

breakthroughs of the Good News among this resistant people group. Several have recently found hope and are sharing this hope to their own people. Despite these breakthroughs, the general attitude towards Christianity is still marked by indifference.

PURSUE GOD'S HEART FOR THE IRANUN

THINGS ONLY GOD CAN DO

When the [Holy Spirit] comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; in regard to righteousness, ... and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.

John 16: NIV

In ministering to the Filipino Muslims, there are things only God can do. Only God can

- ... draw people to Himself.
- ... cause people to seek after Him.
- ... reveal spiritual truth.
- ... convict the world of guilt regarding sin.
- ... convict the world of righteousness
- ... convict the world of judgment.

Experiencing God. p.SB

He does these through the Holy Spirit. Brethren, pray with us that the Holy Spirit of God will work powerfully with the workers and work through them and their expressions of love.

Pray for the Holy Spirit of God to be the one to show, convince them that Jesus loves them and is inviting them to be with Him in Heaven. Pray that they will accept the love of Jesus that will save them from hell.

POINTS FOR PRAYER

1. Praise God for the believers. Pray that God will keep them strong in their faith and remain in Him. Pray that God will enable them to meet regularly for nurture and that God will use them /make them the nucleus of an indigenous Iranun church.
2. Praise God for the committed and persevering workers. Pray for God's wisdom, strength and encouragement to sustain them in their desire to share God's love to this people, for protection for them and their family, and for regular and adequate financial support.
3. Pray that our sovereign Lord will provide opportunities for them to hear the Good News. Pray for the Holy Spirit of God to open hearts of this people and break the spirit of indifference that they have towards Christianity.
4. Pray that God will encourage more participation in prayers for Him to open their spiritual eyes.
5. Pray that God will raise up more MBS laborers in the field.

Missions Emphasis Month 2008



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Missions Emphasis Month 2008 Program

October, 2008

Theme: Blest to be a Blessing

Theme Verses: Genesis 12:1-3

Theme Song/Hymn: **Make Me a Blessing**

Wk	Theme & text	Emphasis	Prayer Focus	Songs	Highlights
1	Blest to be a Blessing by Honoring God of Who He is Genesis 8:1-21	God chose Abraham & His offspring to be channels of His blessings to all peoples of the earth	Muslim Bloc - Thailand, Nepal, & Cambodia	-Make Me A Blessing	-have a good opening Sunday - announcement of the incoming Sunday activities -Pray for the prayer focus group -Start promoting missions pledge offering card -collect a missions offering
2	Blest to be a Blessing by Bringing the Gift of Salvation John 1:35-42	God blessed us with the free gift of Salvation, so we must also share this blessing to the nations.	-Hindu Bloc -Paraguay, South Africa, Papua New Guinea	-Saved to serve - To the Ends of the earth	-Pray for the salvation of the lost loved ones, and the listed in the prayer focus -Encourage the members to share the gospel w/ someone this week -Start promoting for the missions pledge offering card - collect a missions offering
3	Blest to be a blessing by Establishing Passion for Prayer Acts 12:1-19	God blessed us with access to His throne and a promised of answer to prayer, so we need to develop a passion for prayer to bless others.	Chinese Bloc -China, Palau, Hong Kong, Tibet		-Pray for the people groups in the prayer focus - Start distributing missions pledge offering card - Announce the schedule for the district/zone-wide missions festival -Collect a missions offerings
4	Blest to be a blessing by Giving what I have Acts 16:11-15	God blessed us with various forms of blessings so we need to share it with work of missions worldwide	Buddhist Bloc -Japan, Hawaii, Australia	Make me a blessing	- a missions culmination program pray for the people group in the prayer focus - Collect the filled up missions pledge offering card - have a missions offering

The IRANUN

People Group Name: IRANUN Primary

Language: Iranun

Alternate Name(s): Ilanun, Maranao Iranun, Ilanon, Illanon

Population: approximately 175,000, 6,000 in Sabah

Location: Coasts Lanao del Norte, Lanao del Sur, North Cotabato and Maguidanao provinces, Mindanao; also in Sultan Kudarat and Cotabato City in Maguindanao province.

Religion: Islam-animist Percent Christian: >0%

Scripture: NO SCRIPTURE; but able to use the Maranao translation of the Kitab Injil

IDENTITY: The Iranuns are a Filipino Muslim group of sea-based people who are very closely related, culturally and linguistically, to both the Maranao and especially, the Maguindanao. Sometimes the Iranuns are numbered among the Maranao, particularly those living along the coast of Lanao del Sur, and sometimes they are numbered among the Maguindanao. Historically, the Iranuns, the Maranao and the Maguindanao have been considered separate ethnic groups, though they are descended from common ethnic origins.

LOCATION: The Iranuns are primarily concentrated along the shores around Ilana Bay, particularly in Lanao del Sur and the coastal areas near Cotabato City in Mindanao. They are also found in smaller scattered groups along the coastal areas of Lanao del Norte and Zamboanga del Sur, as well as in North Cotabato and Maguindanao provinces.

CUSTOMS AND RELIGION: Most of the Iranuns are engaged in fishing, while the rest raise food crops along with some active trading with Muslim and non-Muslim neighbors. Their socio-political organization is governed by traditional and customary laws. They have their own datus and headmen. The headman acts as a "mediator" of disputes and as a "facilitator" of discussions and meetings. The Iranuns are Muslim and common to all Muslim groups is the performance of the five pillars of Islam. The Iranuns observe these pillars but they are relatively more relaxed about them. They also believe in spirits and are in constant fear of them. Thus, there are many animistic rituals that they also observed in addition to Islam.

CHRISTIANITY: The Iranuns have resisted every effort to introduce Christianity to them. The last few years, however, have seen great

this day rituals, practices and beliefs which can hardly be classified as Islamic. Nevertheless, Islam continue to have a strong religious and social hold on them.

CHRISTIANITY: Maranaos are very reluctant to become Christians. History tells of colonizers using "Christian" converts to fight their colonial wars against the Muslim Maranaos. This has left a lasting legacy of Muslim hatred for their "Christian" Filipino brothers. Many Maranaos still ding to the belief that every Christian is a potential enemy. But because of increased efforts, many Maranaos have believed in Jesus and churches have been planted.

PURSUE GOD'S HEART FOR THE MARANAO

JESUS WARNING

A time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God. They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me. John 16:2-3 NIV

Our Lord Jesus gave his disciples notice of persecution so that they would not be surprised.

Jesus is saying here that ignorance of Him and his true relation to the Father helps to explain the reason for persecution. He attributes the action not on the ignorance of intellectual knowledge, but the lack of a personal experience of God and him.

It was in this thought that our Lord Jesus promised the coming of the Holy Spirit to reveal I convict the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment.

Brethren, pray for the continuous working of the Holy Spirit to enable all the Filipino Muslim to understand and experience the loving kindness of God. Pray that our God will mightily use the frontline workers in sharing the Good News to them in words and works in love.

(from The Wycliffe Bible Commentary, Electronic database, copyright (c) 1962 -y Moody Press); NN Bible Commentary; Bible Library; S-ong s Definition & Henry 8 Concise Commentary; Microsoft® Encarta Encyclopedia 2002.

POINTS FOR PRAYER

1. Praise God for the believers! Pray that they will grow strong in their faith and be a light to their own people. Pray that God will enable them to resist pressures to revert back to Islam.
2. Praise God for the strong fellowships that have been established. Pray that these fellowship groups will grow very strong and that they will send out laborers.
3. Pray for God's wisdom, strength and protection for the workers and their families. Pray for the on-going training program to raise up more leaders for their own people.
4. Pray for God to send more teams to work in all the regions where Maranaos have settled. Pray that neighboring Christians and churches from all regions will be informed that the Maranaos have literally become their neighbors and that they will develop a love and concern for them.
5. Pray for those who are training laborers to serve among the Maranaos.

Instructions to Pastors and Missions Working Committee

1. Promote the Missions Emphasis Month at least a month before October.
2. Pray intensely for the preparation and for significant impact in the church, and in the individual lives of the members
3. Don't have enough songs to suggest, but I propose that you choose appropriate missions songs familiar to your church.
4. Follow up each committee assigned related to this event (e.g. prayer, decoration, promotion, program, etc.) to do their function to accomplish better and greater impact.
5. Be creative in the weekly collection of Missions offerings. Several suggestions below:
 - a. Use missions offering envelopes. Prepare a missions offering envelopes the members can use to put their missions offering and drop it during the offertory.
 - b. Designation of missions offering. Come up with a offering slip which special missions offering is printed. Then they can just check the box for missions as they want to give. Then give during the opportunity.
 - c. On the last Sunday, make a unique way of collecting missions offering – keep on announcing to the congregation about the plan.
 - d. Submit the list of total missions pledge amount to the District.
 - e. Submit to the District the Missions offerings or to the National Treasurer's office. Inform the office if you send it through the bank.
6. Br creative also for the prayer for the unreached people groups and our missionaries. Maybe you can assign each group of members to pray for a particular group during the week
7. For the children, be creative also in the missions program especially during the culmination Sunday. Encourage them to give also to missions.
8. Do whatever you think best to promote missions awareness, motivation and action in your church.

