

Introduction: Most of you are probably aware of the scandal surrounding Donald Sterling in the aftermath of his racist comments. If you have not followed the story, Donald Sterling is the owner of the Los Angeles Clippers professional basketball team. In a conversation with his mistress, Sterling chastised her for associating with black people and told her not to bring them to his game. The national outrage was expected and appropriate. Mr. Sterling has subsequently been banned from the NBA for life. Now, why bring him up this morning?

1) For one, the picture we are going to see of God in Isaiah 49 reveals the love he has for all the peoples of the world. God is not a black, white, yellow, or brown God. God is not colorblind. He is colorrich. He has super vision. He is more than tetrachromatic. Some animals, and it is believed some humans, possess the rare ability to see additional colors because they have four different independent channels for processing color information, so they see colors the rest of us will never see. God sees us all and he loves us all.

2) But I also want us to look within our souls this morning and ask ourselves how colorrich we are. How tetrachromatic are we? It's one thing to not discriminate against those of other ethnicities and backgrounds, but it's a whole other thing to actually truly love people of all nations.

“Light for the Nations” Isaiah 49:1-6

Isaiah 49 introduces us to the tetrachromatic God. The God who brings salvation to all.
Servant Songs: 42, 49, 50, 52-53

The Point: The Light of Christ shines to the ends of the earth to bring God's salvation.

We are going to look at this truth from these six verses, and then explore practical implications for us as the people of God in 2014. First . . .

I. The light of Christ is God's means of global salvation (49:1-6).

We see in verses 1-2 that *Jesus deserves global attention (49:1-2)*

- The Servant is speaking in verse 1: “listen to me, O coastlands, and give attention, you peoples from afar.” As the chapter unfolds we see this servant is the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Look at what is true of him.
 - The Lord (God the Father) called this Servant from the womb.
 - Though we know his name to be “Jesus,” (which means God saves), here we find he is called “Israel,” because it was through Israel God purposed to bring his salvation.

We see that his ministry will be one accomplished through his Word going forth.

- Check verse 2: “He made my mouth like a sharp sword.” This is the imagery of battle.
- The Messiah is a warrior, but not in the way you might assume, and certainly not as Israel expected. His warfare was one of the Word.
- His sword is sharp. It is effective! Men: it's grill season. Who likes to cut a steak with a butter knife. C'mon man! Ineffective. His word is like “polished arrow,” rubbed free from imperfections, that it might fly accurate and hit the intended target. Even from afar...
- When Jesus speaks, God speaks. And as Ray Ortland Jr. says, “[Jesus] emerges in history to conquer not by military might or cultural imperialism but by the force of truth.”

Here's the bottom line of these opening verses: Jesus is uniquely called and uniquely qualified for this mission. And verses 3-6 show us . . .

Jesus will fulfill a global mission (49:3-6)

Verses 3-5 - Who is Israel?

- Israel has to refer to the nation, right? Wrong. “And he said to *me*.” This is an individual.
- Why does God send a servant, he names “Israel,” to bring back Israel?
- Here’s why: Israel, as the OT people of God, could not be the instrument of salvation because they were in need of God’s grace and salvation. Look at 48:1: “Hear this, O house of Jacob . . . but not in truth or right.” & verse 18 “Oh that you had paid attention to my commandments! Then your peace . . .”
- Israel’s job was to shine the light of God as the nations watched them be a distinct people, but they could not live up to what it meant to be ‘Israel,’ the one in whom God would be glorified, so God had to send the true and greater Israel, Jesus.
- Jesus is the true Israel, who perfectly displayed the perfections and splendor of God. (v 3)
- It is through Jesus that Israel will fulfill their ultimate role blessing all the families of the earth as God promised in the Abrahamic covenant. (Gen. 12:1-3).

T: But as verse 6 shows us, his plan was so much bigger than Israel.

- “It is too light a thing” This is way too small. It is “beneath the [Servant’s] dignity and capacity.”
- You don’t call up Emeril Lagasse’ and ask him to make you a hot pocket, and you don’t devise a regional mission for the global Messiah.

Let’s work backwards in v. 6 and cover the “what” of God’s mission before addressing the “how”

First, *what* is coming? “that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth...”

