**Mission & Ministry Sunday 2018**

**Sermon Outline**

**Text: Acts 13:38-48**

Context: Paul’s 1st Missionary Journey. After John Mark turns back at Perga, Paul and Barnabas continue inland to Antioch of Pisidia in Galatia, intent on bringing salvation to the ends of the earth. Invited to speak a word of exhortation at the synagogue in Antioch, Paul briefly recounts God’s dealings with the people of Israel from “the stay in Egypt” to the reign of King David. Paul continues, “From this man’s descendants God has brought to Israel the Savior Jesus, as he promised” (Acts 13:23). Paul then relates how Jesus was put to death and placed in a tomb, “but God raised him from the dead” in keeping with prophecies written by King David and the prophet Isaiah. In the concluding part of his message, Paul makes a heartfelt appeal to his audience to believe the message of salvation through faith in Jesus and warns against rejecting it.

**Theme: Bring Salvation to the Ends of the Earth**

Introduction: What do you think of when you hear the phrase “the ends of the earth”? What comes to mind is probably a place that’s far away or remote. Antioch of Pisidia was not “the end of the earth” to people living in Galatia, near the center of what today is the country of Turkey. Antioch was a Roman colony with enough Jewish residents to support a synagogue. But as John Mark prepared to accompany Barnabas and Paul on a trek of more than a hundred mountainous miles from Perga to Antioch, it must have seemed like the end of the earth to him. The book of Acts says, “John (Mark) left them to return to Jerusalem” (Acts 13:13). Was it the rigors of the journey that lay ahead or the fear of danger that caused him to turn back? Was he homesick? We don’t know why John Mark turned back. Paul and Barnabas continued on, however, because they knew that God had commanded them to bring salvation to the ends of the earth—and that included Antioch of Pisidia.

Acts 1:8 – Jesus said, “You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, *and to the ends of the earth.*” This commission is reflected in the mission of our Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, which “exists to make disciples throughout the world for time and for eternity.” Mission and Ministry Sunday is a time to refocus ourselves on the mission Jesus has given us. In the words of the prophet Isaiah, as quoted by St. Paul, our mission is to **Bring Salvation to the Ends of the Earth**.

**I. By proclaiming the forgiveness of sins through Jesus.**

1. v38 Paul had been invited to speak “a word of exhortation” in the synagogue (13:15).
2. History of Israel from “stay in Egypt” to King David (13:16-22).
3. “From this man’s (David’s) descendants God has brought to Israel the Savior Jesus, as he promised” (13:23).
4. Paul recounts Jesus’ execution “with no proper ground for a death sentence” (13:28).
5. Paul proclaims Jesus’ resurrection, as foretold by Isaiah and David (13:30-37).
6. Forgiveness comes through Jesus—by his execution, innocent Jesus endured our condemnation; by his resurrection Jesus showed that his payment for sin was accepted.
7. Notice the personal nature of Paul’s appeal: “I want *you* to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to *you*.”
8. v39 Justified through faith in Jesus, a justification impossible under the Law of Moses.
9. Acts 15:10: Peter would call the Law of Moses “a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors have been able to bear.”
10. Anything less than complete obedience brings a curse. (See Gal. 3:10-12.)
11. Sadly, many today still rely on obedience to laws for salvation “In these early years of the twenty-first century, three great religio-cultural bastions remain largely resistant to the missionary endeavor, the peoples that embrace Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam.” (“Paul’s Theology of Suffering” by Don N. Howell in *Paul’s Missionary Methods*, Robert L. Plummer & John Mark Terry, IVP, 2012.)
12. Islam with its Five Pillars, Buddhism with its Eightfold Path, and Hinduism with its hundreds of millions of gods and tens of millions of reincarnations are all religions that teach people to depend on their own works for salvation
13. Even many nominal Christians and nominally Christian churches teach a reliance on our own works, rather than looking to Jesus for the forgiveness of sins through him.
14. Only through Jesus do we have the complete certainty that we have been set free from sin, justified.
15. “Through (Jesus) everyone who believes is set free from every sin” (13:39).
16. Missionary John Roebke reports on what he’s seen among the people of Malawi, “When they see water splashed on their child’s head, or the head of an adult, they understand that Baptism saves souls by washing away sin’s stain and covering them with the pureness of Christ. When they see people swallowing wheat wafers and sips of wine, they understand that Communion is uniting them with the body and blood Christ used to pay for their freedom. When they see the pastor standing in front and hear him say, “I forgive you all your sins in name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” they understand that it is Christ who is speaking to them, the same Christ whose words give eternal life.” <https://welsfriendsofafrica.com/what-am-i-seeing/>