Let us pray for a great and significant impact in our church and in the unreached people groups through the observance of the Missions Emphasis Month. God bless you and your church.

Blest To Be A Blessing by Honoring God of Who He Is

Genesis 12:1-3

Introduction

The whole month of October is CAMACOP Missions Emphasis Month. Our denomination, the Christian & Missionary Alliance was born because of missions. And we would like to maintain to be a missions driven organization. We believed that the Alliance is called to aggressively involve in the worldwide missions especially to the unreached people groups.

Our theme this year is "Blest to be a Blessing." God wants those whom He blessed to also bless others. God blessed His Church so that the church will become a blessing to the nations.

We know that everyone wants to be blessed. Amen! (allow the congregation to respond). Who among you here had recently experienced God's blessings? Who wants to receive more blessings from God, please raise your right hand? Everyone in the world desires to be blessed. But, do you know the purpose of God in blessing you and me? This is what we are going to look into today's message in the Bible particularly in Genesis 12:1-4. This passage deals with the call and covenant of God to Abraham. (Read the text slowly but with strong emphasis on the command and promises, especially the last part of verse three.)

I. The Background:

A. The Tower of Babel

Before the Tower of Babel incident in chapter 11, the people had only one language. They were united. But how come we have so many languages and dialects today? Gen. 11:1-4 says,

"Now the whole world had one language and a common speech. [2] As men moved eastward, they found a plain in

The MARANAO

People Group Name: MARANAO

Primary Language: Maranao

Alternate Name(s): Maranaw

Population: approximately: 1,100,000

Location: Lanao del Norte and Lanao del Sur, Mindanao; also Metro Manila, Baguio, and other urban areas throughout the Philippines.

Religion: Islam

Percent Christian: >0 %

Scripture: New Testament (1981); most Old Testament books

IDENTITY AND LOCATION: The Maranaos are one the largest and one of the most dominant Muslims groups in the Philippines. Their name means "People of the Lake" for they are centered on the shores of beautiful Lake Lanao in Cetral Mindanao. The Maranao people make up



22 percent of the total population of the province of Lanao del Norte and 92 percent of the total population of the province of Lanao del Sur; both provinces surround Lake Lanao. Many are also scattered among the major towns and cities throughout the Philippines. For example, about 24,000 Maranaos are living in Metro Manila and 5,000 or more in Baguio.

There is also significant Community of Maranaos overseas Filipino Muslim workers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia organized to maintain unity among Maranaos everywhere; to strengthen Islamic brotherhood among members; to work together in promoting and preserving the Maranao culture and identity; to cooperate with other Islamic organizations in uplifting the Muslim Ummah; and to participate in propagating Islam throughout the world

CUSTOMS AND RELIGION: The Maranaos in Lanao are traditional wet-rice farmers. Farmers around the Lake Lanao are also engaged in fishing. The traditional community still has the "torogan" the biggest house used for community gathering (feast or court proceedings) or guesthouse for visitors. The maranao beliefs are deeply rooted in Islam. It is their way of life. The Quran is the fundamental souce of law that governs much of the Maranao Muslims' daily conduct and behavior. Performance other five pillars of Islam is a must. However, very few Maranaos do these faithfully. Generally, all Maranaos call themselves Muslim but those who truly practice all of the Islamic tenets are very few. Animism is also deeply ingrained in their culture; and they still observe to

interweaving of Islamic tenets with local animistic beliefs. There are still beliefs in and fear of evil spits, devotion to supernatural beings and belief in magic

CHRISTIANITY: Christianity is viewed with animosity because of the conflict between "Christian" Filipinos and Muslims from early Philippine history until today. Now, the Maguindanao are actively working on a separate Moro Islamic State. In the past few years there have been increasing numbers of workers attempting to reach the Magindanaos. There have been several significant breakthroughs over the past two years. Many are now worshipping the true God in their own indigenous way and leadership.

PURSUE GOD'S HEART FOR THE MAGINDANAO

JESUS WARNING

A time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God. They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me. John 16:2•3NIV

In His last moments with His disciples, Jesus told them about further persecutions. (John 15:18-25/16:1-4) In those days, the Jews persecuted the apostles and believers, regarded them as blasphemers, and put some to death, thinking they are rendering a service to God. They persecuted the saints with great zeal for the cause of purity of religion.

Ministry to the Muslim is very much like what our Lord Jesus is saying here. Reaching the Muslim is considered the most difficult (ranging from difficult to life threatening) ministry. Many have been martyred, suffered persecutions, received real death threats and suffered setbacks in ministry.

Brethren, WE APPEAL to you, pray continually for the protection of all our frontline workers to the Muslims. Pray that the Lord Himself

will confront / convict those who will threaten the workers.

(from The Wycliffe Bible Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1962 by Moody Press); NN Bible Commentary; Bible Library; Strong's Definition & Henry's Concise Commentary; Microsoft@ Encarta Encyclopedia 2002.

POINTS FOR PRAYER

Praise God for the believers! Pray for a strong ongoing mentoring so that they will be firm in their faith. Pray for more workers who will help in this.

Praise God for the fellowship groups! Pray that they will develop into solid communities of faith.

Praise God for their indigenous worship! Pray that God will raise up strong overseers leaders from among the believers.

Pray for God's abundant grace and protection in translating God's Word into the language they understand.

Pray for strength and protection of all the workers, and their families.

Pray for a strong financial and emotional support that will enable them for a long term service.

Pray for more pioneering workers to locate in strategic areas.

Shinar and settled there. [3] They said to each other, "Come, let's make bricks and bake them thoroughly." They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar. [4] Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth."

We have so many languages, people groups, and various cultures today because of the result of the tower of Babel project. The purpose behind the people who build the tower project was to make a name for themselves, so that they will not be scattered over all the earth. This move was a plain disobedience to the command of God to Adam and Eve, then to Noah – "to be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth." God compounded their language so much so that they did not understand each other. We could just imagine the situation that day, maybe someone is asking for a hammer, but he got bricks, or asked for a brick, but got a shovel! Everyone was shocked that they cannot understand one another anymore. Because of this, they stopped building the tower. And those with the same language went together to dwell or settle in a particular place. Genesis 11:8 says, So the Lord scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city. "

In Genesis chapter 10, we read the different people groups or nations. From one nation (one language people group) to seventy (70) nations scattered over all the earth.

B. The Call of Abraham

In the last part of Genesis chapter 11, we find a record about the family of Abram who is the son of Terah, from Ur then moved to Haran. In chapter 12, right at the start, we read that God called Abraham. This call has two major components. One is the command, and the second is the covenant (promise).

Let's read Genesis 12:1-3

The Lord had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. [2] "I will make you into a great nation, and I will

bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. [3] I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”

God’s Command to Abraham

We find in verse one the command of God to Abraham, which says, “Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you.” Literally, God wanted Abraham to leave the place where he lived and the people and will go to a place God wanted him to go. Remember, God did not specify the name of the place he is going to. This is not an easy command. But, what was Abraham’s response to God? Verse 4 says, “So Abraham went as the LORD told him....”

God was honored and glorified when Abraham obeyed Him. In the same way, we bring honor and glory to God when we obey His commands.

God’s Covenant with Abraham

The command of God was followed by a covenant. It is something that God promised to do. We find this in verses 2 & 3, which says,

II. Two Levels of God’s Covenant with Abraham

There are two level "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. [3] I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”

This covenant has two levels - The upper level and the lower level. Don Richardson the author of the book “Peace Child” called it as the Top line and the bottom line of the covenant.

The Upper Level (Top Line)

The upper level or top line is found in verse two and the first part of verse three. It says, [2]"I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great and you will be a blessing. [3] I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse...”

The MAGINDANAO

People Group Name: MAGINDANAO

Primary Language: Magindanao

Alternate Name(s): Maginganaon, Magindanaw

Population: approximately 1,100,000

Dialects: Taw-sa-laya, Taw-sa-ilud, Taw-sa-biwagan, Sibugay

Location: Maguindanao, North and South Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat and Zamboanga del Sur provinces (all in Mindanao); also Metro Manila and other urban areas throughout the Philippines.