- Alec Motyer says the Hebrew more accurately reads, “that you may be my salvation to the ends of the earth.” Jesus is not simply the instrument that communicates salvation. He is salvation. Salvation is in him. (Acts 4:12)
- His aim is to fulfill God’s vision captured in Revelation 7:9-10. Jesus will redeem people from every people group on the planet.: “**After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!’**”
 - Who is there? As they say in Hindi: “Harek jhati, harek kuhl, harek basha, harek log.” “Every nation, every tribe, every people, every language.”
 - What are they doing? Worshiping God!
- When you hear us talk about people groups. The International Mission Board defines a people group as: **A “people group” is an ethnolinguistic group with a common self-identity that is shared by the various members.**
- They consider a **people group unreached (UPGs)** if **less than 2%** of them are **evangelical Christians**.
- To drill down further, **Unengaged Unreached People Groups (UUPGs)** are groups less than 2% evangelical and do **not** currently have an **active church planting strategy** on the ground **to reach them**.
- **PIC OF **GLOBAL STATUS OF EVANGELIZATION MAP****
- This is why we want to raise up and send missionaries to reach the unreached peoples of the world.

T: That is the “what” of his mission. Every people, every nation. But how? Jesus is made a *light* for the nations.

- What is the function of light? To illuminate. To make visible. To reveal what is there.
 - Projector screen... Hard to see... ☺ We’re working on it....
- Light also exposes and cancels darkness! God sent his Son, Jesus, because people sit in darkness.

- **Isaiah** prophesied this back in **chapter 9. Verse 2: “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone.”**
- “[Jesus] is your breakthrough to seeing everything in a new light.” – Ortland Jr.
- **“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” (John 8:12)**

T: It’s hard to grasp the mystery of Christ’s ministry. You say, “What do you mean Tanner?” Jesus is the light of the world, and yet, his ministry was confined to 1st century Palestine.

How is this explainable?

- He was going to accomplish his mission through his apostles (sent ones) who would take the gospel and equip the church to take the gospel to the ends of the earth.
- And this is where we come into play. We are not simply recipients of salvation. We are sent out as bearers of this news!
- In the Gospel of John, Jesus told his disciples the task for all of his disciples, including us: **“As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.” (John 20:21)**

T: Not only is “The light of Christ the means of God’s global salvation,” but . . .

II. We are called to participate in his global mission today (49:1-6).

In light of Christ fulfilling his mission to the nations through his disciples, I want to give you six practical implications of God’s global mission for us.

1) This is God’s mission. (1-6)

- The mission of the church is to participate in God’s mission. I like what **Christopher Wright** says in his book *The Mission of God*: **“It is not so much that God has a mission for his church in the world, but that God has a church for his mission in the world...mission was not made for the church; the church was made for mission—God’s mission.”**
- We join God in his rescue mission as his ambassadors to tell people the means of his salvation in Christ, but *salvation belongs to God*. His job is to save.
- When someone comes to Christ, you did not save them. You might have shared. God might have used you in significant ways, and we praise God for all of that, but make no mistake, God is the one who saves.
- And what does this do for us? You ready for this? *It takes the pressure off*. We sow the seed of the Word, and we sleep because it is God’s job to save (Mark 4:26-29).
- God is sovereign in salvation. His plan orchestrates it and his power accomplishes it
- This should encourage us even when we are frustrated and do not see our friends and family believe in Christ Well, Jesus’ ministry was not always silky smooth. Verse 4: “I have labored in vain.” At times, there was discouragement and frustration in his ministry. His disciples often didn’t get it. When he brought hard sayings to the crowd, many turned away.
- The first part of verse 4 reveals Christ’s humanity. The second part shows us his divine strength, resting in faith in the power of God.
- “Yet . . .” There is confidence in God. “Surely my right is with the Lord, and my recompense (reward) is with my God.” How can he have this confidence? Because God is sovereign. This is his mission. #2

2) Every people group on the planet matters to God. (6)

- What is God’s vision? Rev. 7:9 Harek jati, kuhl, log, basha.
- So if God’s heart is for every people group on the planet, our heart should be to see them reached.
 - There are roughly *77 million Muslims* in Iran who need the gospel
 - There are almost *1.4 billion people in China*. Most have been taught there is no God.

- And . . . there are 1.3 Billion people in India, 72 million in our focus state, and 3.8M in our focus city.

Here's the question: Who's going to tell them?

