



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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July 11, 2010

7th Sunday after Pentecost - Mission Festival

Sermon Text: [Isaiah 55:10-11](#)

Pastor Jon Bare

First Lesson: [Isaiah 60:1-6](#)

Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 67](#)

Second Lesson: [Romans 15:23-33](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Matthew 28:18-20](#)

The Believer Follows Christ: Followers of Christ Spread The Good News

在我們神的名， 父， 子， 聖靈， 阿門

In the name of our God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Amen.

There was a recent study conducted to reestablish what are the wonders of this world. You see, we have that list of ancient wonders...these places that were just marvels of man's creation in the past. But the problem with these wonders is that they are from the past. Most of these wonders of the world don't exist anymore. We can't go to them and see them anymore. So this survey was taken to reestablish what are the wonders of the world. What are some man-made wonders in this world that we can go to, that we can see and visit? As the study came out, it really wasn't much of a surprise to see that on that list was the Great Wall of China.

The Great Wall of China is a wall that goes across the northern border of what was China at that time, from the East to the West, or the West to the East, whatever, up and down mountains. It's a marvel of man's creation. It's a wonder to behold, this beautiful wall that took years and years to build. A wall that not only served as a way of defending against the enemies from the North, but also served as a form of communication so that if the enemy would come at any point along that wall, watch fires could be lit and word would soon go from wherever that enemy was to the capital, "The enemy has arrived! Get ready for battle!"

The Great Wall of China certainly is a wonder to behold. Amazing! But as I've been in China, I've had the chance to experience, to witness a far greater wonder than the Great Wall of China. It's the wonder of God's Word. It's really something I wouldn't have had to go to China to see at all. It's really something we don't have to go any further than the Word of God before us today to see and to experience. Today let's take some time together to explore the wonder of God's Word.

Isaiah the prophet was a prophet who was working in a world where work seemed utterly impossible. Isaiah the prophet was a man sent by God to God's people. The problem though was that God's people wanted nothing to do with God. The same God who had chosen them, who had made them his own people, they were saying to him, "Well, we don't really like him anymore. We'd rather go and worship the gods of this world. We'd rather have these idols that they have. We'd rather be able to worship him

on the mountains in nature, wherever, but the God who brought us out of Egypt, well, he can be in the background a bit.” It was to those people that Isaiah the prophet was told to go out and preach. It was by those people that Isaiah the prophet more often than not was rejected.

So Isaiah the prophet had to feel at many times like he was working in a world where works seemed impossible as he would take out God’s message of stern Law to these people and face doors slammed in his face, as he would take out the message of sweet Gospel, like the one we had today, and face people who just didn’t care. What was the prophet like Isaiah to do working in a world where works seemed impossible? It was to that prophet that God spoke these wonderful words, words of reminder of the wonder of his Word.

He says to Isaiah, *“As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it”* ([Isaiah 55:10-11](#)). These were exactly the words that Isaiah needed to hear, words of comfort and hope, words of reminder of the wonder of the Word.

These are exactly the words that we need to hear as well, because we are working in a world where works seem impossible. China is one of those places. On the books, according to the official law in China, it is illegal to do mission work in China. According to the official government laws, the official religion of the country is atheism. That means that there is no god. So children are brought up from little on, taught in schools that there is no god and they are merely the product of evolution, waiting for the next best thing to evolve from them, and if we can work hard in this world and if we can make a difference for the next generation, maybe making things just a little bit better in this world, well then we’ve done a good job. We’ve done everything we can do. But beyond that and as far as this afterlife goes, who cares. Working in a world where works seem impossible we often might think, “What’s the point?” How are we going to do this?

My friend, Bart, was a product of his education. He was brought up in that education system believing that there was no God. As he would come to the Bible Studies that we were by God’s grace able to have, we’d always start off the Bible Study introducing ourselves. At the first Bible Study where I met Bart, we went around the room and he said, “Hi, my name is Bart, and I’m a communist and not a Christian.” Bart was very strong in his belief that there was no God. Bart was very adamant about the fact that he was coming to these studies not because he wanted to study the Bible, but simply because he wanted to learn English. When we are working in a world where works seem impossible, what do we do?

What about you? We don’t have to go all the way across the world to China to see that we’re working in a world where works seem impossible. All we have to do is go to our friends, our neighbors, our relatives...the people that we’ve tried to share God’s Word

with again and again and again. That person at work who just wants nothing to do with the fact that we're Christian, wants nothing to do with the fact that we take time out of our busy schedules to come and worship God together...though you invite them to come to worship on a Sunday morning, they say, "Huh! Why would I want to waste my time with that?" We're all working in a world where works seem impossible, where doors get slammed on our face, where relationships grow cold because somebody else finds out that you're a Christian and suddenly that friendship that was there seems to be not so much there anymore. What are we supposed to do?

With my friend, Bart, I was tempted at often times to say to him, "Bart, perhaps you shouldn't come to these studies anymore. Perhaps your attitude towards this study isn't so good for the rest of the friends coming. Maybe it would be better just not to associate anymore at all."

So often we need to hear the words that Isaiah needed to hear; a reminder of the wonder of God's Word. So often we start to think about this work of evangelism, this work of sharing this Gospel message, of sharing the Bible with this world in a logical way.

