me?”

There is never a commission until there is a commitment!

Our president calls for dedicated men and women to fill the posts of government. So be it!
But Christ calls for dedicated followers today:

Who are willing to take up our crosses
Who are willing to lay down our lives if need be
Who are willing to pray, to speak, to serve, to give, to go
Willing to do whatever the Master says

Jesus told Peter: “What is that to you? You must follow me” (John 21:22).

You have a place to fill:
- It may be a leader
- It may be a follower

But do it for the sake of Christ!

It is your heart that Jesus wants.

In Luke 10:38-42, Mary was sitting at the feet of Jesus. Mary was giving her heart. That was the needful part.

*AGWM missionary John Flower is Missions Awareness Team representative for the Northeast region.*
MISSIONS SUNDAY SERMON OUTLINE

BEYOND THE MAP
Wayne Cagle

INTRODUCTION
Have you ever heard the phrase, “Beyond the map?”

There was a time in history when only known areas within visual sight of land were recorded on maps. Ship captains used these maps to sail the seas.

Because of fear of the unknown, ships would usually only venture short distances. However, when a captain ventured beyond the mapped area, he wrote in his log, “Beyond the map.” In a real sense, he was in an area where no one had gone. He was at the edge of the known!

Text
It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known ... (Romans 15:20)

There were probably three main reasons why a captain might go beyond the map.

1. He might have been blown off course by a storm.
2. He might have received a direct order from his king.
3. He might have had a sense of adventure, to discover the future.

Whatever the reason, the venture into the unknown was an experience of faith as well as a time for stretching the limits of knowledge.

How do we get into places like these?

1. Sometimes God allows a storm to push us off a well-defined course.
2. It’s not easy to be in the unknown, BUT …
3. God is well able to guide us through the straits and bring us out into the new world.
4. Many times we have heard the voice of our great Captain as he tells us to go into the very stronghold of the enemy.
5. It’s when our desire to please the Master causes us to go beyond our fear and venture out into the unknown.
**View from the Gap**

[God said] “I looked for a man among them who would ... stand before me in the gap” Ezekiel 22:30.

It is difficult and sobering to assess the problems of the world today.

Much of the world is in the throes of pain — either through a desire for a new era of growth — or burdened by the death of hope for millions of lost people.

I. God knew who to choose as a gap-stander, difference-maker — Daniel 2:19-22

   A. Daniel had the realization that the enemies to be defeated were of such power that no mortal could conquer them.

      1. God would send a divine redeemer to save the people who loved Him even though they were treated unfairly in the present realm.

      2. This hope was not restricted to one people group but was for an empire composed of men of all kindred, tongues and tribes.

   B. The world of Daniel was much like our world today.

      1. People are in bondage.

      2. The city of God is deserted.

      3. Leaders of the world are confused — they don’t know how to solve issues or interpret the possibilities of the future.

      4. A time of stress, tension, chaos

   C. In this world of confusion, it was the man of God who could see beyond the mist of the dreams and understand the purpose of God for the hour.

      1. In the midst of suffering, pain, lack, ignorance, hunger and death, God’s man, Daniel, spoke the *Word* to a world of slaves.

      2. Daniel became the messenger of hope to a people in crisis.

   D. Several key elements are to be found in Daniel’s view from the gap (Daniel 2:19-22).

      1. God changes the time.

      2. God knows what’s in the darkness.
E. We must also remember that

1. The time of the Son has not yet come.

2. We are living in the gap!

3. But we still have hope.

4. There is a Kingdom that has come, and its nature and power are hidden to the worldly man.

5. God is calling us to interpret the dreams of fallen people and show them the plan of the Eternal One for the hour.

Let us look at some of these truths from Daniel’s hope in the light of the world situation.

II. God sets the times.

A. “Times” (Septuagint) kairos — epochs or seasons

1. Not chronos or quantity of time

2. But quality or special feature of a specific season

3. God has set this time for harvest in the midst of confusion about the times and future. God has opened the windows of heaven and poured out His Spirit upon the nations.

4. This time of uncertainty is an unprecedented opportunity for the Church to take the precious seed of the Word to soil that has been prepared by the Spirit.

B. Gospel is going to remotest fields

III. God knows what is in the darkness.

A. Battle is spiritual

1. New Testament — “darkness” always used in a negative sense

2. Apostle Paul — Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them (Ephesians 5:11).

3. God has given us the assurance that He knows the works of Satan and He is not surprised by any of his tactics.
4. It is only as we confront the powers of darkness that we overcome Satan and take the souls in his kingdom away from sin.

5. This is the pattern for church planting today
   — It’s an all-out struggle against demonic powers to wrestle from them the territory they have controlled for centuries.

   B. Presently — spiritual warfare is raging all over the world with all the crime, violence, sexual abuse, drugs and all the rest that is going on.

   C. Based on Matthew 11:12 which reads —

   The kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing and forceful men lay hold of it.

   — no growing, lasting church is planted until we overthrow the Prince of Darkness by the power of the Cross in a specific locality and hold the territory by the dynamic power of the Holy Spirit.

