

Sermon Notes
Good News Church
Light Into Darkness
"The World's Second Most Unbelievable Story"
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12-23-25

What is the world's 1st most unbelievable story? CHRISTMAS!

- Christmas (def): Light into darkness

PROPHECY

"The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned." - Isaiah 9:2 (700 years before Jesus)

REALITY

*"In him (Jesus) was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and **the darkness has not overcome it**. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. **He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.**"* - John 1:4-5, 10-11

REJECTION WHY DID THEY NOT RECEIVE HIM?

*"This is the verdict: **Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.**"* - John 3:19

VICTORY

For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ. – 2 Corinthians 4:6

POWER OF THE 1st STORY

Under cover of night, *"when the set time had fully come,"* in the greatest land invasion this world has ever seen, *"**God sent His Son to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship**"* (Galatians 4:4-5).

- God came to earth as a baby, to be a ransom payment offered to the prince of darkness, in order to redeem hard-hearted rebels (us) and not only secure our eternal salvation, but also to adopt us as sons and daughters. Unbelievable!!!

JESUS SAID... WE WOULD DO GREATER THINGS. WHAT?

"Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father." - John 14:12

2nd MOST UNBELIEVABLE STORY

In a few weeks on January 8th, it will be the 60th anniversary of the 2nd most unbelievable story you'll ever hear, and tonight, I'm gonna tell you that story.

I'm telling you this story because I want you to experience the impact of Christmas and the incredible difference that Christmas makes!

THE STORY BEGINS... "Operation Auca" (God planted a seed)

- In the summer of 1950, **Jim Elliot** (a young 22-year-old guy from Portland, OR) was at Camp Wycliffe (Oklahoma) and was told about the Auca Indians in Ecuador.
Auca means "naked savage."

- **Map 1 (South America)**

- **Map 2 (World)** – Bethlehem, Ecuador, Atlanta

- **Auca - No leaders. No rules.**
 - Kids – How does that sound? No rules!

4 Unwritten Rules

1. If offended, ignore it.
2. If you can't ignore it, kill them.
3. If they kill you, then you have an obligation to kill them back.
4. If you kill them back, then you have to also wipe out the entire family.

- **As a result... the Auca tribe was a society of death.**
 - **This tribe was the most violent society in the history of the world. 60% homicide rate.** They had not had a single positive contact with the outside world.

- All that to say... Jim felt called to give his life away in missions but wasn't sure where. God's providence would lead him to Ecuador.

- **Jim and Pete Fleming** moved to Ecuador on Feb. 21, 1952, to start training. **Ed McCully** (also a Wheaton grad), **Nate Saint**, and **Roger Youderian** would come down in late 1952 / 1953.

THE MISSIONARIES

- **Roger Youderian**, age 31 (Sumatra, Montana) Montana State Univ., WWII paratrooper, participated in the Battle of the Bulge
- **Pete Fleming**, age 27 (Seattle, WA) High School valedictorian, athlete lettered in basketball and golf, enjoyed mountain climbing / Univ. of Washington (Philosophy)
- **Jim Elliot**, age 28 (Portland, OR) Wheaton College
- **Nate Saint**, age 33 (Hershey, PA) Wheaton College
- **Ed McCully**, age 28 (born in Iowa / grew up in Milwaukee, WI) Wheaton College (athlete / Marquette University Law School)

PASSION FOR THE AUCAS TO KNOW CHRIST

This was the most savage tribe in the history of the world. Nevertheless,

- *"I would gladly give my life for that tribe"* - Pete Fleming
- In his early 20's, Jim Elliot was journaling about his willingness to give up his life for the sake of the gospel.

ENGAGING THE AUCAS / REACHING OUT

- September, 1955 - find the Aucas, establish contact, build relationship
 - Strategy – airplane > drop tangible items as peace offerings to build relationship
- January 3, 1956 – landed the plane on "Palm Beach" and set up camp

VIDEO (3:44 min.)

- It seemed like everything could not have been going better.
- Sam Saint (Nate's brother) had said that ***"Roger, Pete, Jim, Nate, and Ed (and all who knew them) were absolutely confident of God's leading and protection."***
- **But, it didn't end well. In fact, it seemed like the worst ending imaginable.**
 - Sometimes life feels that way, doesn't it? Things are going great, and then everything bottoms out. Hope feels lost.
- **On January 8, 1956, all five men were speared to death.** Though the men had guns as weapons for defense, they chose not to use them, because they knew if they did, it would likely close the door on any possible future of sharing the gospel.
 - *"The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has ~~not~~ overcome it."*
– John 1:4 (or so it seemed)

HOPE IN THE DARKNESS

- ***"God doesn't write his whole story in one chapter."*** - Steve Saint

TURNING POINT (Elisabeth and Rachell) 1958

PHOTOS – RACHELL SAINT / ELISABETH ELLIOT

- **THEN... THE UNTHINKABLE** - In October 1958, Elisabeth Elliot, her 2 yr. old daughter, Valerie, and Rachell Saint (Nate's sister) moved to live with the Waodani tribe.
 - Elisabeth and Rachell translated the Bible, taught them the Good News, and lived it out among them. They LOVED their enemies, and God did an amazing thing!

