

Our Mission: Bringing God's Salvation "To the Ends of the Earth"

- I. By proclaiming Jesus, the world's only Savior.
- II. By sharing God's powerful Word.

Dear Christian friends,

"To the ends of the earth." That's a phrase repeated in **both** the OT and NT. They're words spoken by **prophets** and **apostles** – by Jesus Himself. Right before He ascended into heaven He told His disciples, ***"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*** That's Jesus' PROMISE and COMMAND to His NT Church. As we await Jesus' **second coming** we are to be busy ***"bringing* (God's) ***salvation to the ends of the earth."*** That's **also** our mission and ministry as **congregations united** in the WELS.**

We hear the words ***"to the ends of the earth"*** and we probably think of the FAR CORNERS of the world – far distant places in **Africa, Asia**, etc. Yet to the tens of millions of people **living in** NYC – London – Beijing – Tokyo, etc. – Fox Lake, Wisconsin, is ***"to the ends of the earth."***

"To the ends of the earth" is another way of saying to ALL people no matter where they are or who they are. OUR MISSION is bringing God's salvation ***"to the ends of the earth"*** - TO ALL people.' We carry out that mission 1) by proclaiming Jesus, the world's **only Savior** and 2) by sharing God's **powerful Word**.

I. By proclaiming Jesus, the world's only Savior.

Paul here was on THE FIRST of his **three** missionary journeys. He's in the city of ***"Pisidian Antioch"*** in the central part of Turkey today. **These verses** are the conclusion to a sermon **Paul was preaching** in a Jewish synagogue. They nicely sum up Paul's MISSION and MESSAGE. ***"So, brothers, let it be known to you that through this Jesus forgiveness of sins is being proclaimed to you."***

Like Paul we carry out our MISSION by proclaiming Jesus ***"to the ends of the earth."*** **Jesus is the Savior** everyone in the world NEEDS because only in **Jesus** does anyone have ***"the forgiveness of sins."***

All need that forgiveness because ***"all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."*** There isn't a single person in the world that BY THEMSELVES God could give a pat on the back and honestly say, "Boy, I like the way you've lived your life!" EXCEPT for Jesus God's Word bluntly declares, ***"there is no one righteous"*** - there's no one who has ALWAYS DONE what's **right in God's sight**. Breaking ANY commandment IN ANY WAY is **sin** – rejecting God's control over our lives – defying God's will for our lives. The holy and righteous Judge of all FINDS NOTHING CUTE in **sin** or **sinners**. To those who think God is a PUSH-OVER who would never send anyone to hell the Bible solemnly warns, ***"Our God is a consuming fire; it is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God."*** Paul knew those truths APPLIED FIRST to himself. Paul understood that IF ANYBODY should have been banned from heaven and dammned to hell it was him, ***"the worst of sinners."***

But God had intervened in Paul's life. Paul had come to know THE TRUTH both about himself AND **Jesus**. Paul knew he was a **guilty sinner deserving** only death and hell. Paul also knew **Jesus** was God's eternal SON and his PERFECT SAVIOR. Paul could do nothing to **save himself** or make things right with God. Paul's confidence and joy were that Jesus HAD TAKEN CARE of **everything** to save Paul. In Paul's place – GIVING Paul **all the credit** – Jesus had actually lived the **sinless, perfect, righteous** life Paul had owed God. Bearing all of Paul's sins Jesus had suffered and died on His cross. Jesus had shed His **precious blood** to cleanse Paul of **all** his sins. Jesus had sacrificed His **innocent**

life on the cross to FULLY PAY for **every single one** of Paul's sins. Jesus had risen triumphant from the dead on Easter morning and He shared His victory with Paul. TRUSTING in Jesus as his Savior Paul had God's **forgiveness** of all his sins – he had peace with God – he had eternal life in heaven the **very moment** he died.

What Jesus had all done FOR PAUL He **has done** FOR ALL people. Paul clearly understood that WITHOUT JESUS he'd be doomed to hell's **eternal banishment** and punishment. Paul knew and rejoiced that WITH JESUS he was going straight to heaven **whenever** and **however** he died. There WAS NO WAY Paul could keep Jesus to himself. There **was no way** Paul could NOT SHARE Jesus' love – forgiveness – promises with others even if it meant going **“to the ends of the earth”** – even if it COST HIM his life. HOW can we not have that **same MISSION MINDSET**? How can we not work and sacrifice to **“bring (God's) salvation to the ends of the earth”**?

