

Gentiles

Isaiah 49:1-6

Isaiah 49 is the passage Paul quoted in Acts 13. He and Barnabas were sent out from the church in Antioch and arrived **on the island of Cyprus**. A huge crowd gathered to hear their message. The Jews in the area became jealous of all this attention for this new Christian “cult” so they publicly opposed Paul and Barnabas. In response, the missionaries said, “Fine. Since you Jews have rejected the gospel, we will go to the Gentiles!”

“We are turning to the Gentiles. For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, ***‘I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.’*** ...And the word of the Lord was spreading throughout the whole region.” Acts 13:46-47 (quoting Isaiah 49:6)

The Gentiles cheered and many joyfully put their faith in Jesus that day. And notice that last line - “the word of the Lord was spreading throughout the whole region.” That is exactly ***our prayer and vision at Oakwood!*** We want to play our part in reaching the whole Bay area with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Following the promise in Acts 1:8 that we WILL BE witnesses for Jesus to the ends of the earth, our vision is to bring the gospel to EVERY PART OF TAMPA BAY and every people group on earth!

Last week Jason shared from Acts 2 how **the Holy Spirit came to fill ALL BELIEVERS** - not just a chosen few - to prepare and empower us to complete this task of bringing the gospel to the nations. In the power of the Holy Spirit, as we follow His direction, this is a mission that CANNOT FAIL. We WILL BE His witnesses to the end of the earth. Mark 13 says:

To All Nations

“And the gospel must first be proclaimed **to all nations.**” Mark 13:10

This is our commission and mandate - ***this is the mission of the church*** - to bring the gospel to ALL NATIONS; or “TO ALL THE GENTILES.” The Word “nations” is ETHNOS and can also be translated Gentiles (which means all non-Jews). These are the marching orders Jesus gave to the church in the Great Commission “Go and make disciples of ALL NATIONS.” In Matthew 24 it is a promise:

To All Nations

“And this gospel of the kingdom **will be proclaimed** throughout the whole world as a testimony **to all nations,** and then the end will come.” Matthew 24:12

This is all we are waiting for in history - for the gospel to reach the remaining unreached people groups. According to the Joshua Project there are...

<p><u>JoshuaProject.net</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● 4,814 frontier people groups● Zero access to the gospel● 1,857,575,000 people● 25% of the world	<p>“And this gospel of the kingdom <u>will be proclaimed</u> throughout the whole world as a testimony <u>to all nations</u>, and then the end will come.” Matthew 24:12</p>
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Visit the church blog to download a **31 day prayer guide** for the 31 largest frontier people groups who make up half of the 1.8 Billion people with no access to the gospel whatsoever. You can get that same information in an App from Joshua Project called ***Unreached of the day***. The gospel of the kingdom MUST BE PROCLAIMED in the whole world as a testimony to all nations... only then will the end come. This is what Jesus is waiting for -for the work to be completed; for His church to finally and fully obey His Great Commission; for the gathering in of all the people on earth who belong to Him.

God loved the world so much that He sent His only Son (John 3:16)

This is the gospel we cherish FOR OURSELVES. We revel in the love of God and the lengths He went to reach us. But that is not the end of the story. That CANNOT BE the end of the story!

God loved the world so much that He sent His only Son (John 3:16)

Jesus loved the world so much that He sent us

“As the Father sent me, even so I am sending you.” John 20:21

We are SENT ONES. We are ambassadors. Jesus empowered us and commissioned us to go and make disciples of all nations. We carry the banner of Jesus’ name to every place where He is not known. Hundreds of millions of people in our world remain lost in darkness - slaves to their sin and destined for an eternity of suffering under God’s just wrath. Come back next week to study Romans 1 and be reminded of that vital truth - the unreached millions who do not know Jesus ARE NOT OK.

Today in Isaiah 49 we see ***the two sides of the Great Commission*** - first, this is WHO WE ARE and second, this is what WE MUST DO.

First - who we are.

God Created us to BE the Light of the World

- **Designed to Reflect His Glory**

“The Lord called me from the womb, from the body of my mother he named my name... He said to me, ‘You are my servant, Israel, *in whom I will be glorified.*’” Isaiah 49:1,3

From the womb. Ephesians 1 says even **“before the creation of the world,”** God had you in mind. Before you were a twinkle in your dad’s eye, you were a twinkle in God’s eye. He created you, He called you into being for this purpose: to reflect His glory.