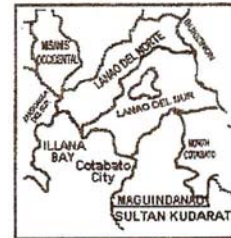
Religion: Islam

Percent Christian: 0%

Scripture: Bible portions; Gospels, James, Gen. 37-50, Jonah, Jesus film (196) Translation work in progress

IDENTITY: The Magindanaos are one of the largest and one of the three most dominant Filipino Muslim ethnic groups. Their culture has been shaped by Islam; it is the primary element in the Magindanao's identity as a distinct people. Among the Filipino Muslims they are well-known for their Islamic zeal. They pride themselves on the fact that since colonial times they have been an unconquered people.

LOCATION: The highest concentration of Magindanaos are found in the following Mindanao provinces: Maguindanao, North Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, South Cotabato and Zamboanga del Sur. Smaller groups are found in almost all of the other provinces of Mindanao. The Magindanaos are also found in major towns and cities throughout the Philippines, including over 11,000 in Metro Manila.



CUSTOMS AND RELIGION: The Magindanaos people practice the Islamic faith. The values and attitudes that govern their daily conduct and behavior are basically anchored on the principles and laws of the Quran. The Madrasah or Islamic schools in Maguindanao are largely responsible for the propagation and cultivation of the Islamic faith in the region. Islamization is reported being supported by Muslims in Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Malaysia. They implement the Shariah Law in matters of their own discipline. The Magindanaos strongly support the "Moro Islamic Liberation Front", the vanguard of the Islamic movement in the Bangsamoro homeland, whose objective is the re-establishment of a sovereign Moro Islamic State. Despite the strong Muslim influence, however, there is still an

renewed and fresh efforts to reach them, several Badjao families have become believers. Also many Badjao families have relocated to urban areas such as Davao City, Cebu City, Metro Manila, Subic and Batangas. In these places they are much more open to the Good News and many have become believers. Expressions of love for the Badjaos are so effective that they lead many to believe. Miraculous means - through signs and wonders have also been very effective.

PURSUE GOD'S HEART FOR THE BADJAO

THE LORD'S PRAYER FOR HIS DISCIPLES

"I have revealed you to those whom you gave me ... and they have obeyed your word. ... and they accepted them and they believed that you sent me. I pray for them ... for they are yours ... but they are still in the world ... Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name ... While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction ... II

"My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one ... Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. II John 17:6-19NW

Brethren, Let this be our prayer too for all the frontline workers to the Filipino Muslims. Pray the same for the believers coming from all the Filipino Muslim background. Pray that our Mighty God will be their strong protector against those who are hindering the testimony of the Good News, the workers and the believers.

POINTS FOR PRAYER

1. Praise God for the significant breakthroughs of the Good News that have occurred among the Badjaos who have moved to urban areas! Pray for continued openness and for churches to take advantage of this.
2. Pray for God to create receptive hearts to the Good News.
3. Praise God for the fellowships! Pray that they will remain strong and healthy. Pray that they will send several of their own people back to Sulu to reach their Badjao brothers and sisters there. Pray that these Badjaos, in turn, will become key instruments for reaching other Filipino Muslim groups.
4. Pray for God to raise up Badjao men for leadership. Pray too for work opportunities among the youth and children.
5. Pray for the workers working among the Badjaos. Ask God to send more workers to all current Badjao locations in the Philippines.

The Upper level or the top line of the covenant is God's blessing to Abraham, his family and his offspring (descendants). Though at the giving of this covenant, Abraham and Sarah his wife didn't have a child yet because Sarah is barren (incapable of bearing children). However, with God nothing is impossible. So, God is able to do His promise.

I am sure many of you, if not all, know the story of Abraham. In chapter 21, we read that Sarah gave birth to Isaac, the son promised by God. And Isaac became the father of Jacob and Isau. Jacob was the father of the twelve tribes of Israel. Israel became a nation, as stated in the covenant.

The Lower Level (Bottom Line)

The Lower level or the bottom line of the covenant is found at the last part of verse three: God said, "and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

The lower level or bottom line of the covenant is God's blessing to ALL PEOPLES of the earth. How is God going to bless the peoples of the earth? The last two words of verse three says "through you." Wow! What a great blessing for Abraham and his offspring. God will channel through Abraham all His blessings to the peoples of the earth.

It is clear brethren that God intended originally to bless all peoples of the earth, but through a nation – the nation of Israel. By the way, "peoples" here is nation or language people groups. These peoples are the Gentiles, the non-Jewish nations. The offspring or descendant of Abraham was called Israel or Jews. In other words, God desires to bless also the Gentiles but through the nation of Israel. Israel was really a privilege nation that God has chosen them to be channel of blessings, but, on the other hand, they also have great responsibility to God and to peoples to flow God's blessings.

The Bible tells us that Israel failed to fulfill their obligation. They rebelled and disobeyed God. They became stumbling block to the Gentiles. Thus, God punished the Jews as a nation and sent them to Babylon as exile during the reign of King Nebuchadnezzar.

The blessing of the peoples of the earth is God's agenda. However, he uses channels. In other words, God blesses people in order to bless others. He entrusted Israel His law to

teach to all peoples but they failed. They became stumbling block to the Gentiles.

There are other scriptures that tells about God's intention in blessing His people to bless others so that His name be glorified or be made known among the nations. One example is found in Psalm 67: 1 & 2, which says,

"May God be gracious to us and bless us and make His face shine upon us (v.1)." This part is the upper level of the covenant. It is a good verse to claim because it has to do with God's blessing to us. But, this is incomplete. The next verse says, "that your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations (v.2)." This verse is the lower level to the top line of the covenant. It has something to do with the glory of God worldwide – so that his ways and name be made know all over the earth or among all nations.

When God chose the nation of Israel as His people, it doesn't mean that His love and blessings are only focused to them. No! God loves all the peoples of the earth. He wants to bless them too. However, it is through a channel, the nation of Israel.

There is one example who refused to bring God's blessing to the Gentiles. His name is Jonah. God chose Jonah to go to the great city of Niniveh to warn the people because of their wickedness. God wants Jonah to bring this warning – that God would destroy Niniveh in 40 days. Jonah doesn't want to bring this warning because he hated them, lest they repent from their sins. So, he rather disobeyed God and went to the opposite direction. We know the story, that God sent a big storm, the people in the ship threw Jonah to the sea, then God sent a fish to swallow Jonah and spew him to a seashore towards the direction of Niniveh. When Jonah reached Niniveh, he prophesied that Niniveh will be destroyed in 40 days due to their wickedness. When the King of Niniveh heard the prophesy, he and the inhabitants humbled themselves by fasting even the animals. God saw their humility and repentance. So he did not pursue the plan destroy them. This then has enraged or angered Jonah so much. He hates the people and wanted them to be totally destroyed. However, God forgave them and had mercy on them.

God could have destroyed the people in Niniveh. But he used a person to bring first a warning to the Ninivites. Unfortunately,

The BADJAO

People Group Name: BADJAO

Primary Language: Badjao (Samal or Sinama or Sama Central)

Alternate Name(s): Samal-luwaan, Sama-laud

Population: approximately 209, 000

Location: Sulu Archipelago, Mindanao; Visayas; Palawan, Davao City, Cebu City, Metro Manila and Batangas

Religion: Islam-animist

Percent Christian: <1%

Scripture: New Testament in Sinama dialect

IDENTITY: The Badjaos are a Filipino Muslim Ethnic group of sea gypsies: groups of boat-dwelling people. They are one of the largest Sama people groups. Their ethnic neighbors, the Tausugs and the Samals, often call them Samal-luwaan ("outcasts") or Samal-laud or Pala-u ("people of the ocean"). They are the poorest ethnic group in Sulu. They depend mainly on fishing for their survival. Badjao communities fall under the category of government DDU areas: depressed, deprived, and underdeveloped. Those that move to urban areas often become beggars.

LOCATION: In Sulu Archipelago, Badjao communities are situated on the hallow reefs near the seacoast or along coastal areas in Sulu, Siasi, Sitankai, Sibutu, Sangga-Sangga, Bongao, Tapul and Tawi- Tawi Islands and a smaller extent in Basilan Island and in Zamboanga City, Mindanao. Several hundred Badjao families are scattered around the Visayas. They are also found in sizable numbers in Davao City, in Cebu City Coastal areas, and in Metro Manila, Batangas and Subic in Luzon,



CUSTOMS AND RELIGION: Badjao families have been age-old boat dwellers but now they live on floating houses built on stilts above their boats and fishing paraphernalia. As a sea-oriented people, they are experts in fishing and pearl diving. Their lives revolve largely around the fishing industry. Several Badjao rituals having religious significance combine animistic and Islamic beliefs. In general, however, the Badjaos are not very pious. Most Badjaos are busy just trying to survive that religion often does not plays major role in their lives.

