Title: God's Merciful Mission
Text: Jonah 1:1-17
Date: October 18, 2026

Good morning. It's good to see you all this morning. For your great blessing and joy, I'd ask that you would turn your Bibles to Jonah 1, the book of Jonah 1. And if you remember as you're turning there, we are in the book of the twelve, the one singular book composed of twelve small books known as the twelve minor prophets that are purposely brought together and arranged in their orders and for the purpose of communicating the message of God's salvation through judgment, through his Messiah in the last days. And these books are not only put together in history but also in the text themselves. And we have seen that at the seams of each of these books, that these important passages tie these books together.

In particular, last time we saw that the book of Obadiah acts as a kind of thread that pulls together Jonah and Amos. And we talked about how these three books together present God as both the savior and judge of not just Israel but of the whole world. While Amos and Obadiah use Edom as representatives of the nations, Jonah uses Nineveh, the capital city of the enemy nation of Assyria and is a great city that is a representative of all the nations and their sinfulness. And through Nineveh, the book of Jonah, like Amos, is going to show us that God has a plan to save even them.

So, let's hear how Jonah begins to do that in Jonah 1. Let's read together. Jonah 1, the whole chapter, verses 1-17. Jonah being carried along by the Holy Spirit writes,

"Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, 'Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me.' But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. So he paid the fare and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the Lord. But the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship threatened to break up. Then the mariners were afraid, and they each cried out to his god. And they hurled the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. But Jonah, he had gone down into the inner part of the ship and had lain down and was fast asleep. So the captain came and said, 'Why are you sleeping? Arise, call out to your God! Perhaps God will give a thought to us that we may not perish.'

And they said to one another, 'Come, let us cast lots, that we may know on whose account this evil has come upon us.' So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. And they said to him, 'Tell us on whose account this evil has come upon us. What is your occupation? And where are you from? What is your country? And what people are you?' And he said to them, 'I am a Hebrew, and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.' Then the men were exceedingly afraid and said to him, 'What is this that you have done!' For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them.

Then they said to him, 'What shall we do to you, that the sea may quiet down for us?' For the sea grew more and more tempestuous. He said to them, 'Pick me up and hurl me into the sea; then the sea will quiet down for you, for I know it is because of me that this great tempest has come upon you.' Nevertheless, the men rode hard to get back to dry land, but they could not, for the sea grew more and more tempestuous against them. Therefore they called out to the Lord, 'O Lord, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not on us innocent blood, for you, O Lord, have done as it pleased you.' So they picked up Jonah and hurled him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows. And the Lord appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights."

This is the word of the Lord.

Let's pray together as we begin.

Father, speak, O Lord, and let us come to you to receive the food of your holy word. For your honor and praise we pray in Jesus' name, amen.

Everyone wants to be part of something great, whether it's a championship sports team or a successful business or maybe a good cause to help those who are in need. There's something about being a part of something bigger than ourselves that is very appealing to all of us. What if I told you today that in this church, we not only have the opportunity to be part of something great, but we have already been included in the greatest endeavor that anyone would ever want to be a part of.

You see, the church of Jesus Christ does not only exist for the most glorious purpose, which is to glorify God, but also has been commissioned by that God for the most glorious end, to spread his glory all over the world so that his glory covers the earth as the waters cover the sea. And in that glorious goal, we have the privilege of bringing the best news ever, the salvation, the gospel of Jesus Christ for sinners to the ends of the earth, to people who have never heard it before and who don't know the answer to their greatest needs. That, my friends, is truly something great. We have a God who is eternally worthy of praise from all his creatures. And what an opportunity we have to join in the mission of God, to be part of something so great that would be about glorifying such a great God. But we also have a great problem, is that we are nowhere close to being done.

