

Sermon for Sunday, July 28, 1974 by Andrew A. Jumper, D.D., Pastor  
Central Presbyterian Church, St. Louis, Missouri

WITNESS AT THE WATER WELL

St. John 4:1-30, 39-42

Text: "Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony." St. John 4:39a

I have just returned from Lausanne, Switzerland. There, approximately 2,700 evangelical leaders--along with about 1,500 official observers--met for ten days to talk together about the evangelization of the world. One might wonder why it would be necessary to get together when there already exists a world organization called the World Council of Churches which should be the means of evangelizing the world. Yet, those of us who are conservative and evangelical feel that this organization has now shifted the spotlight of its activity. It no longer is focused on evangelism as its primary business or even as one of its major concerns. The World Council of Churches is basically and principally involved in social and political action and they have even been publically charged with fermenting rebellion and insurrection in some of the emerging nations. They are primarily concerned with the humanization of the world of reconciling man with man rather than reconciling man with God.

That being the case, evangelical leaders from all over the world gathered in Lausanne to talk about evangelizing the world. There were three reasons we felt that it was imperative to gather there. First, we were people who believed in the authority of Scripture as the Word of God. We believe the Bible to be the infallible Word of God and we take His Word seriously. As a matter of fact, at Lausanne we adopted a statement that reads as follows: "We affirm the divine inspiration, truthfulness and authority of both Old and New Testament Scriptures in their entirety as the only written word of God, without error in all that it affirms, and the only infallible rule of faith and practice. We also affirm the power of God's word to accomplish his purpose of salvation. Now, those who are not up-to-date on what is going on in the Christian world may be amazed to discover that Christians need to affirm these things about the Bible. Many Christians at the local level have always simply assumed that all Christians feel that way about the Bible. Yet, the fact is that today this view is not one held by many so-called Christian leaders. As a matter of fact, much of the leadership in many denominations (including ours) and most of the leadership of the World Council of Churches does not hold such a high view of the Bible. So, the first reason that we gathered in Lausanne was because we take the Bible to be the word of God in a time when many no longer hold that view. Secondly, we gathered there because if you take the Bible seriously, you have a definite view of salvation. You must take seriously what the Bible says about man's lostness and his need for redemption. The Bible portrays man as created by God for fellowship with Him. However, sin broke into man's life in the Garden of Eden. Man today--ever since Eden--is born alienated from God. Without Jesus he is lost and without hope in this world or the next. If you take the Bible seriously, that's what it says about man. Jesus himself spoke most pointedly about the reality of heaven and hell. In describing the state of the lost, Jesus used such terms as, "a place of wailing"; "a place of weeping"; "a furnace of fire"; "a place of torment"; "a place of outer darkness"; "a place of everlasting punishment"; "a place prepared for the devil and his angels". These are terrible terms. These are dreadful and fearful descriptions. But our Lord also said something else. He also said, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life but the wrath of God abideth on him." (St. John 3:36)

You see, if you take the Bible seriously, when it says that men are lost apart from Jesus you have to take that seriously, too. Today there has been a steady erosion of belief that Jesus is the only way. Some have openly taught that there are many ways to God and that ultimately no one is lost. This vast permissiveness has left its stain on the Church. Some are saying that Jesus is not the one way to salvation according to the Bible, but that there are many ways to God according to one's culture and inclination and ultimately all men will make their way to a loving God who will condemn no one. In our denomination, we have not been able to get our General Assembly to say clearly and unequivocally that this doctrine of universalism is unbiblical.

So we gathered in Lausanne because we take the Bible to be the Word of God. And when that Bible says men are lost apart from Jesus, we believe it. And if our leadership in the Church and in the World Council of Churches do not believe the same thing or have the same concern about lost men, it was necessary for us to get together. We needed to think together about what we will do about lost men, about how we will carry the good news about Jesus to the whole world.

The third reason we gathered in Lausanne was because of the staggering size of the problem that faces us. Today, Christians comprise about 28% of the total world's population. Even the most optimistic estimates place the number of Christians at the end of this century at only one-third of the world's peoples. The population of the world today is estimated at over 3.5 billions of peoples of which only 1.1 billion are Christians. That means that over 2.4 billions of people do not know Jesus Christ. If you take the Bible seriously when it says people are lost apart from Jesus, that means that these people are doomed to eternal damnation, that they are lost without Jesus.

Does God care about these people? Yes, because he sent His Son to die for all men. Jesus died for these men as well as for us. But that's where the catch comes. You see, Jesus in the Great Commission, sends us to tell men about him; he commissions us to go and tell men the good news that if they turn to Jesus they will be saved. If those billions of people are lost it is not because God doesn't care, not because God doesn't love them, not because Jesus didn't die for them and their sins. No, if they are lost it will be because we failed to go and tell them the good news about Jesus. When the great Judgment Day comes and you and I stand before Jesus to be judged, I rather suspect the greatest charge against us all will not be some of our personal sins, but it will be the charge that millions upon millions of people perished who never heard the good news...never heard it because you and I did not make it possible for them to hear.