CHRISTIANITY: In the 1950's Protestant American missionaries came to the small islands in Sulu Archipelago to work among this group. Later a church was built for the Badjaos but the congregation did not grow because the Badjaos kept moving from one place to another. Through

PRAYER FOCUS

POPULATION of THAILAND: 61 million

LOCATION: South East Asia

% of the POPULATION that are BUDDHISTS: about 93% Restricts Evangelism.

Thailand means "Land of the Free", but it is really a land that is in bondage to a complex web of culture, occult practices and Buddhism. Corrupt leaders have protected the large sex industry, drug networks and crime syndicates. There needs to be a spiritual breakthrough so that the Thai may be free indeed in the Lord Jesus.

Despite over 175 years of Protestant work, the growth of the Church has been very disappointing. Since 1990, however, there has been a rising interest and some encouraging signs of church growth. In 1900 Christians were 0.6% of the population, in 1985 this had only risen to 0.9%, but in 2000 this reached 1.6%. Most of the growth has been among the Thai speaking Chinese and the tribal peoples but not so much amongst the Buddhist Thais.

Two Prayer Points

PRAY that Thailand will really become "The Land of the Free". Pray for a real spiritual breakthrough, releasing millions from their bondage to sin.

Pray for the many national workers and expatriates ministering in Thailand. Give them encouragement and effective strategies for reaching the Buddhist population and planting churches amongst them.

Other predominantly Buddhist countries are: Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and Myanmar(Burma).

"Operation World" has more information on these countries.

Jonah was unwilling to obey God's command, instead, he desired to see the people whom God loves so much be destroyed.

As someone has said, "Jonah is the father of those Christians who desires God's blessings for themselves but refused to bless others".

Its Implications

What are the implications of God's blessings to Israel in order to bless the peoples of the earth to our church today? Do you think God has the same purpose in blessing us? In the Old Testament, God chose the nation of Israel as His instrument in making the name and glory of God be made known over all the earth. What about in the New Testament? Let me share at least two implications.

God blessed the Church to bless the unsaved and the unreached people groups.

The Bible tells us that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. And the wages of sin is death. This is not only physical death but also spiritual death, which is a separation from God, because of sin. However, despite of our sinfulness, God still loved us so much so that He sent His one and only Son Jesus Christ to die on the cross for our sins, so that anyone who believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life.

By the grace of God through faith in Christ, we are saved. We have eternal life, we have Jesus Christ in us and with us through the Holy Spirit. We are all blessed in Christ Jesus. In fact, our salvation from sin, from eternal condemnation, from Satan is the greatest blessing we ever received. Have you realized that? Yes they are. However, brethren, there are still many peoples in the world that need to hear the Gospel. According to Romans 1:16, ". . . this Gospel is the power of God for the salvation of those who believe." And in 1 Timothy 2:4 says, "He (God) wants all peoples to be saved and come to a saving knowledge of the truth." Yes, God wants the unsaved and the unreached people groups to hear the Gospel and be saved. And God through Jesus Christ has given this responsibility to His Church, those ones who have experienced His saving grace – that is you and me. How is

your involvement as far as the proclamation of the Gospel in the all world is concern? How much time you spend in prayer praying for the salvation of the unreached people groups? How much are you contributing to evangelism and missions?

I said to bring the gospel to the unsaved and the unreached. What does this mean? From the context of Missions, ministry to the unsaved is evangelism and ministry to the unreached is mission. Evangelism is reaching out to our own people group with the Gospel, while missions is reaching out to the unreached – people groups or nations that has no viable church yet.

Looking our world in three views, the world has 234 countries, about 6.3 billion plus individuals and 16,000 nations or people groups. Out of this 16,000 people groups, 9,100 are already reached with the Gospel, and 6,900 nations or people groups are still unreached. This means, these places have not yet been reached with the Gospel, and there are no existing viable church yet. Jesus said in Matthew 24:14, “And this Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached into all the world as a testimony to all NATIONS, and then the end shall come.” You see, God wants all the nations in the world be reached out with the Gospel through His church. Would you want to be part of God’s channel of His blessing in bringing the Gospel to the unreached people groups? Are you willing to give for this cause? Are you willing to pray for them and support missionaries God has called to go? Are you willing to go if God is calling you to go?

God bless you in order to bless others.

Another implication is that, God bless you and me to bless others. Brethren, how do you look at the blessings God has given you? And what are those you have now that you consider it as blessings from God? Do you view your life, your talents, your abilities, your family, work, promotions, strength and wisdom, friends, and your salvation in Christ as blessings from God? Do you think that these blessings were given for your pleasure and consumption only? How about the Gospel? You know the Gospel! But are you sharing that Gospel with the

BUDDHIST BLOC

Facts and Figures

- Buddhism began around 530 BC as a purified version of Hinduism. At the heart of Buddha's teaching are the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path. All are designed to take man from his imperfect state to Nirvana, a state of bliss and freedom from incarnation.
- 273 million Buddhists have no viable, evangelizing Church in their culture. They comprise about 350 unreached people groups.
- Buddhism absorbs the indigenous religions in every culture penetrated by it e.g. China with idolatrous Taoism and Japan with nationalistic Shintoism.
- Relatively few Buddhists have come to Christ despite two or more centuries of presenting the gospel to them in such lands as Thailand, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Tibet.
- South Korea is the only Buddhist country where Christianity has experienced remarkable growth and impacted all levels of society. Ten of the largest congregations in the world are found in the city of Seoul, Korea.
- Buddhism has millions of adherents and encompasses China, Tibet, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Myanmar, Malaysia, Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and India.

PRAYER FOCUS

MAINLAND CHINA

POPULATION of CHINA: 1.26 billion

LOCATION: East Asia

% of the POPULATION that follow CHINESE FOLK RELIGION: about 29%

(Due to Communism, almost 50% of the populations are now classified as non-religious) Restricts Evangelism

The growth of the Church in Mainland China since 1977 has been incredible, due to:

- the sacrificial seed sowing of thousands of missionaries for 140 years prior to the Communist take over in 1949.
- the millions of intercessors worldwide who have prayed for China.
- the Christians who stood firm despite harsh persecutions.

This incredible growth and receptivity may only be for a season. Materialism with increasing wealth, corruption and moral decline are all working together to blunt the cutting edge of the Church.

Strict controls are maintained over Christian organizations and all unregistered activity is repressed wherever possible. China's 500 million children and young people under the age of 18 are officially forbidden to be exposed to the gospel.

Two Prayer Points

PRAY for the House Church movement in mainland China. It is growing fast but it needs mature church leaders who can give good teaching and training to the many converts. Pray that the present openness in the midst of opposition may be used to the full.

PRAY for the Chinese students who are the key for the future. Pray that the Christians among them will be built up in their faith and be fervent witnesses for Christ.

Four Chinese majority territories and countries are: Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macao and Singapore.

Look in "Operation World" for more information about the above.

unbelievers? The Gospel is only powerful when it is spoken and shared, but once you keep it to yourself, then that cannot be powerful then.

How many percent of what you have now are you giving to evangelism and missions? How much time you spend in prayer and in reading the word of God? How much time are you spending in being with God's people and minister to one another?

God is pleased when He blessed you but His more glorified when you share your blessings with others especially with the ministry of reaching the unreached people groups – to Missions. Brethren, I hope and pray that this year, no one here in this church that has not given towards missions through the CAMACOP Missions program.

Conclusion:

The New Testament tells us the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, being born in a manger, ministers both to the Jews and Gentiles, then suffered and died on the cross to pay for the sins of the world, was buried, and rose again on third day, the ascended up to his father in heaven, and now seated at the right hand of His Father.

We also know that before He ascended up to heaven, he commissioned the church, his people to go and preach the Gospel into all the world (Mark 16:15). He told them to go and make disciples of all nations (Matt.28:19-20). The Church is the New Testament Israel chosen to be a channel of His blessing. He wants the church to reflect His power and love to the world. Just like us today who were once in darkness and was saved by faith in Christ through the preaching of the Gospel and now part of the family of God, so he desires also those who are still in darkness to be saved. The responsibility of proclaiming the gospel is entrusted to the Church and to you and me. Let us go and be God's channel of blessings until Jesus Christ comes again! We are blest to be a Blessing.

Blest to be a Blessing by Bringing the Gift of Salvation

John. 1: 35 – 42

*35*The next day John was standing there again with two of his disciples,

*36*when he saw Jesus walking by. "There is the Lamb of God!" he said.

*37*The two disciples heard him say this and went with Jesus.

*38*Jesus turned, saw them following him, and asked, "What are you looking for?" They answered, "Where do you live, Rabbi?" (This word means "Teacher.")