According to the most recent stats from the Joshua Project, out of 10,421 people groups in the world, 12% of them are less than 2% evangelical Christian, and 31% of those people groups, 3,209 of them, are less than 0.1% Christian with virtually no established gospel presence. And they estimate that close to half of the world's population is unreached with the gospel. There's a great God who deserves the praise of all of his creatures. And there are a whole lot of people who are not praising that God. There's a great commission, a great mission. The church has been given from the Lord to be the means of the gospel going forth and the kingdom spreading.

And that's what Jonah 1 reminds us of today. The main idea from our text today is that we should join the Lord's merciful mission for the salvation of the nations. We should join the Lord's merciful mission for the salvation of the nations. And we see this unfold in two points, that the Lord's merciful mission will never change. And the second reason that we should join this mission is that the Lord's merciful mission will never fail. So first, we should join the Lord's merciful mission for the salvation of the nations. Why? His mission will never change. And second, his mission will never fail.

So first, let's look at how the Lord's merciful mission will never change. It will never change. This is in verses 1:1-6. With a new book, we have a new prophet to introduce. So, Jonah is a contemporary of Hosea and Amos and is mentioned in 2 Kings 14:25 as the prophet of the Lord under King Jeroboam II, who gave an accurate prophecy concerning the restoration of the border of the people of Israel despite their wickedness. So, Jonah, we know from 2 Kings 14, is not only a real prophet of the Lord, but he's also a faithful prophet of the Lord that gives correct prophecies. And so, this is quite interesting that in our text today that he does what he's doing, which we'll get to in a little bit.

The book of Jonah's central message is summarized in Jonah 2:9. *"Salvation belongs to the Lord!"* And again, in chapter 4:2, *"for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in covenant faithfulness, and relenting from disaster."* In other words, the book of Jonah is all about how it is God's prerogative to save whom he will, to have mercy on whom he has mercy. And that message is that the book teaches is not only meant to glorify God in his character, but it's also meant to challenge the reader in our own misconceptions about the implications of that great truth and our own disposition toward the unsaved.

The story begins in 1:1 & 2, which says this, he says in verse 1, *"Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, 'Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me.'"* So, Nineveh is the capital of Assyria, which is the superpower of the world at this time and the mortal enemy of Israel. Israel and Assyria, to put it lightly, do not like each other. This is something way worse than Ohio State and Michigan. And it's something probably more like in our context today, Ukraine and Russia, that kind of animosity, that kind of headbutting is going on between Assyria and Israel. And so, you can probably imagine how Jonah felt to be told by the Lord to go to Assyria and specifically that sinful city of Nineveh. Jonah certainly wouldn't, he wouldn't be surprised that Nineveh has great evil, as the Lord says, and he wouldn't even be surprised if the Lord said, I'm going to judge them. But he's definitely surprised that the Lord's asking him to go and to preach to them, to call out to them.

In other words, to call them to repentance, to give them the opportunity to repent of their sin. Imagine how Jonah might feel in this situation. But Jonah knows, as we will see later in chapter 4, that God's character, that he's a merciful God. Jonah's probably seen it before in his own lifetime, the preaching of the word, changing souls and bringing them to repentance. And he knows the Lord could very well do that to Nineveh. But why, why Nineveh? Why Nineveh? A people that are poster children for the sinfulness of the nations, most hostile to God, the most unlikely to be saved. But we see that in God's call to Jonah, that the Lord is on a merciful mission to save the most unlikely and the most sinful of all the nations. The Lord is on a merciful mission to call out sinners from the nations to repentance through his sent messenger.

That is the God we serve, friends. That merciful God who is on hot pursuit of the chief of sinners. We are all living testimonies to that fact, are we not, this morning? That God pursues in his mercy the worst of sinners from the most unlikely places. God is on a mission, and he's using his people to gather in those who he's saving. And we see God on a mission with Jonah in the first two verses, and I want you to see that that merciful mission is a mission that will never change. And we see that in these first six verses. When we read the Bible, I want us to look at repetition and connections of words and concepts.