Our job is to shine the light. We are not the light. ***Jesus is the light of the world.***



But we HOUSE that light and we reflect that light in an ever-darkening world. We have this treasure in jars of clay. This lantern represents each one of us. We are containers for the light of Jesus. He lives in our hearts.

Before you trusted in Jesus the image of God in you was covered and corrupted by your sin. But when you called on Jesus to save you, he took away your sinful nature and gave you a new heart - a new nature. As a follower of Jesus the world should not only see the image of God in you, but also see the light of the Holy Spirit who now lives in your heart.

The light of the glory of God shines through the cracks in our brokenness. In our weakness the power of God is most clearly seen - as we trust in Him and allow Him to work through us.

This was the purpose of the nation of Israel. God created the nation from an elderly couple named Abram and Sarai who could not have children. He chose this infertile old couple to make it clear that Israel was HIS from the very beginning. God did not adopt an already established and strong nation like Egypt. Instead, He designed the nation from the moment of Isaac’s conception in Sarah’s womb.

In the same way, **God designed YOU to be His servant and to reflect His glory.** He knit you together in your mother's womb, designing every part of your body and planning the details of your life to maximize your ability to reflect His glory.

God Created us to BE the Light of the World

- **Crafted for His Purposes**

"He made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me a polished arrow..." Isaiah 49:2

This primarily refers to **Isaiah himself** as the prophet of God. But remember what Jason showed us in Acts 2 last week. In the Old Testament the Holy Spirit only came upon a few people during specific times and for specific reasons. Isaiah, for example, had a special assignment that resulted in this book we are studying. He was one of a very few for whom this verse was true - that his mouth was a sharp sword to confront and divide the nation... that he was a smooth arrow the Lord shot at the heart of the nation.

But since Acts 2 and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, **all believers are filled with the Spirit and called to speak God's Word.** All of us are Spirit-filled prophets like Isaiah. So this verse is true for you just as it is for me. God made YOUR MOUTH to be like a sword to cut through the resistance of hard-hearted sinners. God made your life to be a polished arrow with a specific target to hit. Ephesians 2:10 says:

God Created us to BE the Light of the World

- **Crafted for His purposes**

"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." Ephesians 2:10

You are God's masterpiece. He crafted you for specific good works that ONLY YOU are able to do. The primary good works we are called to do are to testify to the gospel of God's grace. But God places people around us so we can love and serve them - pray for them and reach out to them. He crafted you for His purposes. There is a specific target for YOUR LIFE - a bullseye of God's will - that maximizes your physical abilities, spiritual gifts, natural temperament and life experiences.

- Are you living in this sweet spot of fruitfulness? **Do you know your SHAPE for ministry?** Your spiritual gifts, heart for ministry, key abilities, personality style and experiences?
- Are you actively seeking to **steward your time, talent and treasure** for the glory of God and in pursuit of His purposes?

Some of you are called to take on abortion - to devote your time, effort and energy to saving the unborn and caring for mothers in crisis

Some of you are called to care for children - to take orphans and foster kids into your home.

Some of you are called to serve the poor - to demonstrate God's great love for the least visible.

Some of you are called to minister to the broken - to bring healing grace to the hurting souls around us.

Some are called to fight hunger, to end human trafficking, to find cures for diseases or how to build a better water filter or how to stimulate business in developing countries.

All believers are LIGHT. How has God uniquely designed you to shine the light of His grace and love?

are we INVESTING OUR LIVES for the maximum glory of God and to reach the most people with the gospel?

That is why God created you! He designed each one of us to reflect His glory in a special way. He crafted you for specific good works that would point people to Jesus. And He positioned you to reach specific people only YOU can reach. For, brothers and sisters, we ARE the light of the world! Verse six says:

God Created us to BE the Light of the World

- **Filled with His love and power**

"I will make you as *a light for the nations.*" Isaiah 49:6

"You are the light of the world." Matthew 5:14

Feel the significance of this truth. As a believer in Jesus, **you ARE** the light of the world. God has MADE YOU to house His glory. He created you and is shaping you to BE His light in a world of darkness and death. This is who we ARE. Jesus went on in Matthew 5, "A city on a hill cannot be hidden. So let your light shine before men that they might see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."