39"Come and see," he answered. (It was then about four o'clock in the afternoon.) So they went with him and saw where he lived, and spent the rest of that day with him.

*40*One of them was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. *41*At once he found his brother Simon and told him, "We have found the Messiah." (This word means "Christ.") *42*Then he took Simon to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "Your name is Simon son of John, but you will be called Cephas." (This is the same as Peter and means "a rock.") TEB

Introduction:

Have you ever longed for a blessing but did not receive it?

A young man named Brian longed to receive a blessing from his father. He just wanted to hear his father say "Son, I Love You. I am proud of you."

Brian's father was a career Marine officer. His sole desire for Brian was when he grow up he would follow his footsteps. With that in mind, Brian's father took every opportunity to instill in his son discipline and the backbone he would need when he too becomes an officer.

Words of love or tenderness were forbidden in Brian's household.

CHINESE BLOC

Facts and Figures

- The traditional religion of China is made up of three interwoven belief structures: idolatrous Taoism, Buddhism and philosophical Confucianism. Now it is a mixture of folklore, mysticism, animism and occult practices.
- The Chinese people constitute more than one fifth of the human race with a total population of over 1.3 billion.
- 91 % of Chinese belong to the Han group. Most of the Christians come from this group. However, there are at least 55 minority groups, mostly located in the border regions on the edge of the nation. The minority groups use 78 languages other than Mandarin Chinese. Even among the Han Chinese there are hundreds of dialects. However, Mandarin Chinese is the official language of China.
- There are over 25 million Muslims, scattered all over China, from specific ethnic groups such as the Uyger, Kazak, Uzbek, Tajik etc. Few ministries are targeting these groups.
- Accurate Christian statistics are hard to obtain. Estimates vary from 30 to 150 million.
- There are over 57 million Chinese living outside mainland China. Many of them are receptive to the Christian message. There are at least 8,000 Chinese churches in more than 50 countries.
- Taiwan is still part of greater China and in 1997 and 1999, Hong Kong and Macau reverted to Chinese rule.

PRAYER FOCUS

THE HINDUS IN INDIA

POPULATION of INDIA: 1.1 billion

LOCATION: South Asia

% of the POPULATION that are HINDUS: about 80%

Freedom to spread the gospel, despite efforts to limit this.

In India we find the greatest diversity and concentration of unreached peoples in all the world. Two of the broad categories needing to be reached are The North India Plains and The Higher Castes.

In the five states of the North India Ganges Plains, with over 360 million people, there may live no more than 120,000 active committed believers. Christians in India are unequally spread-70% in the south, 25% in the northeast and only 5% in the more populated north and west.

Caste is a big issue. 70% of the Christians come from the lower level of society. Higher caste Hindus are often attracted to the gospel but repelled by the low social origin of the Christians.

Two Prayer Points

PRAY for the North India plains with its millions of unreached. Pray for the many national missionaries from South India going to this area, that they might use the right strategy for evangelizing each caste and planting churches.

PRAY for the higher castes which have shown little response to the claims of Christ. Pray for the Brahmin who are the highest and priestly caste in the Hindu world. Pray that pride of descent may be replaced by conviction of sin and faith in the Lord Jesus.

Other predominantly Hindu countries are: Nepal

For further information on India and Nepal look at "Operation World" by Patrick Johnstone.

After graduating from high school, Brian did enlist in the Marine Corps. It was the happiest day of his father's life. However, the joy was short-lived. After weeks of attitude problems, which included a vicious fight with his drill instructor, Brian was dishonorably discharged from the service.

The news of Brian's dismissal from the Marines dealt a deathblow to his relationship with his father. He was no longer welcome to his father's home and for years there was no contact between them.

During those years, Brian struggled with feelings of inferiority and lack of self-confidence. Even though he was above in average intelligence, he worked at various jobs far below his abilities. Three times he engaged only to break the engagement just weeks before the wedding. Somehow he just didn't believe that another person could really love him.

He was suffering because he was deprived of the family blessing especially his father's blessing.

After several years of no contact with his father, he received a call that his father was dying from a heart attack.

He immediately went to the hospital to see his father. During the entire flight he was filled with hope that now, at long last, they could talk and reconcile their relationship.

But when he arrived, it was too late. His father had slipped into coma a few hours before he arrived.

The words that Brian longed to hear for the first time – words of love and acceptance – could never be heard.

Four hours after Brian arrived at the hospital, his father died without regaining consciousness.

After his death, Brian kept saying the same words over and over again. "Dad please wake up...please wake up."

His cries spoke of an incredible sense of loss not only physical loss of his father, but also the emotional sense of losing any chance of his father's blessing.

We long for any blessing. We want our parents, our spouses, our children, our friends, our co-workers to bless us...BUT remember that receiving blessings means responsibility - to bless others also.

We need to understand that if we long for others to bless us others are longing for our blessings also. As we enjoy the blessings of God we must act now by bringing the blessings to others – the blessings of salvation.

**Our theme “Blest to be a Blessing”. Today I AM GOING TO SHARE WITH YOU THREE principles that relates to our theme.

These principles once applied, I believe will change our life and the lives of others around us.

FIRST, TO BE A BLESSING TO OTHERS, WE NEED TO PROVIDE WAYS for A MEANINGFUL RECOGNITION OF THE SAVIOR.

"There is the Lamb of God!" (V. 36)

In this phrase, John is reminding his readers including us, that to follow Jesus it begins with recognition that He is the Savior.

John upon seeing Jesus, said, “There is the Lamb of God”; he wants others to see and recognize Him as the sacrifice Lamb of God. John wants that what he experienced must be experienced by others also. He wants to share the blessing to others. He wants that others will be able to recognize the Savior.

We are also tasked to share the blessing of salvation that we received from God through Jesus Christ. But how? Paul said in Romans 10:14 *"But how can they call to him for help if they*

HINDU BLOC

Facts and Figures

- Hinduism has no single founder, nor does it have an established creed or body of doctrine. In fact, it is a conglomeration of ideas, beliefs, convictions and practices, varying from people to people and from region to region.

- There are different forms of Hinduism. The majority of Hindus adhere to what is called Popular Hinduism. Followers of this form are influenced by ancestral tradition, animal worship, temple cults, magic etc. It is idolatrous with millions of gods. Intellectual or mystical Hinduism has growing appeal in Western countries. Other forms are Philosophic Hinduism, Religious Hinduism, Tribal Hinduism and Secular Hinduism

- 771 million Hindus have no viable, evangelizing church movement in their culture. They comprise about 2,190 unreached people groups.

- Over 22 million migrants have left the sub-continent of India to reside and trade all over the world. Most of these migrants are Hindu, thereby exposing other cultures to their religion.

- Over 2 million Hindus live in the United States.

- Nepal is the only country in the world where Hinduism is the official religion. Over 75% of Nepal's 24 million are Hindu.

- The majority of the Hindus in the world live in three countries: India, Nepal and Bangladesh.

PRAYER FOCUS

THE MUSLIMS IN PAKISTAN

POPULATION of PAKISTAN: 156 million

LOCATION: South Asia

% of the POPULATION that are MUSLIM: about 96% Restricts Evangelism

Persecution of religious minorities by Muslim extremists has rapidly increased since 1988. Christians are not allowed into some professions and the most menial tasks are reserved for Christians alone. They suffer beatings, imprisonments and other injustices. This causes the Christian community to become fearful and discouraged.

Christians who come from a Muslim background are particularly under threat. There are possibly thousands of secret believers but only a small number who confess Christ and openly identify themselves as Christians.

Two Prayer Points

PRAY for the small Christian community in Pakistan. Pray that the Lord will strengthen them in their faith and give them the courage to be a good witness despite the hardships.

PRAY for the converts who come from a Muslim background, that they will be discipled and integrated into culturally appropriate fellowships.

There are many countries that are predominantly Muslim. "Operation World" has information on any country you are interested in.

have not believed? And how can they believe if they have not heard the message? And how can they hear if the message is not proclaimed?"

Like John together with the other two disciples, he led the attention of the people around him to the Savior – The Lamb of God.

People will believe if we will provide a meaningful means for them to experience the blessing of experiencing the Savior through our lives and attitude.

People are not after of the Bible translation/s that we were using when we preach or teach because many times they don't have access or ability to possess it but they are reading lives, lives that manifest a meaningful picture of who Christ is. When we walk with what we talk, people will walk with us and desire to know Christ.

****You can supply your own ILLUSTRATION****

SECOND, TO BECOME A BLESSING TO OTHERS, WE MUST OFFER THE OPPORTUNITY FOR PEOPLE TO FEEL THEIR NEED OF THE SAVIOR.

The Lord asks, "What do you want?" or "*What are you looking for?*" This is a searching question made by Jesus addressing every stage of life. According to Bruce Milne, "Jesus has a disturbing habit of facing us with it at every new cross road of our daily experiences."