So, in your Bible reading, look for repetition and for the connections of different words and concepts. So, we see repetition here in these first six verses of the phrase, before the Lord or before the presence of the Lord. In verse 2, the evil of Nineveh rises up before the Lord. In verse 3A, *"Jonah rose to flee from before the presence of the Lord."* It's the same word used in verse 2. And again, in the end of verse 3, *"Jonah goes to Tarshish, away from the presence of the Lord."* It seems as if the author wants to get through to us to make sure that we know that the presence of the Lord is important.

And in particular, Jonah doesn't want to be around it. He keeps on trying to go away from it. But how does God make his presence near to Jonah in the text? Well, we looked at repetition. Let's look at connection between phrases here. The connection between the presence of the Lord and the word of the Lord. The only time that Jonah, that the Lord comes to Jonah is when his word comes to him. Look, *"Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah and says, 'Arise, go to Nineveh.'"* God makes himself present, in other words, to Jonah through his word. God's word is there, his presence is there. And what was the word that the Lord told Jonah? He says, arise, go, and call out. That's important. Arise and call out to Nineveh in order to save them from their sin, in other words, in order to call them to repentance. The Lord makes his commissioning presence known through his word to rise and call out for the salvation of the nations, for the salvation of Gentile souls.

And as we move through the story, we see what happens next. It's a very familiar story to us. You might have watched the Veggie Tales version of this or something, but Jonah goes down to Tarshish. Well, he goes down to Joppa, gets on a boat. He wants to go to Tarshish, which is the exact opposite way of Nineveh. The Gentile sailors are going along, and they hit a massive storm. The Lord hurls a storm on the sea. The sailors are at wits end trying to get rid of the water. The boat's about to break. And meanwhile, Jonah had gone down into the bottom of the ship and he's fast asleep, just sleeping through the whole thing. And notice what happens next in verse 3, sorry, in verse 6. The captain, the captain of the boat comes, and he says literally, *"what is it to you to be sleeping?"* Or why are you sleeping? *"Arise and call out to your god!"* I think that should be capital G by the way in verse 6. *"Arise and call out to your god! Perhaps god will give a thought to us, so that we may not perish."* And I believe that this is not him saying the god or a god or something. I think he's recognizing the one true God here.

It is because we see the same exact wording in chapter 3:9, when the leader of another Gentile people, the king of the Ninevites says, *"Who knows? God,"* or literally the God, the one and only God, *"may turn and relent and turn from his fierce anger,"* for the same purpose, *"so that we might not perish."* So, I think the captain here is recognizing Jonah, your God is the one true God. And the only way we're going to get out of this thing is if you arise and call out to him. And notice that repetition of that phrase, the words that the

Gentile sailor says to Jonah, *"Arise, call out to god!…. so that we might not perish."* In other words, so that our Gentile souls might live, might be saved from the wrath of God.

Ironically, the second time Jonah is told to arise and call out in order to save the Gentiles, it comes from the mouth of a Gentile. God speaks to Balaam through a donkey. He speaks to Jonah through a Gentile sailor. While Jonah thought he could get away from God's commissioning word in his presence, the Lord reminds him and all the way in the hull of a boat with Gentile sailors that you can't run away from my presence. You can't run away from my word to go arise and call for the salvation of the Gentile souls. That repeated word to Jonah through a different voice shows that the Lord has not changed his mission.

You know, it'd be like if my wife tells me to, before we go to bed one night, say, hey, tomorrow morning you're going to do the dishes and take out the trash. It's a very unrealistic situation, totally. And she gets up the next morning and leaves for an appointment or something and I'm left to do the dishes and take out the trash. And I might procrastinate, or I might forget, have selective memory, but I go downstairs, and I go to the fridge and there's a note on the fridge that says, do the dishes and take out the trash. The different medium that Ellie used to tell me to do the dishes and take out the trash is confirming that her mission for me that day has not changed. It will never change. I'm supposed to do the dishes and take out the trash. Amen? Yes.