CONCLUSION

What can we do to make a difference?

1. Pray to the Lord of the harvest

2. Work for the night is coming

3. Do not become weary in well doing

Pray, Give, Go!

[God said] “I looked for a man among them who would ... stand before me in the gap”
Ezekiel 22:30.

AGWM missionary Wayne Cagle is director for Asia Pacific Center for the Advancement of Leadership and Missions.
MISSIONS SUNDAY SERMON OUTLINE

REACHING THE LOST
Norm Edwards

Text
Luke 15:1-32

INTRODUCTION
Background to the passage

In Luke 15 Jesus shares three parables given in direct response to the grumbling of the Pharisees and rulers of the law.

Parable of the lost sheep (verses 3-7)
Parable of the lost coin (verses 8-10)
Parable of the lost or Prodigal Son (verses 11-32)

The fact that Jesus groups these three parables together addressing the same topic indicates that He really wants to emphasize a point.

Before telling these parables, Jesus is having dinner with tax collectors and sinners (verse 1). Tax collectors were people of ill repute. By eating with these people, Jesus is showing His acceptance of them.

- Tax collectors
  
  Direct taxes, such as land taxes, were collected by tax collectors employed by the Romans. Tolls, tariffs and custom fees were collected at tollhouses by toll collectors.

  Toll collectors paid in advance for the right to collect tolls. As a result, the system was open to abuse and corruption.

  Toll collectors were often not natives of the area where they worked, and their cooperation with the Roman oppressors brought them wealth made them targets of scorn.

  Tax collectors were people that good Jews should not associate with.

- The Pharisees and Rulers of the Law

  They had the responsibility of guarding the Law and making sure Jews were following the laws.

  An unbalanced view of tradition and religion made them lose the vision and heart of God.
In response to these groups of people, Jesus shares the parables with a call to return to the heart of God.

In these three parables God appears to take more delight in celebrating with the repentant sinner than with those who remained in the flock.

I. God’s heart is thrilled at the thought of reconciling the lost to himself — the primary lesson of the parable.

A. In all these parables, rejoicing calls for celebration. The note of celebration seems to be exaggerated to emphasize the point.

The shepherd and the woman call their friends to tell them the good news and invite them to join in the celebration. The father throws a huge party when his wayward son returns home.

B. The true aim of these parables is not calling sinners to repentance, but the aim appears to be a call for the righteous to join in the celebration.

1. Whether or not we join in the celebration is important because it reveals whether our relationship with God is based on merit or on mercy.

2. Do we feel that God is too good to others and not good enough to us? If so, Jesus wants to expose these roots of bitterness.
   (a) Typically we want mercy for ourselves and justice for others.
   (b) These parables are calling us to celebrate with God because He is extending His mercy to those who do not deserve it.

II. God’s heart is revealed in the parable of the Prodigal Son.

A. In ancient Palestine it was considered inappropriate for a grown man to run.

B. Jesus knew this and yet shapes the story in such a way that the father (who represents God) jumps to his feet and runs to meet his son.

1. I would suggest that our Father is still willing to set aside all concern for religious propriety to celebrate the welcome home of a sinner.

2. Through these parables Jesus is calling us to examine our hearts. He wants to make sure we are positioned to rejoice with God when sinners who don’t deserve mercy find it through Christ.

III. God cares about individuals, not just crowds. Only one sheep was lost. Only one coin could not be found. The father was concerned with one son.

A. The Bible is filled with examples of God caring for the individual and not just the crowd.

1. He called the disciples one by one.
2. We never see Jesus do mass healings. Rather, He touched them one by one.


4. When the crowd was pressing around Him, He noticed the touch of one (Luke 8:46).

B. God cares about the lost around the world individually. He knows their names, addresses and needs. He wants to bring them into relationship with Him.

IV. It takes effort to find and reach the lost.

A. The shepherd went to seek the wandering sheep. The woman searched for the lost coin. The father ran to embrace his wayward son. There is effort and action involved in winning the lost.
   2. These words, *planted, watered* imply work being done on our part to enable God to make the harvest grow.

B. The actions spoken of in these stories also imply that the lost will not come. We have to go to them.
   1. He commanded us to go and make them come in (Luke 14:23).
   2. Arthur Simonyan, an Armenian pastor says, “Building churches and expecting sinners to walk in because we have beautiful buildings is as silly as thinking that if policemen built beautiful jails the criminals would check themselves in.”
   3. Every believer comes to Christ because someone, somewhere at sometime told him or her about Christ. The same will be true of all those who are going to come to faith in the future.

CONCLUSION
Rick Warren in his book, *Purpose Driven Church* says, “Churches grow by the power of God through the skilled efforts of people.”

He then adds, “As the body of Christ we must ask ourselves: What is our business? And, how’s business?”

More than 4 billion await an adequate witness of Jesus Christ. They are lost and trying to find their way, but they need someone to help them. Someone who has the heart of Christ to rejoice at those who find Him. We must mobilize, put our shoulders to the plow and get the job done.