Think of what it means to be ***FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT OF GOD***. 1 Corinthians says that we as believers are **the TEMPLE of the Holy Spirit**. He lives in us. Just as Solomon's glorious temple housed the radiant presence of God, so we now house that same glory, power, love and light. When Moses emerged from the presence of God the people couldn't even look at him because he was blinding with God's glory upon Him. This should be our reality as believers - that people can easily see there is something different about us - that in seeing us they can see some of the love and joy and peace of God Himself!

Paul prays this for the church in Ephesus:

God Created us to BE the Light of the World

- **Filled with His love and power**

“To know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.” Ephesians 3:19

As we experience the fullness of Jesus’ love for us ***we will be filled*** to the measure of all the fullness of God. The fruit of the Spirit will increasingly grow in our lives - the first fruit being LOVE. As we know how loved we are in Christ, the primary characteristic of our lives will become LOVE. And it will be a sacrificial, serving, self-giving love - which is the very love that defines our God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit eternally pouring their limitless love into one another!

God promises us the fullness of His love and His power. Acts 1:8 says -

God Created us to BE the Light of the World

- **Filled with His love and power**

“But ***you will receive power*** when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and **you will be my witnesses** in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” Acts 1:8

This is our promise from the Lord. As blood-bought believers in Jesus, as Spirit-filled followers of Christ, we have access to the same power that raised Jesus from the dead. This is how we will do even greater things than Jesus did during his time on earth - because the Spirit of the Risen Christ lives in our hearts and goes with every one of us, every moment of every day!

So we WILL BE the light of Christ in a dark world. This is who we are! This is the purpose for which God created us and it is the reason for everything that happens in our lives. ***Our biggest struggles are arguably our best opportunities to point others to Jesus.***

My mom saw this as she ***battled cancer*** this year. She loves to knit, and so does my wife - so the two of them use that ability they have to make these little knit hats that people wear up north because it gets cold up there. And mom gave them out as she went in to get her chemo treatments. This provided many opportunities for mom to share WHY she makes these hats and to talk about her son who is a preacher in Florida and everyone should listen to him like she does. Love you Mom!

We can honor God a little when He blesses us - a new house, a new car, a new job, a new baby. We rightfully give God the credit for all the good blessings in our lives. But we

can ***honor God even more when He challenges us*** - a painful illness, a job loss, a great fear, a financial struggle. To praise God IN THE STORM - to trust Him even when life is confusing and painful - that is THE BEST APOLOGETIC we have - it is the best evidence we can provide for the reality of our faith. We do not live for this world which is passing away. We were made for a different world!

God created us to BE His light in this dark and dying world. That is who we are. Now let's look at what God has called us to DO. ***DOING always follows BEING***. Because God has MADE US to be light it is only natural that we should carry that light to the world!

God Commissioned us to BRING the Light to the World

- We are Servants with clear orders from our Master

“And now the Lord says, he who formed you to be his servant... ‘It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob... I will make you as a light for the nations.’” Isaiah 49:5-6

Since we ARE the light of the world it makes sense that our job is to carry that light TO THE WORLD. Now, these verses clearly **point beyond Isaiah and Israel to Jesus**. This is just a few chapters before Isaiah 53 when the Servant of God will be portrayed as one despised and rejected by men who would be pierced for our transgressions and crushed for our sins. Jesus was the light of the world who carried that light into our darkness - even the deepest darkness of our sin - to conquer the darkness and transform us into creatures of LIGHT.