- **One by one**, the tribe members started to come to faith in Christ, even **including the killers – Dyuwi, Nampa, Guikita, Kimo, and Minkaye**. These men became elders in the church that God miraculously planted among the Waodani tribe.
- **The people who had been the most savage tribe in the history of the world were now... God followers.**

MINKAYE AND STEVE (1961)

In 1961, Steve Saint (age 10) went to live with the Waodani, staying with them during the summers. They called Steve, “Babae.”

- **Minkaye (missionary killer)**, one of the group of tribal leaders who killed the missionary men (including Steve’s dad, Nate) complained to Rachel Saint (Steve’s aunt) that Steve didn’t know anything about living in the jungle. Rachel said, “Well, his father would be the one to teach him but he doesn’t have a father.” After a few days, **Minkaye (God follower)** came back to Rachel and said that he decided he would teach Steve how to live in the jungle. Since he was responsible for killing his father, he knew it was now his responsibility to be a father to Steve.
- **In 1965, Steve was baptized in the Curaray River by Dyuwi and Kimo**, the same men who killed his father
- **In 1969, Steve moved back to the U.S to attend Wheaton College** and graduated in 1973 with a major in Economics. For the next 20 years, Steve and his wife, Ginny, lived in the U.S. (Minnesota and Ocala, FL).

THE SAINTS MOVE BACK (1994)

- **In 1994, Steve’s aunt, Rachell (who spent her last 36 years of life living with the Waodani) died.** Steve and his family returned to Ecuador for the funeral. While they were there, the tribe told Steve that they believed God wanted Steve and his family to move down and live with them. So, they did.
- **ANGELS - A lot of amazing things happened in the 2 years that Steve and his family lived with the Waodani.** Among them, in a conversation with the Waodani, as they were retelling the details of the killings of Roger, Pete, Nate, Jim, and Ed was that, the men did not fight back or use their weapons, their faces were not full of fear but of love, and during (and after) the killings the men said that **there were “hundreds of people in the trees” all singing music that seemed like it was from heaven... Angels. Pretty amazing.**

- **GATORS** - As a side note, because the Saints live in Ocala, FL and their daughter went to the University of Florida, they're all Gator fans. And because the Saints are all Gator fans, the Waodani are all Gator fans!

WAODANI MISSIONARIES

- The Waodani have shared the gospel, not only with their neighboring tribes (who had forever been their enemies), but also throughout North America and around the world (including radical extremist Hindus in India).

MINKAYE

- We're going to wrap up this Christmas message by having Minkaye (former killer who became an elder in the Waodani Church) share, with Steve Saint as his interpreter, how Jesus changed his life and how he can change ours.

VIDEO (2:37 min.)

- The King is calling, *"Come walk my trail. I want to be reunited with you."*

CLOSING

WHY THIS STORY AT CHRISTMAS?

- "Operation Auca" is a great example of the truth of Christmas.
- **Who in their right mind would do this**, unless there was something far greater motivating and empowering them to do it?
 - The Christmas story is the Christian Good News story of light and love coming into darkness and transforming darkness into light.
- This story is a tangible, undeniable evidence that every single thing we celebrate about Christmas is not just a sweet story. It's a true story with the power to change hearts, lives, families, tribes, villages, regions, countries, and the world.

PHOTO – 5 MISSIONARIES

CLOSING THOUGHT

- *"He is no fool to give up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."* - Jim Elliot

PHOTO – STEVE & THE WAODANI MEN

This is a real-life story that gives undeniable evidence for the truth of Christmas.

1. **LIGHT** - Compelled by love and not fearing the possible consequences, love willingly entered into darkness.

2. **DARKNESS** - Darkness attacked because the darkness of man loved darkness.
3. **GRACE** - The response of grace (love in the face of hate) softened hard hearts and turned the darkness into light.
4. **SACRIFICE** - The men in the previous photo gave their lives for the men in this photo.
5. **SALVATION** - Jesus came into our dark world, stepped into darkness, and became darkness in order to bring us out of the darkness and into the light.
6. **PARTICIPATION** - When we get it, the light shines in us, and we become light to those around us.
 - In just a few minutes when we light our candles during “Silent Night,” we’re going to have a visible example of this spiritual reality.

CHRISTMAS (def): LIGHT INTO DARKNESS

“In him (Jesus) was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. – John 1:4-5

And THAT’S Good News!