This emphasizes deeper implications. What is really our motivation of coming to Jesus? Is our coming to Him conforms to what is expected from us? What motivates us in sharing the message of salvation to others?

Many times our motivation to share is JUST for that person to get converted from their former religious belief and to become part of the church. Many times we missed to teach them that they must share the blessings to others as well.

Our local church mission base from our existing Local Church Administrative and Ministry Guidelines states that, “we need to Win people to Christ, Integrate them into the Local church life, Disciple them and Engage in transformational ministries” (WIDE). This is not wrong but I think we must always bear in mind that the bottom line of this is to produce converts that declares God’s global glory while growing in their personal relationships with the Savior.

We need not to rush in presenting the Gospel to the people; they need first to recognize who the Savior is by leading them to feel that they need Him. Bruce Milne further said, “Jesus did not press them for an immediate response to become His disciples but He gives the opportunity to spend time knowing Him before they make a commitment.”

In relation to our Christian service the Lord himself allows first the two disciples to be with him so that they will be exposed to the mission that He is doing. He wants them to feel what He feels in bringing the message of the kingdom.

In short, we can really make a difference by leading people to see and understand that they need a Savior and so that they can also experience and proclaim God’s glory.

****You can supply your own ILLUSTRATION***

THIRD, TO BLESS OTHERS, WE MUST UNDERSTAND THAT OUR RESPONSIBILITY IS TO BRING THE BLESSING TO OTHERS.

At once Andrew shared the blessings of salvation to his brother Simon Peter, “we have found the Messiah”. He was sure of what he shared to his brother. He understood the message of John about the Lamb of God.

Words are useless if not accompanied with action. A blessing is not complete if it is not accompanied with a commitment to see it through.

For example, a coach not only blessed his players with encouraging words, he showed them how to play the game. He taught them how to shoot, how to pass and how to be a

MUSLIM BLOC

Facts and Figures

- The word 'Islam' means 'submission to God'. Islam is monotheistic, requiring submission to Allah, the one and only God.
- The revelation of Islam was given to Muhammad, who is revered by Muslims as the greatest prophet. He was born in AD 570 in Mecca and died in AD632 in Medina, Saudi Arabia. During the month of Ramadan, Muhammad would often retreat to a cave. During one of these times Muhammad began to receive revelation that he believed was from the archangel, Gabriel. These writings form the basic of the Qur'an. In addition to the Qur'an is the book of 'Hadiths'. The Hadith is the teachings of Muhammad and is an important part of the life of a Muslim.
- The devout Muslim tries to live his life by the five Pillars of Islam: Reciting the creed; Praying five times a day; Fasting during Ramadan; Giving to the poor and Making the pilgrimage to Mecca at least once.
- 1.18 billion Muslims have no viable evangelizing church movement in their culture. They comprise approximately 2,580 unreached people groups.
- Growth rate in the 20th Century was significant- from 12.3% in 1900 to 21.1 % in 2000. Most of this growth has been through a higher birth rate and the expansion of Islam through migration.
- The Islamic world stretches across North Africa, Middle East, Asia and Europe. Asia has the four largest Muslim countries in the world: Indonesia; India; Pakistan and Bangladesh.

B. Cheerful Mission givers are blest by God

1. Cheerful Mission givers share in the multiple rewards of mission work

Phil:4:17- they share in the rewards of saving people

2. Cheerful Mission givers enjoy the manifold blessings of the Lord

Phil. 4:19 their needs are supplied according to the glorious riches of Christ.

Conclusion:

God blesses people who will become channels of His grace and blessings to bless the world for His glory.

leader on the court. He committed his time and effort to ensure that their desired championship trophy (blessings) becomes a reality. There is no doubt about it! Commitment is necessary to be a blessing takes time and effort. We must invest energy to see the blessing become a reality in people's lives.

It takes hard work to bring the blessing to other people. It takes time to meaningfully introduce others to Christ. It takes courage to offer people positive words by saying "I have found the Messiah". It takes time and effort to help people to experience the blessing of salvation.

But what a joy seeing another person's life bloom and grow because you bring the blessing of salvation to him/her. You have done your responsibility while enjoying the blessings of God.

****You can supply your own ILLUSTRATION****

CONCLUSION:

If we prove meaningful ways so that people will recognize the Savior and let them see and feel their need of a Savior, if we fully understand our responsibility of bring the blessing of salvation to people around us, what do you think would be the possible result?

The answer is found in the encounter that concludes this passage. Andrew, having spent the night in fellowship with Jesus, immediately went out the next morning to bring his brother, Simon: "He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, 'We have found the Messiah' (which means Christ). He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, 'So you are Simon the son of John? You shall be called Cephas' (which means Peter)" (Jn. 1:41-42).

It is extremely significant that Jesus changed Simon's name. One thing it shows is that Jesus had special plans for Simon Peter, namely, that his preaching of the gospel would be the rock on which he would start building the church ("Peter" means "rock"; see Mt. 16:18). It also showed Jesus' authority over those who come to follow him, since only He has the

authority to change someone's name like what He did to Abram.

Most importantly, it shows that Jesus intends to make his disciples into new men and women. Men and women who were blest to bless others by bring the message of salvation.

In return, Jesus sees us in terms of what his salvation is going to do in our lives. He sees us as those redeemed by his blood, who, because of his Word and the power of our fellowship with him, are being made new into the likeness of his glory. Jesus sees us – even now in our weakness and continuing sin – as those who will dwell forever with him in glory. Jesus told Simon that he would be named Peter – the Rock – and years later Peter wrote that the same would be true of all believers: “You yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house... You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into this marvelous light” (1 Pet. 2:5, 9).

In Jesus' eyes, that is what we are, and by naming Simon as Peter he proclaimed what he intends for us all to be. According to William Barclay; Michelangelo was once chipping at a huge shapeless piece of rock. Someone asked what he was doing and he replied, “I am releasing the angel imprisoned in this marble.”

Jesus likewise blessed us not only the free gift of salvation but also with potentials to bless others. Therefore, we have no reason not to share the blessings to others because it's our responsibility to bless them so that God's glory will be revealed. May the Lord bless you in your effort to bless others.

4th Sunday Message (Missions Emphasis Month)

BLEST TO BE A BLESSING BY GIVING WHAT I HAVE

Acts 16: 11-15 Phil. 4: 10-19

Introduction:

The Great Commission needs missionaries (sent ones). The church (sender) must pray and give moral and financial support.

Paul's Missionary work was backed up by generous supporters like Lydia and the Philippian church. They are worthy examples of those who are blest by the Lord and became channels of God's blessings by giving what they have for the work of missions.

I. The Lord Blesses the Missionary Work with Cheerful Givers

- A. Cheerful giving Christians like Lydia (Acts 16: 11-15)
note: Cheerful giving is a mark of a faithful believer v.15
- B. Cheerful giving Churches like the Philippian church (Phil. 4: 14-19)
- C. Cheerful giving Christians and Churches are a blessing to missionaries
Phil. 4:10 Missionaries rejoice
Phil 4:14-16 The needs of Missionaries are supplied

II. The Lord Blesses those who Cheerfully Give for the Work of Missions

- A. Cheerful Mission givers Pleases God

Phil 4:18 - Their giving is a fragrant aroma, acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God

responsive to God and dependent upon him and who cried out to him.

This is what Paul means in Romans 8 when he says that we do not know how to pray as we ought oftentimes (Rom 8 26). We do not know what to ask for. The situation is too complicated and intricate for us. How can we understand it. But Paul says that as we pray the Spirit of God helps us in our weakness and awakens deep longings and yearnings in our hearts for which we cannot find words. And God the Father who knows and can read our hearts reads there the mind and will of the Spirit and he answers by sending the very events that are needed to work out the situation according to his purpose. That is what prayer does. There is a mighty mysterious element to prayer which even as God's people gather together and open their hearts and share their feelings with God is somehow creating an atmosphere in which God can work in sudden remarkable ways.

Finally notice how this chapter ends

But the word of God grew and multiplied

And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their mission bringing with them John whose other name was Mark (Acts 12:24-25.) The word of God grew and multiplied despite all the opposition and two men were there whom God particularly wanted to instruct in how to handle tough situations -- Barnabas and Saul They were keen observers of all that took place in Jerusalem at this time Saul would draw upon his experience many times later in his turbulent career -- remembering how God could work to set people free to open prison doors to change a situation to move a tyrannical ruler -- all in response to the believing prayer of his people.