Now, as Jesus was the servant of God, carrying God's light - He has sent US to be servants of God, carrying that light. Just as the Father sent the Son into the world to save sinners, so Jesus has sent us into the world to show sinners the light of God's grace in the person of Jesus. ***Our orders could not be more clear:***

God Commissioned us to CARRY the Light to the World

- We are Servants with clear orders from our Master

“Go therefore and make disciples **of all nations**.” Matthew 28:19

God Commissioned us to CARRY the Light to the World

- We are Servants with clear orders from our Master

“The gospel must first be proclaimed **to all nations**.” Mark 13:10

God Commissioned us to CARRY the Light to the World

- We are Servants with clear orders from our Master

“Repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name **to all nations**.” Luke 24:47

Do you see the common phrase in all of these verses? ***“TO ALL NATIONS.”*** Our orders are to bring the light of the gospel **to every people group on earth**. Every nation of men. This is what Paul explained at the beginning of his missionary journeys. In Acts 13, quoting Isaiah 49, Paul said:

God has Commissioned us to CARRY His light to the World

- Our Mission is to bring the Name of Jesus to the Nations
“I have made you a light for the Gentiles [nations], ***that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.***” Acts 13:47

We see both sides of the message right here. First, ***God has MADE YOU a light*** for the nations. Then, the purpose of God in making us the light is ***that we would BRING THE LIGHT*** of salvation to the ends of the earth. It is salvation itself we are called to carry throughout the world.

We have this light, this glory, this love and grace and peace and joy - we have the Holy Spirit of God in our hearts. As those who have this gift of infinite grace and mercy we are bound to share that light with those still in darkness.

- **If you have food**, and the person beside you is starving, wouldn't you share your food?
- **If you have water**, and the person beside you is dying of thirst, wouldn't you share your water?
- **If you have oxygen** and the person beside you is drowning under water, wouldn't you share your oxygen?

Brothers and sisters - those are PHYSICAL needs to save a person's BODY. ***We have spiritual bread, spiritual water, spiritual oxygen.*** It is not just bodies we are on a mission to save, it is eternal souls destined for unending misery under the just wrath of God. Come back next week to study Romans 1 that shows how all people are without excuse since they universally reject the truth they know from creation and their own conscience. We have been trained for 200 years to believe people are basically good and to think of distant tribes as peace-loving, good-hearted, untainted happy, friendly people.

But the truth is just the opposite. ***Apart from Jesus all people are lost in the darkness of their unbelief.*** They are dead in their sins. They are slaves to their proud, selfish, corrupt nature. We will see next week in Romans 1 - all people are confused, controlled and consumed by their sin. Therefore they are destined to live in that sin-saturated condition forever - with no escape. Because here is the truth from Acts 4:

God has Commissioned us to CARRY His light to the World

- Our Mission is to bring the Name of Jesus to the Nations

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

People are lost in darkness and we alone have the light. Jesus is the light. There is no other light. There is no hope in tribal religions, no hope in Buddha or Krishna or Mohammed. “Salvation is found in no one else.” There is no other way to the Father except through Jesus Christ. “For there is no other name under heaven... by which we must be saved.” So our task is to bring the name of Jesus to those who have not yet heard of Him.

We know it is **ONLY the Name of Jesus that saves**. It is His name and His name alone. This is what we carry to our neighbors and the nations. The safety and blessing, the peace and joy of the name of Jesus. We carry salvation in our hands.

When Jesus called a religious man named Saul to follow Him, do you remember the story? Saul was riding with his troops to Damascus for their next raid on that cult of Christians to capture and kill as many as they could. Suddenly a light shined upon them and blinded Saul, knocking him to the ground. He was blind for three days until God called a believer named Ananias to go to Saul. At first Ananias protested saying, "Lord, I'm not sure if you've heard all the reports - but that particular guy kills Christians and throws us in jail." But the Lord said to him:

God has Commissioned us to BRING The light to the World

- **Our Mission is to bring the Name of Jesus to the Nation**

“Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine **to carry my name before the Gentiles.**” Acts 9:15

Saul, who was renamed Paul, became the greatest missionary of the early church. The one who had been attacking the name of Jesus became a preacher of the name of Jesus. He was God's chosen instrument **to carry the name of Jesus to the Gentiles** - the nations of the earth.

And so Paul immediately began to preach the name of Jesus. At first people didn't trust him, thinking it might be a trap or a trick. But Barnabas, the encourager of the early church, went and found Paul and brought him to the apostles. And eventually **Paul and Barnabas became a great missionary team** - carrying the name of Jesus together to Cyprus, what we call Turkey, and into Macedonia and Greece. Thousands of people heard the gospel through Paul. Dozens of churches were planted and multiplied so the gospel began to spread throughout the Roman Empire.

