

This Sunday's texts:

Ezekiel 18:21-22

Acts 13:36-39

Luke 24:45-48

The Unfinished Task

Pastor Nijhar Ekka

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The gospel is from the Gospel according to St Luke, chapter 24, beginning at verse 45:

Then he opened their minds so that so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, "This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things."

Here ends the Gospel reading.

Good morning. We bring greetings to you all from India, the mission that you are part of, and also from the World Mission Prayer League. Thank you, Pastor Jim, for inviting us to be part of all of you this weekend. We thank Pastors Judy and Jim for their generous hospitality. Indeed it is a privilege to be with you and we thank God for giving us this opportunity to be with you. It's been a long time since we were here last, but God is active, working, and on the move, here in this place and around the world, including India. We are thankful for your prayers and your support for God's work in India.

We serve with World Mission Prayer League. It is a pan Lutheran Mission organization, based in Minneapolis and we gather to pray. This is a prayer league, so we pray. We also emphasize discipleship and we focus on unreached people groups and these people groups are those who are yet to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ meaningfully. Out of the more than 17,000 people groups in the world, there are seven thousand of such groups who are yet to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ. So at World Mission Prayer League, we pray for these people-groups, pray that God will send workers among them.

Luke 10:2 is our guiding verse where it says "[t]he harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers in his harvest field." As a result, the mission in India is growing. The seminary that God helped us build in India has produced more than 150 graduates and they are proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ as evangelists, missionaries, and pastors in as many as twelve different states of India. And you are part of that proclamation, as you have joined together in this partnership for the gospel

We have some exciting ministry going on. We have a ministry called “Backpack Library Ministry” where in a backpack, there are books. These books are shared with village children who gather to read the storybooks in letter time. These kids are reading books like this for the first time, so it is exciting. Once they are done with this set of books, the library will move to another village and another set of children will read those books. So that is exciting.

Also, we support ten children who have lost their dads during Covid and this is a significant ministry for these seven families, being supported for kids’ education during this difficult time.

The most exciting project that you're part of is the starting of school next year. I think many of you would remember during our last visit here in 2016, St Timothy provided us with a check for \$50,000. How many of you remember? Thank you. That money is being used to build a structure, a place, a center where a school will begin. That will be a blessing for so many poor people in that area. So we thank you for your partnership in the Gospel of Jesus Christ and we pray that God will bless the ministry of St Timothy here and around the world. God bless you all. Thank you.

Let's pray. Our gracious, heavenly father, as we come before your throne of grace, we acknowledge that you are the lord of the lords, king of kings, and king of the universe. You are gracious and kind and your heart is that every single one on this Earth will come to know you, to know your gracious loving fatherhood, that you are gracious. You're kind. You're forgiving and you are everlasting. Heavenly Father, as we ponder upon your word, we pray Holy Spirit Come pour out your strength and power on us so that we will catch the vision that is ahead of us. We thank you that we are yours. You have called us to be yours. Father, we pray that you enable us to go forth into this world to proclaim you, who is loving and living, who has the power to forgive and renew the lives of all. All these, we ask in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Grace and mercy and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit that lives and breathes in us and gives us courage and power to go forth into this world. Thank you again for your prayers. Thank you for praying for the world, praying for your neighborhood, and your families. Jesus said, while he was departing from this world, we read in all four gospels, that he commissioned to his disciples. In Matthew, he said to go to all the nations and preach the good news and those who believe, baptize them.¹ In

¹ Matthew 28:19

Mark, he said to go to the world and preach the gospel.² And today, we hear in Luke's gospel, he said it is written the Messiah will suffer and die and rise and the repentance and forgiveness of all the sins of all the world will be forgiven in the name of Jesus and that will begin from Jerusalem. That will be proclaimed. It will begin from Jerusalem. And the best part is he said you are the witnesses. So here we are with that message.

There was a young man. It was a true story in Norway. He was caught in a robbery and was put into jail. There, he was given a book that was a biography of a missionary who came to know the Lord, and then he received the message; he received the call to go and preach the gospel. The young man read and he was so compelled by the Holy Spirit to know who he was in front of the king of kings and lord of lords, he started confessing his sins. Many, many people who knew him were praying for him. He was so compelled, he confessed his sins and he asked God to fill him, to send him to share what it means to be a forgiven sinner. The Lord led him to be trained in Germany and then he was sent to India to share the good news, the repentance and forgiveness of sins in the name of Jesus to the nations.

In 1900, it happened. There are many places around the world, especially in the western part of the world where many people were caught in revival and they went to share the good news in the eastern part of India. In Assam, there is a group called headhunters in those days and they did not like anybody to come into their area to share or change their lives. The missionaries from this country went to that area in the late 1800s and early 1900s and started sharing the gospel, talking about life in Jesus Christ, believing in the name of Jesus, and receiving the forgiveness of all their sins. These people were not ready to hear. The missionaries were asked to leave, but one person believed and he confessed his sins and came to know the Lord. When the villagers found out, the chief of the village was very angry because one person has turned himself against this whole belief system, their whole other understanding, and their culture. So they brought this man and his family who have accepted the Lord and they put them in the center of the village. The chief needed this man to stand in front of the whole circle and his family, his two boys and wife were right in front of this man. This man was tied up and he was asked to deny Jesus. The man said I have decided to follow Jesus, no turning back. His two sons were killed right in front of him. The chief said now two sons of yours have died; deny Jesus. He said though none go with me, I still will follow. His wife was killed, right in front of his eyes. Now the

² Mark 16:15

chief said your wife and your children are gone; deny Jesus, so that you can live. He said the cross before me, the world behind me; no turning back. Why?! Because he had received the life everlasting, the forgiveness of sins. He, his life, had been turned around. He was focusing on the cross. So he was killed right there.