And in similar fashion here, the Lord through a different medium, a Gentile sailor, reaffirms his mission to Jonah. No, no, no. Arise and call out to save Gentile souls. God's mission, his merciful mission, will never change. It will never change, regardless of even the obedience of his people to do it. And let's put a pin in that for right now as we turn to the rest of story where we see the Lord's merciful mission will not only never change, but it will never fail. We see this in the rest of the passage. Someone wants to prove that anything will never fail. They have to demonstrate it and demonstrate that it works.

My dad used to sell Cutco knives door to door, and he had to prove that these knives would never fail you, right. And if you remember, if you've ever had this happen to you at your doorstep, they prove that by cutting rope and cutting a penny in half to show that this will never fail. These knives are super sharp. And God, in order to show that his mission will never fail, he demonstrates that the mission actually works and it's working. And we see this in the rest of the passage and specifically he shows that despite the unfaithfulness of his prophet, he uses his prophet as the means of saving souls. Through three points of contrast between Jonah and the sailors, God shows that even despite Jonah's unfaithfulness, the Gentiles are still changed to be believers in the one true God because God's mission never fails.

The first point of contrast is in verse 7, where the sailors are proven innocent in the casting of the lots while Jonah is revealed as the guilty party. They cast lots to see whose fault it is, and Jonah has a lot cast on him. Now you might be saying, well, that seems like a pretty pagan behavior, but the Lord actually commands this kind of lot casting to find a guilty party in Joshua 7 after the defeat at Ai. Achan is found guilty, the singular man, through a continual casting of lots until the lot falls on him. So, I think in the biblical world of the Old Testament, the sailors here are being presented as actually being faithful to what the Lord himself commands in scripture, while Jonah is the guilty party.

The second contrast between the sailors and Jonah is in verses 8-10. The Gentile sailors show genuine fear of the Lord, while Jonah confesses fear but does not show it. The man asks Jonah who he is, where he's from, what's his occupation, and he says, *"I'm a Hebrew, and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and dry land."* Now, just based on what we've heard in the story so far, does Jonah fear the Lord? Was he showing genuine fear of the Lord? Is he trembling at his word? No, Jonah is not fearing the Lord.

But notice the response of the sailors to this tone-deaf statement that Jonah makes. The men were exceedingly afraid and said to him, *"What is this that you have done! For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them."* The Lord says in Isaiah 66:2, *"But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and who trembles at my word."* Jonah didn't tremble at God's word. He never even stopped to ask himself, what am I doing? I'm fleeing from the Lord. What am I doing? But the sailors, they do both. They are exceedingly afraid of the Lord. And they ask him, what on earth are you doing, Jonah? These Gentiles sailors are showing godly fear of the Lord.

Number three contrast is in the rest of the passage in 11-16, where Jonah has a suicidal turn from the Lord while the sailors attempt to return to the land, and they call out to the Lord themselves. The befuddled sailors ask Jonah what they should do to him, and what should Jonah's answer have been? How can you get the storm to stop? Do exactly what the sailor told him in verse 6. *"Arise and call out to the Lord."* Repent, recognize your sin. But what does Jonah say? I know I'm the one who's causing this, but instead of calling out to the Lord in repentance for my sin, just kill me and it'll all be over. Even the sailors know that Jonah is nuts in saying this because look at the way they respond. They hear that and they don't say, okay, they say, this guy's crazy.

Let's try to row through a storm to get back to shore instead. But when they couldn't get through the storm because it grew too tempestuous for them, look at the contrast of the sailors in verse 14 and note the word he uses here. *"Therefore they,"* did what, *"called out to the Lord."* They did exactly what Jonah was supposed to do. And look at their prayer and look at the name of the Lord they use. *"O Lord,"* and whenever it has small caps like that, that's the name, the covenant-keeping name of Yahweh. *"O Yahweh, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not on us innocent blood, for you, O Yahweh, have done as it has pleased you. So they picked Jonah up, they threw him into the ocean, the sea stopped."* And then look how they respond. *"The men feared the Lord exceedingly, and they even started offering sacrifices and making vows to the Lord."* Through their contrast with Jonah, these Gentile sailors are shown to evidence saving faith, conversion from their idols that they were calling out to in the beginning to the one Lord God himself and worship of him.

