

Sermon Series: “From Bethlehem to Calvary to Heaven”—Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN—2/8/2004

Title: “Mission Complete—Mission Define”

Text: Acts 1: 8 & 4: 17-35

Intro.: *Mission Impossible 1 ending – just when you think that you have a mission complete another starts*

Theme: Just when we think that Jesus has finished his plan of salvation, he is only beginning it by now defining the mission and purpose of our lives as believers to go out and be his witnesses of salvation to the world

Snapshot of the books of Acts and the readings of this week

- A *chronicle of the beginning of Christianity* — knowing our “roots” gives us a framework to define who we are
- A *description of what the Church looks like and what its purpose is* -- not prescriptive in sense of must do
- A powerful testimony to the centrality of the *Holy Spirit’s place and power within the Christian Church’s existence*

Get the Word out . . .

- Because we have a defined **PURPOSE** (Print Acts 1: 8)
 1. **Witnessing** = *telling others what you believe not what they should believe*
 1. **Ills.: Are you in need of shoes?**
 2. Start in your own backyard (*Jerusalem*) – seeing your
 3. Willing to go where you never have gone before (*Samaria*) – overcoming my prejudices and hang-ups
 4. Hastening Jesus’ return (*to the ends of the earth*) (*And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.” Matthew 24:14*)
- In spite of **PRESSURE** (Print Acts 4: 17-22)
 5. Disciples had healed a lame man and proclaim that the resurrected Jesus was responsible and the leader want to stop
 6. There will be *purposeful* and *overt* steps taken to prevent the Church and individual Christians from doing this
 1. **Print and read 1 Peter 3: 13-16**
 2. *Ills.: When intimidated by who’s sitting in the audience, we should remember the King of Kings is also here, and it’s his message. Citation: Charles Swindoll*
 7. Adopt the “*obey God rather than men*” but governed by God’s Word not by cultured biases
 1. **Ills.: “Obeying God Rather than men?” -- news story of the Indianapolis Baptist Temple**
- Enveloped in **PRAYER** (Print Acts 4: 23-30)
 8. *Naming God’s sovereignty* to rule and order all things to facilitate our spreading of the Good News (vs. 24)
 9. *Reiterating God’s promise* that he will not let anything hinder and thwart the spread of His Kingdom (vs. 25,26)
 1. *The Confession--“On this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.” Matthew 16:18*
 2. *The Effort -- “I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.” Matt.17:20*
 10. *Claiming God’ plan* that He will accomplish the miracle of salvation in, around, under, and thru everything (27-30)
 1. Praying God to use the most unlikely people and circumstances (including mine) to do it (Pilate, Gentiles, Israel)
 2. Praying that God stops evil in its tracks and gives us boldness to speak
 3. Praying that God confirm our words and work with his supernatural miracles to confirm our witness
- Expecting **POWER** (Print Acts 4: 31-35)
 11. Expecting the Holy Spirit to show up to fill us with power and a contagious faith
 1. **Ills.: Expecting the unimaginable**
 12. Expecting resurrection power to backup and confirm our words and witness
 13. Expecting God’s powerful grace to overflow through our community of believers (in generosity, in ministry)

Are you in need of shoes

30 years ago two shoe salesmen were sent to Nigeria to survey the country for the possibility of building a shoe factory. The first man came back and said, "Few people here wear shoes so there is little need to build a new shoe factory in Nigeria. The second came back to London and said, "This is the greatest opportunity we have ever had. Everybody I saw needs a good pair of shoes." That is how we need to look at every community when it comes to their need for Jesus Christ and His love and forgiveness

Obeying God rather than men?

INDIANAPOLIS, Indiana (CNN) -- Federal marshals seized an Indianapolis church Tuesday, carrying out a judge's order to confiscate the property because of \$6 million in years of back taxes and penalties. Dozens of marshals swarmed the Indianapolis Baptist Temple around 8:30 a.m. (9:30 a.m. ET) and a helicopter hovered overhead during the peaceful seizure. The Rev. Greg Dixon was holding a prayer service with about five members of the congregation -- including some who had been holding a vigil for nearly three months -- when the raid began. Dixon, who in the 1980s began the church's fight with the Internal Revenue Service, placed blame on the Bush administration. U.S. District Judge Sarah Evans Barker in Indianapolis ordered the confiscation because the church owes \$6 million in taxes, penalties and interest for its failure to withhold employee income taxes, Social Security taxes and Medicare taxes. She had ordered the church to vacate its 22-acre campus by Nov. 14, 2000. In the following months, federal officials met with church leaders about trying to resolve the situation as peacefully as possible. The Supreme Court denied a final appeal by the church last month, clearing the way for Tuesday's raid. ***"Indiana church seized for back taxes"*** CNN web site February 13, 2001 Web posted at: 11:29 AM EST (1629 GMT)

Expecting the unimaginable

When the American West was opened up, many a traveler passed over the rich earth that lay on top of the territory of Nebraska. The dirt is rich, black dirt, but they could see no water anywhere. They thought this land would be good for nothing. One writer even called it, "The Great America Desert". Some even died while on their journey, for lack of refreshment. Nebraska is now serious about farming. It has been called a bread basket for our nation. More wheat, and more corn are grown there than almost any other state in the union. What happened? What made the difference that those early travelers couldn't see. They failed to realize, that under the state of Nebraska, is an underground lake, an aquifer that lies under 2/3's the state of Nebraska. Some one got the bright idea to dig down and found all the water they needed to turn the "Great American Desert" into the bread basket of America....

Acts 1:8

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Acts 4:17-35

¹⁷But to stop this thing from spreading any further among the people, we must warn these men to speak no longer to anyone in this name." ¹⁸Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. ¹⁹But Peter and John replied, "Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God. ²⁰For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard." ²¹After further threats they let them go. They could not decide how to punish them, because all the people were praising God for what had happened. ²²For the man who was miraculously healed was over forty years old. ²³On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. ²⁴When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. "Sovereign Lord," they said, "you made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and everything in them. ²⁵You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David: " "Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? ²⁶The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against his Anointed One."²⁷Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. ²⁸They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen. ²⁹Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. ³⁰Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus." ³¹After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly. ³²All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. ³³With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all. ³⁴There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales ³⁵and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need.

1 Peter 3:13-16

¹³Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? ¹⁴But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. "Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened." ¹⁵But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, ¹⁶keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.