The chief did not know what was happening and he said what is this? In front of the whole village, he said who is this Jesus and why did this man give up everything for the sake of having faith in Jesus? He said I want to know this Jesus. And he heard the good news, the forgiveness of all his sins and having life everlasting in the name of Jesus Christ. And so he came to the lord. He believed. He was baptized and the whole village was baptized.

This is what Jesus is talking about, the repentance and forgiveness of all your sins should be in the name of Jesus and will be preached to all the nations.

Metanoia is the word for repentance. We all understand the forgiveness, but, metanoia, it is about the changing of heart. The person who was the only one whose life had changed knew that life in Jesus Christ is more than what he can ask for, so he did not care about his physical life. This chief understood that turning to Jesus is receiving everlasting life and so he received.

The gospel was preached to the nations, to the people and they started sharing the good news. Jesus said to go and share this. This gospel will be proclaimed to all nations. Today, I'm standing here because some missionaries in Germany had the same gospel and they went to Ranchi and preach Jesus, the risen lord, the one who suffered and died and rose again. Because of these missionaries, there is life eternal. My ancestors, my great-grandfather and mother heard that and they came to believe and now I'm standing here with all of you.

The power of the gospel. Jesus said to all nations, the forgiveness of all your sins. In the gospel, all nations are not the countries. Jesus is not talking about the countries. He is talking about the people groups. So, in the Bible, the word for nations is ethnos. The word "ethnic" comes from that. Paul talked about this and he said it to Timothy. He said the desire of God is that all people will come to know him.³ That is God's desire, that every single one in the world will come to know the saving grace of Jesus Christ through his blood on the cross. All the people mean all the different ethnic groups around the world. As you heard, there are 7,000+ people groups around the world who have not heard the name of Jesus, yet. You will be surprised, but even we have met some people in India.

³ 1 Timothy 2:4

There are so many people groups in India who have no access to the gospel unless somebody goes and shares the good news with them.

Paul wrote in Romans, unless somebody goes, how can they hear?⁴ The unfinished task is that, to go and share the good news that is repentance and forgiveness to all the people, all the people-groups who have not heard the gospel. Over seven billion people are in the world and 3.7 billion people have not heard the gospel. Isn't it urgent? It is urgent. My brothers and sisters, it is urgent for you and me. That's the call; that is the urgency to share the good news because we know that every knee will bow and every tongue will confess. That is the call. That is the desire of our Lord Jesus Christ; that every single one will come to know the Lord. He desires that. To fulfill his desire, he has called you and me. We have the message. We have received that forgiveness of all our sins. When we came, we confessed. We know that he is the only one who has the power and authority to forgive all our sins. We have been washed with the Lamb of God. We have that message.

In 1999, there was a missionary in India, an Australian missionary who was killed, who was burned alive, along with his two young boys, nine and seven years old. In India and during the funeral, his wife a widow, a woman in India, stood there and said I forgive all those who killed my husband and my two sons. I forgive because I am forgiven. This is the message we have, my brothers and sisters. Sometimes, we don't understand that

In 2020, when I was in India and I was able, I was in a hospital campus because my father was very ill. I was ministering to some women who have never heard the name of Jesus. I was talking to them and sharing this good news with them. A woman came and she said tell me what do I have to do. Do I have to bring some money to you? Do I have to bring a goat to you to sacrifice? Do I have to bring a white chicken to sacrifice? No, I said, just believe. Come tell who you are to Jesus Christ. Give your burden to him. Ask him to forgive you. It is very hard in some places to understand how that can be. But Jesus offers freely that grace, that is just believing and trusting in his mercy.

That's what Jesus said to proclaim that will be proclaimed to all the nations. So we have a message of reconciliation. Paul talked about it in 2Corinthians 5. When he talks about when somebody is in Christ, he or she is a new creation. After that, it says we have that message of reconciliation because we have

⁴ Romans 10:14-15

received that forgiveness of all our sins. Now God has made us the ambassador to these nations.⁵

While we were driving to this place, Pastor Judy said you know what; I think this is a harvest field. So we have a message of reconciliation and we have a message as a church to take the whole gospel to the whole world. And this world is a mission field. Jesus said in Luke 10:2, "Harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few" Pray to the Lord of the harvest. We have a message of reconciliation and we have a task of prayer. We have experienced lots and lots of times how prayer changes lives. Your prayer is needed at this time. To go and to make disciples. Pastor Judy said this is a harvest field and we don't know how to go about it. Pray. God is inviting St Timothy. He is showing you the harvest field. Silicon Valley is a harvest field. There are lots of different people groups here. God is calling each one of us here to come in front of him, lay our lives in prayer, seeking his will and his guidance to go and proclaim to all these nations life everlasting in and through Jesus Christ. As you go, remember we are called to pray. Pray for the nations and as God leads you, go and share the good news. Pray for those workers who are out there. In World Mission Prayer League, we say some are called to go, some are called to send, but all of us are called to pray.

Let's pray. Heavenly father, bless us as we go our own ways. Give us your Holy Spirit so we can be your instruments for your kingdom and your glory. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

⁵ 2 Corinthians 5:17-20