Two conclusions based on this contrast. First, God's mission does not fail despite even the disobedience of his people. The Gentiles are becoming genuine converts and are demonstrating it through their lives that reflect the precepts of God's word in hearts that fear and love him. God saves idolaters to genuine worshipers of him. God goes to the darkest souls and brings them into marvelous light. There is not a soul too darkened that he cannot reach, not a life too lost that he cannot find. His mission does not fail.

And second, Jonah is the Lord's unlikely ironic means of the salvation of the Gentiles in chapter 1. Jonah does everything wrong and yet ironically by his being cast into the ocean, he ends up saving Gentile souls. Isn't that amazing? He refuses from the Lord to follow the Lord in his mission, but the Lord still brings the nations to him. He refuses to obey the Lord and call out to him for salvation, but the Lord still saves them. And even Jonah's attempt to die turns into the means of the salvation of the sailors. Even his descent into the tempestuous waves which are symbolic for death in the Old Testament. Even being swallowed by a fish, which I don't know if you've been swallowed by a fish this week but usually you don't survive that. Through his supposed death, the nations are saved.

Ironically, God shows his mission will not fail through the unfaithfulness of his prophet Jonah. But you know later on in redemptive history we're going to see that God shows his mission will not fail through the faithfulness of another prophet, of the true prophet. Jonah's acts of unfaithfulness that result in the Lord's salvation become a foil, a comparison, and a contrast to how the Lord Jesus' acts of faithfulness result in salvation. It's through Jesus' faithfulness as the true prophet, the Lord himself, and the better Jonah that God's merciful mission is shown to never change and to never fail. And we see this in two main places in the New Testament. We see this in Mark 4:35-41.

So, turn with me in your Bibles to Mark 4:35-41. The book of Mark 4:35-41. This is a story that we just have recently heard in Luke's narrative. It's the story of Jesus and the disciples crossing the sea. And notice the similarity in the details of the story. He says, *"Let us go across to the other side."* In verse 36, *"And leaving the crown, they took them with them in the boat, just as he was. And other boats were with him. And a great windstorm arose, and waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling."* It's about to break. *"But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. And they awoke him and said to him, 'Teacher.'"* Look at the, look at the similarity in the question. *"Do you not care that we are perishing?"* Same words from Jonah.

And so, Mark is drawing on the Jonah story. And he's using, he's appealing to your Biblical knowledge. And he wants the reader to be thinking, hey, I've heard this story before. A guy goes out on a boat with sailors. A storm rises up. This one guy is asleep. They go wake him up and say, hey, we're perishing. Oh, I know how the story ends. The guy's going to get up and they're going to throw him into the sea and everything's going to calm down. This guy must be another Jonah figure. But Mark flips the whole story on its head, where he doesn't get thrown into the sea, does he? He's not Jonah, is he, in the story.

Look at how he finishes. *"And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, 'Peace! Be still!' And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. He said to them, 'Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?'"* And look at the same wording again. *"They were filled with great fear,"* or they were exceedingly afraid, just like the sailors were, *"and said to one another, 'Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?'"* Who is Jesus in the story? He's not Jonah. He ends up being the Lord who saves sinful sailors. Mark with a beautiful turn of phrase shows us the identity of Jesus Christ to be the Lord of Jonah, who will never change and whose mission will never fail to bring about salvation for sinful souls.

But of course, Jesus doesn't merely just save sinful sailors from storms, does he? How else does Jesus save? We see this in another contrast with Jonah in Matthew 12:38-40, which we read earlier this morning. Jesus is asked by the scribes and Pharisees to see a sign. And Jesus answers, *"An evil and adulterous generation seeks a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah."* And what is that sign? *"For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."* And he says a verse later, *"something greater than Jonah is here."* Thank you, Silas, for praying the words you prayed this morning.