Transition: Paul quotes Isaiah 49:6 in Acts 13:47, where God the Father says to his Son, “I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.” Paul, however, inspired by the Holy Spirit, says, “For this is what the Lord has commanded *us.”* But there is no contradiction. Jesus is “the light of the world,” but Jesus also calls believers “the light of the world” (Matt. 5:14). We illuminate the world by shining with the reflected light of Jesus Christ.

**II. By speaking the word of the Lord to the world.**

1. Paul and Barnabas were “invited” to speak further at the synagogue on the next Sabbath (13:32).
2. “Invited” is translated “begged.” (ESV and EHV)
3. “Almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord” (13:44).
4. The Lord opens a door for his spokesmen to speak his word.
5. Law (13:41) and Gospel (13:38-39) God’s means to call sinners to repentance.
6. In his grace God has positioned our synod to carry this message to the ends of the earth.
7. Advances in communication: internet, cell phones.
8. People from around the world coming to the U.S.
9. Opportunities for sharing the gospel that seemed impossible only a generation ago. (Note: One sermon can’t include every illustration, but one or more of the following illustrations might be useful in making the point.)
10. “We thank you for the WELS training for the past three years. Now, we believe that we have salvation. Without that, today we would still be living in the darkness of Satan. We believe that God already answered our prayers through the WELS.” (From a letter from the Hmong Fellowship Church, Vietnam, to the WELS, <https://wels.net/the-lord-blesses-hmong-outreach-in-vietnam/>. A generation ago we were fighting a war in Vietnam. Such opportunities to share the gospel are a gift from God who routinely does more than we can ask or imagine (Ephesians 3:20).
11. More than a decade ago WELS was forced to make drastic cuts in world missions, including cutting LATTE (Latin America Traveling Theological Educators—A traveling seminary that was training future pastors all over Latin America). Today millions of Latin Americans connect to Facebook via their smartphones. More than a million Latins connect to *Academia Cristo’s* Facebook page. They come from nearly every country in Central and South America. Some 4,000 are requesting to participate in online classes in order to learn more of what God’s Word reveals to us. One of the goals of the Latin America mission team is to identify those who have the ability and the desire to be educated as evangelists and pastors.
12. The Joint Mission Council of the WELS is supporting outreach efforts to Hmong, Hispanic, South Asian, Sudanese, Liberian, Vietnamese, and Chinese people living in the U.S. In many cases, these immigrants want to share the gospel hope they now possess with relatives and friends in the countries from which they emigrated.
13. Acts 13:48: Though there was opposition and abuse, “All who were appointed for eternal life believed.”
14. Not everyone can personally carry the good news of forgiveness to the ends of the earth.
15. Not everyone can teach a Bible study in Nepal; instruct a seminary student in Russia; teach in a school in Peridot, Arizona.
16. Don’t forget that “to the ends of the earth” includes everything between where we are now and the ends of the earth: over the back fence, the “doubting cynic” (hymn: “We Are Sent by the Lord” by Laurie F. Gauger) in the next cubicle, that Sunday school class that still needs a teacher, the family that just moved in down the street from you, reinvigorating our congregation’s evangelism committee, and making new efforts to reach the unchurched in our own community.
17. Your prayers and offerings are vital. Prayers enlist God’s power in carrying out the commission he’s given us; offerings enable others to go in our name.
18. As a result, all over the world as at Antioch, people are “glad and honor the word of the Lord” (Acts 13:48).

Conclusion: At first glance, the command the Lord has given us, to bring salvation to the ends of earth, seems staggering, impossible. However, a quick glance at wels.net and missions’ news from this country and overseas reveals that God is already enabling us to go to the ends of the earth. The God who made his Son a light for the Gentiles has called us to bring the light of his salvation to the ends of the earth. With the gospel of forgiveness and the power of his Spirit, he’s equipped us to do just that.