So, that is why we went to Lausanne. We went because we believe the Bible to be God's Word to us; we went because that Word says that apart from Jesus men are lost; and we went because the problem of telling almost 2-1/2 billion people about Jesus is so staggering we must work and cooperate together. We were there to see what we could do together to let the whole earth hear His voice.

But a conference in far-off Switzerland, held by a mere handful of people relatively speaking, will not of itself change the world. From that conference there must flow a new commitment, a new concern, a new determination that touches the lives of all Christians everywhere--touches them until their concern for the lost is a consuming fire in their hearts; touches them until as one great body they rise to take up the challenge of telling all men the good news of Jesus. That's where you come in. You and I are a part of that great body of Christians--over one billion strong. God has

given us the resources, the means of reaching the whole world for Jesus. Will we do it? Do we care enough? That's a question that each person must ask himself--and answer for himself.

The equation is simple. It goes like this: Do you believe the Bible? The Bible says that you are dead in your trespasses and sins and a part from Jesus you will perish eternally. Do you believe the Bible? The Bible says that God loves you and sent his Son to die for your sins. If you accept him, God forgives you and restores you to his family. Do you believe the Bible? The Bible says that those who do not know Jesus will perish without him. Do you believe the Bible? The Bible says that you and I are commanded and commissioned to tell all men everywhere that God wants to forgive them. If you do believe the Bible, and if you believe what it says, what are you going to do about it? What are you going to do about it personally so that you will not be lost? What are you going to do about it personally so that you will not be lost? What are you going to do about it so that millions of others will not be lost?

I'm going to be praying and I want you to enter with me into a covenant of prayer. I want us to pray that God will cut us to the heart, that God will break our hearts for the lost people of the world. I want us to pray together that God will lay it upon us and our hearts that we will have a burning compassion and concern for the lost peoples of the world.

Now if all of us tithed, we would have so much money we wouldn't know what to do with it. I want us to covenant together that we are going to involve ourselves in ministering to the lost of the world and I'm going to ask our officers when budget time comes to put a challenge amount of at least \$25,000 in our budget to go to World Missions to those who are lost. I'm going to challenge you to pray with me that we will be cut to the heart and that that will be the least that we try to do. You and I have a responsibility.

I want to share with you several things from our scripture this morning about what needs to happen to us. This woman at the well confronted Jesus Christ. When she did, something happened to her. Her life got transformed and she went back home. She was so excited she left her water pot. Now when she got to town I don't know what people thought of her, but I suspect her credibility, her respectability, was pretty low. She had been married five times; she was living with a man who wasn't her husband and I am sure the people had little respect for her. Yet, when she walked back into town something was apparently radically altered in her life. Some dramatic change had occurred. So much so that when she told them what had happened to her out there at the water well, they believed her. She was out there by herself--usually the women went together--but she was ostracized. Yet by the time she got back to town something so radically transforming had occurred to her that people believed her.

Now I think that has got to happen to you and me. I don't know what your relationship to Jesus is this morning but if it is like mine it needs to be continually deepened, strengthened and renewed. If we are going to reach out to millions of lost people, we have got to start with ourselves. People will believe us only when they see a radical transformation in our own lives. I know some of us need to get ourselves transformed.

Then notice the second thing that happened. Having met a person who was transformed there was generated in their hearts a sort of holy desire to have for themselves what she now had. They saw a change and they wanted it for themselves and the Bible says they went out and they pled with Jesus, "Stay with us awhile", and he did. After he had stayed with them and they met him personally the Bible says they said to the

woman, "We don't believe anymore just because of what you said but we have met Him face to face and we believe in Him for Himself."

That is what our world needs. People who see in us a transformation that they yearn for themselves and who then meet Jesus Christ personally. That is the sort of witness we must have. Many years ago a man in England was on his way to the gallows for a crime he had committed. The Anglican Chaplain of the prison came and was warning the condemned man to repent of his sins or to experience the judgment and the wrath of God. The man listened patiently to the Chaplain and then he said to him, "Sir, if I believed the way you believe I would crawl across England on broken glass to warn people." You know I think he is right. If a man believes that Jesus saves from sin and that people are perishing without him, they'd do just what he said. Do you and I really believe what this Bible says--do you really believe it? If you do, I want you to know that there are 2-1/2 billion people out there who are perishing.

Perhaps the time has come for you and me to begin to crawl across that glass.

Now all of us fit, we would have so much money we wouldn't know what to do with it. I want us to covenant together that we are going to involve ourselves in ministry to the lost of the world and I'm going to ask our officers when budget time comes to put a challenge amount of at least \$25,000 in our budget to go to World Missions to those who are lost. I'm going to challenge you to pray with me that we will be cut to the heart and that that will be the least that we try to do. You and I have a responsibility.

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