That is what prayer can do

(Note: Please provide an illustration about yourself identifying with your hearers about struggles on prayer; make sure to tell stories not mere statement of facts. Thanks)

3rd Sunday Message (Missions Emphasis Month)

Blest to be a Blessing by Establishing a Passion for Prayer

ME: We will look at the twelfth chapter -- a very exciting passage I am sure that you had not been a Christian for very long before you discovered that the enemy with whom we wrestle has a very disconcerting way of striking when everything seems to be going well Just when you think the path has smoothed out and that you are having a great time in the Lord with nothing but blessing ahead -- then everything seems to fall apart at once. That is confirmation of what the Bible tells us is the truth. We are not wrestling against flesh and blood but we are engaged in a life-or-death struggle against principalities and powers and wicked spirits in high places who are able to unleash a vicious lashing attack against us -- just when we think things are going well.

That is what happens in this chapter. In Chapter 11 you will recall blessing was pouring out as God's Spirit was moving in the city of Antioch to enlarge the Christian enterprise and to thrust the gospel out to the We saw how that city the third largest in the Roman empire was being shaken by the presence of these Christians in its midst of the Gentiles. Indeed they were blessed for a purpose, the lower level, that others be blessed through them. Now we come back to Jerusalem and discover that the enemy strikes back with vicious slashing power against the church there. We may be twenty centuries away from this first century but we are not twenty centuries away from the book of Acts. This is a very contemporary book because it is the account of the work of the timeless Spirit of God. He is the same in every age working today just as he did here in the book of Acts.

WE: Up to this chapter we have been seeing the body of Christ at work. Now, we shall examine three events which Luke the writer of this book puts together yet which seem somewhat unrelated at first. But no choice of events in the Word of God is ever without significance and these are very significant for us.

We will go through this chapter rather rapidly comment briefly on the events and then think about the questions they raise in our

minds. We will try to see why Luke guided by the Holy Spirit has chosen these for our instruction.

GOD: The three events are the murder of James the Apostle, the deliverance of Peter from prison by the intervention of an angel and the death of Herod the king.

We have first the murder of James

About that time Herod the king laid violent hands upon some who belonged to the church. He killed James the brother of John with the sword; and when he saw that it pleased the Jews he proceeded to arrest Peter also. This was during the days of Unleavened Bread Acts 12 1-3 (RSV).

That means that it was during the Passover season the same period of the year when Jesus himself was taken and crucified. But this is the year AD 44. We can date it very precisely because the date of Herod's death also recorded here is well known in ancient history. Therefore these events occurred about twelve years after the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus and the coming of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. The church has been growing and expanding during these twelve years spreading out to Judea and Samaria and then beginning to reach the Gentiles as we saw in the last chapter. But now the enemy strikes hard and moves Herod the king to take James the brother of John and to behead him with the sword. This Herod is not the one before whom Jesus appeared.

This is his brother known as Herod Agrippa the father of the Herod before whom Paul will later appear. This obviously indicates that James was an important leader in the church although his name has not been mentioned previously in the book of Acts. His brother was John. You know James and John. How often their names appear together in the Gospel accounts. These were the brothers whom Jesus very affectionately called sons of thunder Mark 3:17 because of their swashbuckling dispositions. They were loudmouths and were probably the youngest members of the apostolic band -- in their late teens when Jesus called them. They were firebrands. They wanted to call fire down upon the villages

Is that not the lesson that Hezekiah teaches us. King Hezekiah was lying on his deathbed and God sent the prophet Isaiah to tell him that he was going to die. Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and began to pray earnestly to God to spare him. And God stopped Isaiah on his way out of the palace turned him around and said, "Go back to the king and tell him that because of his prayer I have granted him an additional fifteen years of life". (Isa. 38 5) Isaiah was given the great sign of the turning back of the sun's shadow on the sundial as proof of what God would do. Do you see how prayer can postpone judgment It can do so individually; it can do so nationally and even globally.

There is a **SECOND** suggestion in this passage which related to the matter of the church at prayer. It is the fact that ***Peter is at peace though he is in prison***. How could he sleep on the night of his execution? If you were to be executed tomorrow morning and you knew it knew that your head was to be chopped off would you have a good night's sleep tonight? You'd be ordering Valium by the bottle from the nearest drug store wouldn't you? But Peter slept and slept peacefully. It was not that he was such a great man of faith. Peter was like us oftentimes weak and fearful.

IT WAS BECAUSE THE CHURCH WAS PRAYING FOR HIM.

That is where he derived strength. That is why God gave him peace of heart. That is why you find the Apostle Paul urging the people to whom he wrote to pray for him. "Hold me up in your prayers that I might be bold and that I might have peace." (Eph 6 18-20). Prayer does that for those undergoing times of difficulty and trouble.

THIRD you notice that ***prayer can produce sudden changes like the death of Herod***. I do not think the church was praying for the king to die. We are not told in Scripture to pray that way about those in authority. But the church was praying that God would intervene and work his will. As a result of their intercession, God was in a sense free to act in unusual and remarkable ways. This vicious cruel tyrant before whom human life meant nothing was suddenly removed from the scene because of a people who were

our prayers in very much the same way. That does not mean that everything we pray for will be granted. Sometimes God overrules our prayers. But prayer does other things as well even when the things for which we pray are not granted.

It is obvious FIRST of all that prayer has the ability to postpone or to delay the judgment of God -- or the act of an enemy the victory of Satan as in this case James was taken but Peter's execution was postponed to a later day. This is a primary power of prayer. It can put off something which is impending and threatening right at the moment. It may not remove it entirely but it can change the time schedule. That is the teaching of the Scripture about prayer all the way through.

We are facing the imminent appearance of the events predicted in the Bible for the last days. But if you have read human history you know that there have been times in the past when the world has approached the brink of the cliff of the last days. There have been times when it appeared to the whole world that these predictions were about to be fulfilled. Threatening figures have appeared on the horizon whom many have mistakenly identified in their times as the antichrist. And yet each time because of the grave dangers present God's people woke up and began to cry out to him -- a spiritual awakening came -- and the world moved back from the brink of extermination and destruction

Once again in our day we are approaching the cliff. Perhaps we are further over the edge toward the ultimate disaster than we have ever been before. But once again God's people are waking up crying out to him This is the only hope in our day -- that once more God will turn the clock back a bit delay the schedule bring us back from the brink and allow perhaps another generation to grow up in relative peace and security liberty and freedom ***to know the glory of the gospel*** in its delivering power. It is my conviction that in order for God to allow the events of the last days finally to come to pass. He must remove his Church from the earth. In order to take the salt out of society. He will remove the Church and thus allow the final display of man's evil and enmity to come to full fruition in the last days. But prayer can delay it.

that would not listen to them. They were filled with zeal and it is interesting to watch how the Lord worked with these two young men John he particularly loved and drew close to himself but both were strong in his affections.

It was these two boys who came to Jesus with their mother and asked to be granted positions at the right and the left hand of the throne of glory when Jesus came into his kingdom. Do you remember what he said to them He asked them a question, "Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink.(Matt 20: 22, Mark 10: 38). By that he meant his violent death on the cross. And with typical teenage enthusiasm and ardor they said: Yes we're able! Jesus told them, "You shall indeed drink my cup but to sit at my right hand and at my left is not mine to grant but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father. (Mark 10: 39). In those words: "You shall indeed drink my cup," he indicated that these men would die violent deaths.

James was the first of the apostles so to die and John was the last. So the deaths of these brothers form a parenthesis within which all the apostles lived and labored and eventually died. James' head was chopped off with the sword. We are not told how John died. The tradition is that he was put into a cauldron of boiling oil. But whatever it was doubtless a violent death he endured because that is what the Lord Jesus predicted.

Now, the church is evidently not too disturbed when James is taken captive. There is no mention of their holding a prayer meeting. Undoubtedly they think that God will release him from prison as he had on a previous occasion. In Acts 5 we are told that all the apostles were imprisoned but an angel came at night to open the doors and let them out. Understandably then the church is not very perturbed.

But imagine the stunning shattering effect upon them when James is beheaded actually executed and the sad news comes to the waiting church that the first of the apostles has laid down his life as a martyr. It is very sobering and the church is stunned. So when Peter is taken there is great concern. It is a different story then.

And when he Herod had seized him, Peter, he put him in prison and delivered him to four squads of soldiers to guard him intending after the Passover to bring him out to the people. So Peter was kept in prison; but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church Acts 12: 4-5.

No more fun and games now; the church is very serious. They realize that they cannot count upon the automatic deliverance of God but that also required is deep concern on their part and so earnest prayer is made on behalf of Peter. You can see that Herod is afraid of something too because he takes special care to see that Peter is held. He details four squads (sixteen soldiers) altogether to watch this one man. Peter is under the guard of four soldiers at all times -- two chained to his wrists and two standing guard at the door of his cell. Herod is taking no chances that this man will be rescued by any kind of strategic coup.