And Paul wrote the book of Romans, which we will begin to study next week, to the believers already in Rome, because he wanted to establish them in their faith and use

Rome as a base of operations *to bring the gospel beyond into Spain* and everywhere else.

As it turned out, Paul never made it past Rome. His assignment changed from missionary to writer and then to martyr. But his ambition and example have inspired missionaries ever since.

William Carey is known as "the father of modern missions." He went to India in 1793 and eventually translated the Bible into six languages. By the end of his **41 years of missions work** in India - without a single trip home - he had founded schools, orphanages, churches, seminaries all while serving as a catalyst for the mobilization of missionaries through the 1800s and beyond.

Carey was the oldest of five children, born and raised in a small village in England. His parents were both weavers but he apprenticed with a local cobbler and learned how to make shoes. While learning that trade he discovered he had a knack for languages and while still in his teens he learned Greek. Then in his 20s he taught himself Hebrew, Italian, Dutch and French. Though he was a brilliant educator and influential leader, Carey referred to himself throughout his life **as a cobbler**.

Inspired by missionaries to the United States, Carey wrote his seminal treatise: *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens*. A year later, he set out as a missionary to India at the age of 32.

While learning the language and starting to translate the New Testament, Carey helped manage a factory to provide for his growing family and missionary team. And so he followed the tentmaking practices of Paul and modeled good financial stewardship.

William Carey endured great suffering for the sake of the gospel. He lost three of his seven children and also buried two wives. His first wife had a severe mental breakdown but he cared for her in their home for years until her death. He managed conflicts in a large and growing missionary organization and all the while translated the Bible and oversaw its printing into dozens of languages.

William Carey is rightfully one of the great heroes of our faith, known for his famous saying, **"Expect great things from God. Attempt great things for God."** In 1792 he saw the obligation of missions on all believers and by studying the nations of the world and learning how many souls were without the gospel he concluded - as we still must today - that the Great Commission urges us to bring the Name of Jesus to the nations. Come back next week for a detailed study of Romans 1 and why the need is so desperately urgent:

God has Commissioned us to CARRY His light to the World

- The need is Urgent to reach the Unreached people groups
“For ***the wrath of God is being revealed*** from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.” Romans 1:18

Every day tens of thousands of people die with no access to the good news of Jesus Christ. Do not for a second believe the lie that these people are ok - they are not ok. Apart from saving faith in Jesus Christ there is no salvation. There is no hope.

- We have the light - they do not.
- We have the truth. They do not.
- We have Jesus. They do not.

Just as we would not keep food from the starving or water from the thirsty if it was in our power to share with them, so ***we must not keep the light of salvation from those who are lost in darkness***. Yes, there are lost people right here in Tampa - many of the people we live next to, work with and interact with every day are far from God and also destined for an eternity under His judgment.

But we have an ***especially urgent calling to bring the Name of Jesus*** to those 1.8 Billion people who have NEVER heard the good news.

God Created us to BE the Light of the World

God Commissioned us to BRING the Light to the World

“I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth.” Acts 13:49

You should have **a pink card** on your chair again. You got one last week, but we know how good we all are at losing things like that. Those cards are for us to write down one or two names of people we are praying for who need the light of Jesus. This is someone you know - a friend, family member, co-worker or neighbor who is living in darkness without a clear knowledge of the saving work of Jesus.

I’ve found ***many people are UNCERTAIN about going to heaven because they are UNCLEAR about the gospel***. That is who we are thinking and praying about. Do you know someone who lacks assurance of salvation because they lack clarity about the finished work of Jesus? That is the light we can bring them! And it begins with prayer.

We pray that God would prepare the soil of their hearts - and then give us an opportunity to plant the seed of the gospel in that ready soil.

While Marcos plays some music we will take the next few minutes to write down a name or two and pray. If you’d like to share who you’re praying for, you can take it over to the

prayer board and clip it there under supplication. Then the church family can join you in praying for that person you care about.

Let's pray together now. Then we will sing *a song of commitment* together in the spirit of of Isaiah when God called him - "Here am I. Send me."