He's greater than Jonah because while Jonah's death out of unfaithfulness saves a few Gentile sailors in irony, the Lord Jesus' substitutionary sacrificial death, the Lord of Jonah himself becoming man, taking on the sins of the world on the cross, dying, being buried for three days in the heart of the earth, is an act of absolute faithfulness to the Lord. And it saves not just a few souls, but every single person who would believe in Jesus' name. Oh, how much better that is than Jonah. Because not only is his death salvific, but his resurrection life is a gift to everyone who would believe to no longer die, but live and have newness of life in his name. The Lord is a better Jonah. Jesus is a better Jonah.

And God shows through Jesus that his mission to save sinful souls will never change and it will never fail. Jesus says it is finished on the cross. Jesus says all who come to me, I will never cast out. My salvation is good enough even for the whole world to be saved. It is that good. It is that sure. It is that perfect. It will never ever fail. It hasn't failed for you, sinner. This morning who has believed in Jesus Christ, you have been brought into wonderful salvation through Jesus Christ. His mission will never fail. And by the way, his mission will never change either. Because that risen and resurrected Lord, that Lord Jesus says in Matthew 28:19-20, to *"Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the churches, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,"* and then within those churches, *"teaching them all that I have commanded. And lo, I am with you always."* The same commission, go call out for the salvation of the nations. His mission has never changed, and it will never change. The Lord Jesus shows that the mission of God will never fail and will never change.

So, what are we supposed to do? First of all, if you have not believed in this God, if you have not received the Father's mercy, if you realize that you're just like the sinful souls of Nineveh, whose evil has gone up before the Lord, God has ordained, this is amazing, we're living it out in real time, people who are gifts to his church, teachers, to proclaim his word, to call out to sinful souls so that you might repent and be saved. This is happening right now. If that's you, call out to the Lord like those Gentile sailors did and be saved. Jesus Christ's salvation is good enough for you and it's the perfect salvation that will never fail. Believe in the God who saves in Christ. And if you have already believed in this Christ, continue to behold, and believe in this God, remember that God is on a hot pursuit to give his mercy to you.

Isn't that a word that we all need to hear this morning, friends? Some of us may be coming off a rough week in our battle with sin, but God pursues sinful people in his mercy. Some of us may be weighed down by the knowledge of past sin, but God pursues sinful people in his mercy. Some of us may be wondering if God's mercy has run dry, but God's always pursuing you in his mercy. As Ephesians 2:4-5 tells us, *"We were dead in our trespasses and sins, but God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved*

us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ." My fellow sinners, believe in that Christ. Believe in that gospel anew this morning, the better Jonah whose death and resurrection saves, who is the Lord on pursuit of sinners and receive anew each morning his mercies.

Second, God's merciful mission will never change. So, what on earth are we waiting for? What are we doing? What are you doing in your life? It is so clear, it is so good, and it's never going to change. I feel that there is an apathy towards the mission of God. I fear that we act as if the Lord is going to put a different post-it note on the fridge the next morning and tell us, oh, well, because you shirked your responsibility, never mind. No, the Lord's mission is not going to change, which means that we need to obey it today. We need to love God, his gospel, his character, to have mercy on sinners so much that we need to devote ourselves and our lives to multiplying the kingdom throughout the whole earth through the proclamation of the gospel, the gathering of people in the churches, and the discipling of those people within those churches to do it again and again and again.

