

Psalm 67 Jonah 1:1-4; 3:1-5; 4:1-4 St. James 1:22-27 St. John 16:23-33

Overcoming the World

Mission Statement: The Anglican Church of St. George the Martyr is a community of believers in Jesus Christ seeking to live out the Gospel among ourselves, seeking to take the Gospel to the world, and committed to being Biblical in our faith, liturgical in our worship, and evangelical in our witness.

3. We seek to take the Gospel to the World:

We seek to encourage all our members to get involved with world missions, to create avenues for vital ministries of mercy both on personal and corporate levels and to promote pervasive Missions mindedness.

A supervisor of a rather large company approached a recently hired employee to ask why the said employee was not fulfilling his job description. The employee looked back at him with an incredulous look on his face and protested that he was, indeed, doing most of what he had agreed to do when he signed up. The supervisor then took out a copy of the agreement and gently but firmly pointed out that part of the job description the employee had failed to do. “Oh,” replied the employee, “I don’t like that part of the job...but I do everything else, don’t I?”

This employee had deceived himself into believing that he was doing his job, when he was, in fact, neglecting a large portion of what he personally did not like to do. This is not unlike the Christian who claims to follow Christ, but then fails to do what it takes to follow Him. The Scriptures show us that God’s primary task in sending His Son was to reconcile the world to Himself. Right from the start, when sin first entered into our realm

of existence, God came to seek and to save the lost...that is His nature...that is His character...and it should not surprise us to learn that when we who claim to be His children fail to demonstrate this character trait He is not impressed with us at all.

The story of Jonah points out this Divine displeasure rather clearly. The prophet Jonah blatantly disregarded his job description to warn the Ninevites (who were enemies of Israel) that they would be destroyed if they persisted in their wickedness, because, as he later confessed, he knew that God would forgive them if they repented. But he wanted God to “stick it to them good”! A modern parallel would be for God to call one of us to go tell the Iranians that they are about to be permanently pulverized should they persist with their nuclear armament plans. Besides the fact that many would refuse to go for fear of losing their head, or any other body part for that matter, some may secretly wish for God to wipe them off the face of the earth...and they would reason, perhaps just like Jonah, that by having God obliterate our enemies, we would ensure world peace.

But is that God’s way to usher in peace and goodwill to all mankind? Is that the way to overcome the world? Imagine if God had that mindset at the Fall. He would have simply crushed Adam and Eve, blown up the Garden and nuked the serpent with it and started all over again from Ground Zero. But God didn’t do that then and He still doesn’t do that now. God came looking for Adam. And the rest of the Bible simply shows us how He continued to come looking for the descendents of Adam. Ultimately, that search came to a climax in the coming of our Lord Jesus Who, as our comfortable words tell us, came to seek and to save sinners. Jesus came to overcome the world by breaking down the barriers of hate and vengeance through love and forgiveness. As He said Himself, He could have called upon legions of angels to destroy those who sought to kill Him, but He

didn't. No, He rather prayed for them to be forgiven even as He hung on the cross dying for their sins. That's the way He overcame the world...and that's the way He expects us to overcome the world.

In His High Priestly prayer Jesus said to the Father, "As You have sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world" and then He added that He was not praying only for His disciples at that time, but also for all those who would believe in Him "through their word"...in other words, through their missionary activity...So, we may conclude that Jesus fully expected His disciples, as well as those who later became Christians because of their evangelistic message, to continue His task in seeking to save the lost. And when the early church in Jerusalem neglected to fulfill this part of their job description, so to speak, He did something very similar to them as that which He did to Jonah...He sent a tempest to rock their comfortable little boat, proverbially speaking, of course. Just read about that in the early chapters of the Book of Acts. And He has always done that throughout Church history...when His children forgot their primary calling to do as God does, He sent something to wake them up out of their slumber...to alert them to the fact that they had deceived themselves into thinking that their deeds were pleasing to God.