But Peter was not afraid for we read, "The very night when Herod was about to bring him out Peter was sleeping between two soldiers bound with two chains and sentries before the door were guarding the prison; and behold an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell; and he struck Peter on the side and woke him saying "Get up quickly" and the chains fell off his hands. And the angel said to him, 'Dress yourself and put on your sandals.' And he did so and he said to him, 'Wrap your mantle around you and follow me'. And he went out and followed him; he did not know that what was done by the angel was real but thought he was seeing a vision. When they had passed the first and the second guard they came to the iron gate leading into the city. It opened to them of its own accord and they went out and passed on through one street; and immediately the angel left him. And Peter came to himself and said "Now I am sure that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting". Acts 12:6-11.

What a remarkable story. You can see how unexpected. This is I think Peter really expected to be executed. But remarkably, he slept He had been there for several days and this is not the first time he has been in prison but it is as he knows the last night before his scheduled execution. Yet he is sleeping peacefully

because you ask not (Jas 4:2). You see in his wisdom, God has designed that his people shall participate in what he does. Though he did set all the apostles free without any prayer as recorded in Chapter 5 and could have done so with James nevertheless ***He is impressing upon his people here that when danger threatens the program of God or the people of God it is a call to prayer God will hear that prayer and answer it and set people free when he would not have done so otherwise.*** This is the great lesson of this chapter to the church. We are not to take the events of our day for granted as though there were nothing we could do about them.

Prayer becomes a mighty powerful thrust on the part of the people of God to change events. That above all else is what this message is shouting at us.

Basically prayer is the most natural and normal response of a heart that is dependent upon God. If you are really counting upon God to do something then you will pray about it. You will trust him; you will communicate with him If you are not counting on him you will not pray.

If you are really counting on something else or on someone else -- if you think that by your own clever maneuvering you can get out of a situation or if you are trusting other human beings to come through -- you will not pray. Or if you do your prayer is but a ritual an empty form a mechanical or obligatory utterance that means nothing.

The basic motive of prayer is a sense of dependence. If you really think that God and God alone can work and that there are elements of a situation in which only he can change things -- then you pray. This is what happened to this early church. When they realized that James had been put to death and that this vicious attack of the enemy could be successful it suddenly crystallized in their minds that they had a part to play in God's program. They were to go to God in earnest prayer that Peter might be delivered. And God set him free in a wonderful way.

This chapter highlights for us several things that prayer does and they are basic for us to learn today. God works in the same way today as he did in these first century days and he will respond to

The great tragedy of the Philippines is that more often than not in a sense we are saying to God. Please God I'd rather do it myself. We want to do it all ourselves. But God strikes oftentimes to remind us that our very life our very breath all that we have and are is coming from him and that we are fools to think that we can exist and live act and react on our own -- that we have some power of our own apart from him that we can operate on.

This episode shows how blinded how distorted how tragically twisted becomes the thinking of men who depart from a sense of dependence upon God. God oftentimes teaches lessons like this to whole nations. I sometimes think that is the meaning of the catastrophes and tragedies brought upon us these past years. It is God's way of saying to us, "You don't have what it takes and you can't live independently of me.

As we review the events of this chapter there are some questions that come to mind. Why has Luke chosen to put these three things together in this account? And of course the pre-eminent question that emerges from this whole story is the one which faces us right at the beginning. Why was James killed and Peter delivered. Why did God allow the brother of John to be put to death while Peter he saved by angelic interference. Could he not have saved James as well? There is no question that he could have. Well why didn't he? The only answer that this chapter suggests is found in Verse 5. It is the key to the chapter

So Peter was kept in prison; but EARNEST PRAYER for him was made to God by the church (Acts 12:5)

That is the difference Peter was kept in prison just as James. But the difference was BUT. That is always a crisis word. It indicates a change in direction. But earnest prayer to God was made for Peter by the church and as a result Peter was set free. You say, "What difference does it make? Couldn't God just have set Peter free anyhow? If God determined that James would die and Peter would be set free what difference did the prayer of the church make? Many people would say that.

But let us never forget what James not, this James but Jesus' brother who wrote the Epistle of James says, " You have not

obviously trusting that God will glorify himself either by his death or by delivering him so that he can live. Yet when the angel comes Peter is taken by surprise.

When we read this account we can see what a supernatural deliverance this was. The angel takes no note of the guards whatsoever but simply strikes the chains from Peter's arms. The guards were evidently bemused or asleep. Then he has to tell Peter everything he must do. Notice how bewildered Peter is. The angel has to tell him, "Now get up, put on your shoes, wrap your mantle around you he leads him by the hand out into the city streets. Peter is not sure what is happening. But when he gets outside and sees the iron gate open of its own accord he knows that God is at work. And the realization suddenly strikes him that God has indeed set him free from prison.

Then we get this interesting and most human account of what happens when he comes to the church.

When he realized this he went to the house of Mary the mother of John whose other name was Mark where many were gathered together and were praying. And when he knocked at the door of the gateway a maid named Rhoda came to answer. Recognizing Peter's voice in her joy she did not open the gate but ran in and told that Peter was standing at the gate. They said to her, "You are mad". But she insisted that it was so. They said it is his angel. But Peter continued knocking; and when they opened they saw him and were amazed. But motioning to them with his hand to be silent he described to them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, "Tell this to James and to the brethren", Then he departed and went to another place (Acts 12 12-17.)

Is there anything in the New Testament more human than that. It sounds like one of our prayer meetings doesn't it. They did not believe it when God answered their prayers. Nothing is more humorous than this picture of Peter valiantly pounding away at the door while the girl is inside having forgotten to let him in trying to explain to these Christians that God has answered their prayers. But they would not believe her. They thought she was mad at first and then they tried to explain it on other terms. It must be his

guardian angel they said. Finally she persuaded them to come out and they saw Peter still banging away frustratedly. Then they believed it and were amazed that God had answered their prayers.

It is strange how weak our faith can be sometimes.

These people were praying for Peter's release and I am sure they were praying in faith. They believed God would do it.

But he did it in such a remarkable way and so suddenly so clearly supernaturally that they could hardly believe it when it occurred.

The account closes with the story of the cruelty of Herod.

Now when day came there was no small stir among the soldiers over what had become of Peter. That is probably the understatement of the century. And when Herod had sought for him and could not find him he examined the sentries and ordered that they should be put to death. Then he went down from Judea to Caesarea and remained there (Acts 12 18-19).

Sixteen innocent soldiers die because of this man's stubborn unbelief. He would not believe that God had acted as the soldiers told their tale the only explanation he would accept was that these men had betrayed their trust and had somehow connived with Peter's friends to release him. So he ordered their deaths. Cruel tyrant that he was he had no qualms of conscience over putting sixteen men to death for no reason whatsoever. Then he went down to his headquarters in Caesarea on the coast. We get the final story of what happened to him

Now Herod was angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon; and they came to him in a body and having persuaded Blastus the king's chamberlain. They asked for peace because their country depended on the king's country for food. On an appointed day Herod put on his royal robes took his seat upon the throne and made an oration to them. And the people shouted, "The voice of a God and not of man", Immediately an angel of the Lord smote him because he did not give God the glory; and he was eaten by worms and died.

BUT THE WORD OF GOD GREW AND MULTIPLIED

And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their mission bringing with them John whose other name was Mark. (Acts 12 20-25.)

The Jewish historian Josephus also records the death of Herod. He describes this occasion when Herod met with the people of Tyre and Sidon in what we now call Lebanon. These people were dependent upon Judea and especially upon Galilee for food. So when the king came out dressed in his royal robes they flattered him. When he spoke to them they cried out. Why this is a voice of a god and not a man. And this arrogant vain king believed them.

It is almost incredible -- the tragic twisted mentality of a man like this who could actually believe that he had so much power that he had become a god.

But this was not uncommon in those days nor is it in our own day. This of course is exactly what happens in any man's mentality when he begins to think of himself as what we call a self-made man. Sometimes you talk to men who own a lot of property and they will tell you. Well I worked for it. I produced it all myself. Nobody helped me. They are falling into the same tragic error as this vain and fatuous king who imagined that he had power in himself to operate. But Luke tells us that he was immediately stricken by an angel of the Lord and he was eaten of worms and died I do not know what Luke's exact diagnosis is here but some sudden catastrophe befell Herod and as Josephus tells us within two or three days he died.

What does this mean? ***This is God's way of demonstrating the ultimate folly of the person who thinks that he can live without God who thinks that we are not dependent people.*** This is the tragedy of mankind. You can frequently discern from our newspapers or from our television programs that as a people we imagine that we have what it takes to produce all that life requires and that we do not need anyone or anything else -- especially God.