OUR MISSION and ministry are to proclaim Jesus, the world's **only Savior**...

II. By sharing God's powerful Word.

Paul wasn't able to fly or drive to Pisidian Antioch. He had to walk 100 or so miles through mountains to get there. **Once there** Paul COULDN'T DO any advertising on radio – TV – newspapers. He couldn't get any FLYERS **printed up and handed out**. He didn't have BIBLES that he could **hand out** to people. He didn't have a MISSION BOARD to support him or even pay him a **modest salary**. Paul had to work to **support himself as he went out** **“bringing (God's) salvation to the ends of the earth”**

Obviously a LOT HAS CHANGED. Not only is there the modern transportation, etc., but the INTERNET has opened up so many previously closed areas. We don't have the MONEY or the MANPOWER but the internet – Facebook – video teaching, etc. ENABLE us to do much more to **“bring (God's) salvation to the ends of the earth.”** You can find out more on our WELS website.

So much has changed but **the mission still comes down** to ONE BASIC THING – sharing God's **powerful Word** with others. That's what Paul was doing in Pisidian Antioch. FAITHFULLY **sharing** God's Word caused Paul a lot of trouble but it also brought JOY and BLESSINGS to **Paul and many others**.

God's Word causes trouble. We have an example here. **“On the next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of God. But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with envy and began to contradict what Paul was saying by slandering him.”**

Because we all have a sinful nature that **hates God** people BY NATURE don't like hearing God's Word – His **law** OR His **gospel**. The sinful nature resents God BOSSING us around with His commandments – God telling us what we CAN and CAN'T do/believe. It's not just our society that is REBELLING against God. **Our sinful natures** are great at making excuses for why we JUST CAN'T do what God wants – “I know God says, BUT...” People don't like being CONFRONTED with **their sin** and the hell we deserve because of our sins. People want a NICE God who'll let us get away with just about anything – who'd never send us to hell **because we're** NOT THAT BAD. Yes we are – and YES GOD WOULD!

But then God's gospel also UPSETS people. They can understand God LOVING – **forgiving** – **wanting** them – but that God should also love – forgive – want some OTHER people – that's RIDICULOUS! That was the Jews' problem here. That God's grace and mercy were ALSO FOR GENTILES that was going TOO FAR. That was just too much for them **to accept**. Their rejection of the gospel – their RESENTMENT of God's **grace for all** – caused Paul trouble in city after city. It can still subtlety – and NOT SO SUBTLETY – **causes us** trouble today. Do we just write off CERTAIN people – they'd never believe in Jesus – they wouldn't fit – wouldn't like – our church – they're not OUR KIND of people? Does any of that SOUND FAMILIAR?

We can't change anything **God says** just because it UPSETS people. We can't ignore or tone down things **God says** just because it's NOT POPULAR or POLITICALLY CORRECT in today's world. Paul once wrote, "***we preach Christ crucified — which is OFFENSIVE to Jews and FOOLISHNESS to Greeks, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God***" and again, "***I did not hesitate to proclaim to you the WHOLE counsel of God.***"

God's Word causes trouble but it also brings **great joy** and **many blessings**. CONVICTED and crushed by God's law we're then ready to hear – we'll TREASURE! – the **good news** of the gospel – that Jesus has taken care of **everything** to save us. Through those SIMPLE FACTS of Jesus' perfect life – His innocent death on the cross – His triumphant resurrection from the dead – through that gospel GOD WORKS **saving faith** in **sinful hearts**. WITH THAT TRUST in Jesus as our Savior comes the peace of God's **forgiveness** – the joy of God's **love** – the comfort of God's **presence** and **promises** – the sure hope of **eternal life** in heaven. Just picture YOUR LIFE WITHOUT **Jesus** and **all those blessing** of the gospel. HOW could/would we then handle life and deal with **death**? HAVING JESUS and all **those gospel blessings** our mission now is to **“bring** (God's) **salvation to the ends of the earth.”** We do that in our INDIVIDUAL **daily Christian** lives – as St. John's congregation in Fox Lake, WI – and united together with the churches of our WELS. Amen.

(Offering, then video)