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MISSIONS SUNDAY SERMON OUTLINE

FROM HEAD, TO HEART, TO HANDS: I COMMIT TO GO, GIVE, PRAY
Jim Sabella

TEXT
2 Kings 23

INTRODUCTION
I. Commitment is a part of our everyday lives. Commitments define our priorities and, therefore, who we are and what we decide is important in life. Here are some examples of the types of commitments we make in our lives.

A. Financial commitments
   1. The act of using a credit card to buy is an act of commitment. By using the card we commit to pay the credit card bill at the end of the month.

   2. This is true of a mortgage, rent, or car payments.

B. Personal commitments
   1. We commit to love and be true to one another in marriage.

   2. We commit to our children and to meeting their needs.

   3. We commit to help those in need.

   4. We commit to a church building project or a community project.

   5. We commit to return books when we borrow them from the library.

C. Spiritual commitments
   1. As Christians we commit to follow the teachings of Jesus Christ.

   2. We commit to the belief in the one true God.

   3. We commit to prayer, to tithing, to church attendance.

   4. We commit to become more like Christ.

   5. We commit to live a life that impacts the world.

II. In every case a commitment is a thoughtful promise. It’s a statement that you will do what you say — an unwavering dedication that you will do what needs to be done — and a powerful resolution that you will do your part no matter the cost.
III. If we expect to make a difference in our lives, our homes, our families and in our world, we must make a commitment. A commitment is a powerful force.

IV. What makes a commitment such a powerful force? A commitment is a powerful force because it affects our whole existence, beginning with our head (understanding), traveling to our heart (motivation) and ultimately expressing itself in our hands (action).

Transition

I. The Old Testament often speaks of commitment in the context of a covenant with God.

II. This is especially the case in 1 Kings and 2 Kings

III. Commentator Dr. Paul House says it this way: “Perhaps more than any other canonical work, the Books of Kings argue of a single-minded commitment to the one God who exists, creates, makes covenants and gives the land. Here, the day-to-day struggles of Yahweh’s faithful servants against the proponents of idolatry unfold. Here kings and kingdoms rise and fall, each one dependent on God’s will for its existence.”

IV. It is in this setting that we find Josiah making a commitment to the Lord. Moreover, we see the steps Josiah and the people of Israel took that led to commitment and finally action: From head (understanding), to heart (motivation), to hands (action).

Let us look at these steps.

Central Theme

I. From head (understanding) 2 Kings 23:1-2
A. Both Josiah’s and the people’s faith were stirred as they heard the Law.

B. The act of reading and the act of hearing is the beginning of understanding.

C. Understanding produces faith that leads to commitment.

D. A commitment to go, pray and give begins with our hearing and understanding two important concepts: what the Word of God says about His Gift of Redemption to the lost world, and what our part in the process should look like.

Application

- Do we allow God to speak with us through His Word?
- What does the Bible say about going, praying, giving?
- Do we understand it clearly?
- Do we grasp what God says about our part in spreading the good news of redemption, compassion and hope?

II. From head to heart (motivation)
   A. The king [Josiah] stood by the pillar and renewed the covenant in the presence of the Lord—to follow the Lord and keep his commands, regulations and degrees with all his heart and all his soul, thus confirming the words of the covenant written in this book (2 Kings 23:3).

   B. The act of renewing or commitment was based on an understanding of the Lord’s commandments with a deep desire in their heart motivating them to follow the Lord and keep His commandments.

   C. Understanding alone is not enough for a commitment. There must be a motivation that begins in the heart.

   Application Questions

- Am I allowing God’s Word to do more than just inform me?
- Am I more than just a hearer or a student of the Word? Am I a doer as well?
- Do I have a desire to follow the Lord and keep His commandments? (See Matthew 28:19)

- Am I allowing God’s Word to motivate me and move me from the state in which I now find myself, to a position from which I can make a commitment to make a difference in the world — a commitment to go, give and pray?

III. From head, to heart, to hands (action) 2 Kings 23:3-37
   A. Josiah acts in a way that brings the nation back to God.

   B. Josiah and the people both heard and understood the Law. They were motivated by a desire to follow the Lord and keep His commandments.

   C. When we understand God’s commands and are motivated by a desire to follow the Lord and keep His commandments, action is the next natural step. In this account, the people of Israel returned to God. In our case we will go,
give and pray so that the whole world will know the redemptive plan of God and have an opportunity to accept this redemption though Jesus Christ.

Application Questions

• Do I understand what the Bible says about going, giving and praying?

• Does this understanding increase my faith and desire to follow the Lord and to keep His commandments?

• Does this knowledge motivate me to make a commitment that leads to the action of going, giving and praying?

• Am I willing to act on what I know and sense in my heart? If not, am I willing to make that commitment now?

CONCLUSION
1. Commitment is a part of our everyday lives.

2. Commitment starts in the head with understanding.

3. Commitment travels to the heart, motivating us to follow the Lord and keep His commandments.

4. Commitment ultimately expresses itself in our hands as we act by doing what God commands us to do: go, give and pray.

Will you commit to go, to pray and to give?

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