And maybe we aren't going to go out and do all that this week, of course. And maybe you comfort yourself by saying, well, that's just a lot, and I, you know, I work a job and I have kids and I and I and I. But ask yourself this, maybe you didn't plant a church recently, but when was the last time you simply prayed for a missionary? When was the last time we shared the gospel with someone in our area? Did we even pay attention to the last mission's moment that happened and follow up in prayer for them? And even so, we need to ask ourselves the serious question still, am I, are we supposed to lay down our lives to go to the nations full time to use what God has given me to proclaim his gospel, to gather in his people from every tribe, tongue, and nation, to support and strengthen the church somewhere where the Lord Jesus' name is not named? And God is not going to send everyone, but he could be sending you. And if he's not sending you, that doesn't mean you're off the hook because the preachers of the gospel still need to be sent.

We need to not have an indifference to missions and a hands-off approach to the partnership we have in the gospel with those who go. We cannot just write checks. We cannot just be content that our church takes cares of it. We need to take every opportunity to pray, to send letters, to send cards, to send emails, to send text messages, to send phone calls, to send short-term missions trips, to care about them in this way, to receive them in when they come, show hospitality to them, lightening their load, give them some encouragement. Friends, we have many ways to do this right here in our church. There's a whole bunch of cards in this hallway by our mission's board that you can use to remind yourself to pray for these missionaries every day or every week or every month. We have a mission's moment or a mission's spotlight every month in your bulletin with prayer requests for one of our missionaries. Put that in your Bible. Pray for them.

We have a missions' conference, for Pete's sake, in a week where our missionaries, some of them that we've supported for 40 years, some of them for shorter than that, are coming home and coming here so that we can minister to, get to know, and deepen our relationship with them. What's your plan for next weekend? If we don't put feet to what the Lord has called us to do, then there's a pretty easy example. And you know what else is true about the church? Is that the church doesn't simply care about multiplying

over the borders of other countries but the church cares about its multiplying effect on our own shores. Our church, brothers and sisters, should be a church that obeys the commission of God to share and proclaim the gospel, to bring them into churches, and to disciple them. Our church should be bent on evangelization and planting churches in our area. It is better for the kingdom to have more faithful churches than a bigger Grace Chapel. That is our mission, to multiply Christians in this place and disciple those who are going to go out.

Who is it in your workplace or in a coffee shop that you visit each day or on your walk at the park that you can share the gospel with and be an agent of God's merciful mission to them? Who is it in this church that you can build into and that you can disciple so that maybe they will one day raise up and go and share the gospel with others or maybe even be a missionary? The mission of God is clear, and it will never change. So, what are we doing? What are we doing?

And finally, his mission will never fail. That's an encouragement to us. That means we can go boldly and do all these things. The Lord says, I am with you even to the end of the age. The Lord does not send us off by ourselves, but he sends his Spirit to empower us, and he gives us his word that is sharper than any two-edged sword and the gospel of salvation that is the power of God unto salvation for all those who believe, so that whenever we go out into our workplaces or overseas or when we plant churches here or abroad, we can say, the Lord Jesus has promised that not even the gates of hell will prevail against his church. He will build it. He will save. It will never fail. So, let's go boldly as we ought. Let's prioritize all of these things with our time, with our efforts, with our budget, because it has been what we've been called to do. Let us join the Lord's merciful mission for the salvation of the nations.

Let's pray.

Our Father, we are in awe of your great mercy. Father, as sinners, we know that your mercy has come to us free of charge because of the work that Jesus has done to pay for it on our behalf. Father, let us give the free gospel to all those we come in contact with. Lord, place on our hearts a burden for your glory. Lord, place on our minds a burden for those we know. Lord, give us opportunities to live out your word in obedience. And Father, most of all, give us the grace and the strength by your spirit to be different than the world around us, to say, you know what, your priorities are the things of this earth, but my priorities are the things that moth and dust does not corrupt. My priorities are the merciful mission of my God to save souls forever. Lord, let us say no to things that are still good but aren't as good as that. Lord, let us make hard decisions to do what's right, to do what's God-glorifying. And let us not view this as a burdensome load, because your mission will not fail, your church will be built, your presence is with us, and we have freedom. Freedom not for an opportunity for the flesh, but to serve others in love by giving them the gospel.

We pray this all in Jesus' name, amen.

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