- We have identified the heart of India to be our strategic global partnership. There are 20 UUPG in the state of Madhya Pradesh. The missionary team we work with has this goal: "A healthy church touching every "jati" (people group) in __M.P."
- I can't wait until we send more teams to be a part of what God is doing there. I can't wait to see us rally behind our national partner as he mobilizes churches throughout our city.
- And here's some more good news for us: There are hundreds of people groups spread throughout our great city of Boston. Get ready for Soccer Nights...
- Now, we will talk more about our strategy to penetrate lost corners of the globe in two weeks when we finish this series. For now, let's ask God to give us his heart for the nations.

T: But the question remains: how will we reach these people groups? #3

3) His word is sufficient for his mission. (verse 2)

- If Jesus advanced the kingdom with his mouth, why would we search for other methods? Our mission is a word-based mission. The light of salvation spreads through the Word going forth.
- We see this in the mission of the Apostle Paul, the church's greatest missionary with the exception of Jesus.
- In 2 Corinthians 4:4-6, the Apostle Paul makes the connection between his mission going forth through the Word and they dynamics between unbelief and the powers of darkness vs. God's light in the Word and the glory of God being revealed through Christ.
As he speaks of his ministry to bring God's Word by an "open statement of the truth.", he goes on to say . . . **"And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Corinthians 4:4-6)**
- Do you see that? As the Word goes forth, God shines the light of his glory in Christ.

T: But we must not only carry the Word. We must live the Word, which brings us to our fourth implication.

4) Holiness matters in the mission of God. (6)

- Where is this? Well, it runs through all what it means to experience salvation.

Let me turn this in two ways:

- 1) We have been brought back to God. Redeemed.
 - God is a holy God. We have been reconciled to him.
 - When we are captivated by his light and experience his salvation, we become light.
 - We not only speak light. We are light.
 - Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount: **"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden." (Matthew 5:16)**
 - **"for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light." (Ephesians 5:8)**

Now, everything in our lives is to be given back to him in praise. To put this another way.

- 2) We have experienced the light to display his light.
- You hear this all the time around here, right? Get in the Word. Live it. Know the Word. Live it. Is this boring? Let me say this: It's only boring if we're not in it and not living it. Just saying...

T: Holiness is essential for the gospel mission to advance. #5.

5) Mission thrives through humble service. (1-6)

- Let's not overlook that Isaiah presents the Messiah, first and foremost, as a Servant.
- What does it mean to be a servant? To put someone else above yourself.
- The greatest obstacle to global missions today is not resources, money, or persecution. It's us.
- Surrendering to God's global plan for the nations happens when we take the posture of a servant.
- Whether we're talking about India or in your neighborhood, in mission we say: "Your salvation is more important than my plans. Your salvation is more important than my comfort. Your life is more important than my life."
- Servants are willing to sacrifice. John G. Paton experienced fruitful ministry in Scotland before God called him to the New Hebrides islands. Before going, a man named Mr. Dickson stood up in objection saying: "The cannibals! You will be eaten by cannibals!" There were indeed some cannibals who lived on the islands. Upon hearing this Paton replied: **"Mr. Dickson, you are advanced in years now, and your own prospect is soon to be laid in the grave, there to be eaten by worms; I confess to you, that if I can but live and die serving and honoring the Lord Jesus, it will make no difference to me whether I am eaten by Cannibals or by worms; and in the Great Day my resurrection body will arise as fair as yours in the likeness of our risen Redeemer."**

T: If this is the kind of sacrifice we must be prepared for, then how can we meet the challenge? The answer lies in our final implication. We must go in his strength.

6) We go in his strength. (5)

- Mission must be done in his strength if it is to be done at all. The end of verse 5 told us Jesus found strength for the mission in his relationship with his Father. Worship is the fuel of missions, right?
- We must do the same. Through prayer and daily dependence and the community of the church, we go forth in the strength of Christ to accomplish his mission.

Conclusion:

So here's what I'd like to do. Two simple challenges For Monday...

1) Pray for one of our missionaries once a week for the next four months. (watch our newsletter this week)

2) Decide how generous you can be in giving to our annual Great Commission Offering. (every year we collect a special offering...)

Let's face it: Some churches are quite ambivalent about the Great Commission. Hey, that's a good idea . . . for them. Hey, I'm really glad . . . they are going overseas. We'll pray for you. How about a few dollars . . . that will ease my conscience. Listen. Let's be a church that is passionate, that gives everything we have of our time, resources, gifts, money, prayer, and people to see the nations one day gathered around the throne in worship of our great God.