You see, if we are not doers of the Word, we are not fulfilling our job description because we are not followers of Jesus. Jesus always did what pleased the Father by doing the Father's will. Those of us who claim to walk as He walked ought to do the same, right? So, if He came to seek and to save the lost, we too ought to seek to save the lost, especially since He said that He sends us into the world just as His Father had sent Him into the world. Just like Jonah, we are called to preach the Gospel to all the world,

including our enemies, and, as St. Paul said, woe to us if we do not preach the Word! Dearest brethren, if God did not spare Jonah, and if He did not spare the church in Jerusalem, He will surely not spare us. If we stubbornly refuse to be doers of His Word, He will send a tempest our way again and again until we learn to listen and to be obedient to our calling as His children. We are not to hide our lights under a bucket, but to shine them out in the darkness of the lives of those who do not yet know Jesus. To do anything less is to deceive ourselves into thinking we are pleasing God. We will not be blessed in what we do as our religion will be useless. Indeed, as useless as an employee refusing to do what his job description requires for him to do.

For this reason, the third point of our Mission Statement clearly states that we at St. George the Martyr seek to encourage all our members to get involved with world missions, because this is quite plainly the will of God. Now, of course, this does not mean that we must all go personally, but it does mean that every one of us should be actively participating in Foreign Missions in one way or another, whether it be by prayer, some form of publicity, or financial support.

There are many ways to get involved with World Missions at St. George's. Perhaps the most important part of this would be prayer...to ask our Lord to bring in an abundant harvest of souls and to use us, if He is willing, in the process of sowing the Word or reaping the fruit of what others have sown before us. Then you could either join the Missions Team or ask them how you could help them fulfill their task in striving to make our parish more missions minded. Support the Annual Missions Conference. Read the bulletin inserts to see how you might get involved. Write letters to those missionaries we

pray for. Support our missions activities financially...and, as I said many months ago, you can support missions with as little as one dollar a day.

One of the interesting books I am reading at the moment is about an American mountaineer by the name of Greg Mortenson, who decided to build a school in a remote impoverished village in North-Eastern Pakistan after he quite literally stumbled into it following a failed attempt to scale a peak called K2. What amazes me about this book is the sheer determination of this man to accomplish this vision of his in spite of the lack of resources, unexpected and disappointing opposition and the many obstacles he had to overcome in order to get things moving and, indeed, keep moving in the right direction. What I find particularly sad though, is that Greg Mortenson would be considered as a nominal Christian at best (his parents are described in the book as holding to their Christianity loosely) and the schools he went on to build are not Christian. The subtitle of the book, "Three Cups of Tea" is, and I quote, "One Man's Mission to Promote Peace...One School at a Time." Does the irony of this statement not get to you? Who Alone can promote real peace other than the Prince of Peace? So, where are we as the followers of the Prince of Peace in all this? If Greg Mortenson had just looked at his personal lack of resources, as we so often do, that village in Pakistan and many others like it would still not have a school...and he does not operate under God's compelling command as we do...or ought to do.

We all want world peace, don't we? I mean, seriously, only the mentally deranged would say no. But you know, it has often been said if the church only sent out and supported more Missionaries, we would not need to send out more soldiers. Or we could say if

every individual members of the Church of Jesus Christ would simply do the Word we would in time overcome the World.

Dearest brethren, here at our Lord's Table we are reminded that Jesus our Lord came into the world to save it by giving up Himself as a sacrifice for sin...and here we are also reminded that those of us who partake of this Table are likewise to offer up ourselves as living sacrifices in our attempts to serve God in His kingdom...But what is important for us to note is that in both instances the purpose of the sacrifice is for the life of the world. Now, of course, we, like Jonah and the early church in Jerusalem, may continue to go through the motions of our religious rituals while neglecting to do what God requires of us, but we are only deceiving ourselves into thinking that what we are doing is pleasing to Him and will result in a blessing. Indeed, many in the modern church are miserable for this very reason...many Christians find themselves mysteriously empty and unfulfilled and they consequently seek to fill this void with all sorts of activities, or tragically they may even fall away altogether if their search for meaning and purpose leads them down other worldly avenues.

So, if you are currently looking at the winds and waves of your day-to-day life and wondering why your boat is not sailing smoothly, ask our Lord to show you whether or not He has sent these the tempests into your life to wake you up and to open your ears to hear his voice calling you to follow Him and to do His Word...so that by your selfless service to Him and to others, you may participate in His mission to overcome the world.