I have a question for you. How many here are farmers? How many here have a garden? How many here know what a garden is? Good. What I want you to do this next Spring is take your packages of seeds and rather than taking them out into your field or taking them out into your garden that you've plowed and made really nice, ready for the seeds, take them out to your patio slab of a driveway and make some nice even rows on your driveway. Maybe pound some stakes in so that you can see where those seeds were. To the gardener or farmer or the person who knows a little bit about gardening, my advise sounds like nonsense, absolutely foolish.

We wouldn't do that with seeds. We wouldn't take seeds out and put them on a concrete slab when we have a garden right next to it to put those seeds into. It just doesn't make any sense.

But the problem comes when we start applying that logic that makes perfect good sense for a farmer or a gardener, the problem comes when we start applying that logic to God's Word and to how God's Word works. When we start saying to God, "God, I know you told me to go out into all the world. I know you told me that you want all people to be saved, but I can see Bart. I can see that he is hardened against this. He is a concrete slab God! What's the point of sharing the message with him? Lord, I can see China. China is a nation that is against you, hardened, a concrete slab. What's the point of me sharing with them? Lord, I can see my neighbor, my relative, my co-worker and I think that in this case, I might just know more than you do." That's what we're saying when we start to think, "What's the point of sharing the message with this person?"

Exactly at that point we need to hear the same message Isaiah needed to hear, a message that reminds us of the wonder of the Word. In this world where works seem

impossible, God is at work to accomplish his purpose. That's what this Bible passage talked about. He says, "As the rain and snow come down from heaven and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater." We know how this works. The rain comes down, the snow comes down, and we have plants in Spring. That's how it works. If A happens, so will B. God says, "So is my word that goes out from my mouth: It does not return to me empty but will accomplish the purpose for which I sent it." That's the wonder of God's Word, that working in this world where works seem impossible, God is accomplishing his purpose.

We need not look any further than our own lives and our own hearts to see how true and how vital this is. Hearts that by nature were concrete slabs hardened against God wanting nothing to do with God. Hearts that through the hearing of his Word, through the washing of water and Baptism, through the receiving of his body and blood in, with and under that bread and wine, were smashed to pieces. Hearts in which he now is able to work, not because of anything we did, not because of any power that anybody else had in our lives, but simply because of the wonder of his Word.

Remember my friend, Bart, the guy who said "I want nothing to do with this message you're sharing"? Bart did continue to come to study the Bible. A few months before I left my first year in China, we were going around the room again and introducing ourselves and came to Bart and he said, "Hi, my name is Bart and I'm a communist Christian." Okay. That's the wonder of the Word.

This past year, Bart continued to study the Bible. About a month or two ago, Bart wrote an email to me and a couple other missionaries in China. In the email he said, "I really like this message that I'm hearing. I really think it's important that other people hear it as well and I'm wondering how maybe I could become a pastor or a teacher of this message. I want to continue to study. I want to learn how to share it because I am a Christian." That's the wonder of God's Word...that working in a world where works seem impossible, God accomplishes his purpose.

Look around you. See the seats filled with people here, ears ready and eager to hear this message of God's Word. That's the wonder of God's Word. You know what the greatest thing about all this is? The greatest thing is that God uses us to do this. Working in this world where works seem impossible, God accomplishes his purpose. And he does it through us!

In China, this place where works seemed like it would be impossible for us to do because we can't go in as missionaries, God has made it possible for English teachers to go in. So an organization like Friends of China was established so that English teachers could go from America to China, teaching English up to 20 hours a week, but in their spare time, working with friends, friends eager to study the Bible, doing the work of evangelism. God is doing this work through us.

Ten years ago, that organization, Friends of China, started with four teachers. For them the work seemed very difficult. For them it looked like...how is this ever going to work? Today, this next August, about 50 teachers will be sent over to China. Those 50 teachers will be able to share God's Word on a one-on-one basis with small groups, however. That's the wonder of God's Word. He does it through us.

There was a professor at the Agriculture University in Beijing, China. This professor had a daughter in one of our English teacher's classes. After class one day, the mother came up to the teacher, Hannah, and said to Hannah, "Hannah, are you a Christian?" Hannah responded, "Yeah, I am." "Well, Hannah, would you be willing to come to my house and teach my daughter about the Bible? I really think it would be important for her to learn this." "Okay, I can do that." "Well, Hannah, as long you're coming to my house, do you mind if I invite some other people to come and study too, some of my students, some of my fellow professors? Maybe we could have an adult study as well." "Okay." So every week, Hannah and I started from that time on going up to Agricultural University of China where we have a small Bible Study. At the end of our studies, we always close with a prayer and ask for prayer requests from everyone there. I don't think I'll ever forget the prayer request that Professor Quang had that day. She said, "I just want to say a prayer of thanksgiving to God, a prayer of thanksgiving because I've been praying for three years now that someone would be able to come into my house and share this Gospel message with me and my family and my friends. And I want to say a prayer of thanksgiving for you because he sent you to do that."

Wow! What an amazing thing, that working in this world where works seem impossible God is accomplishing his purpose. And he's doing it through us. Her prayer wasn't just a prayer of thanksgiving for me and for Hannah. It wasn't just a prayer of thanksgiving for the 50 other teachers in China. Her prayer was a prayer of thanksgiving for all of you, a prayer of thanksgiving for your love, for your support, for your work of taking this Gospel message out to all the world, starting right here, starting with your friends, your neighbors, your relatives, starting with the people around your church; going then to the work of an entire synod as you support this synod, going to the work of parrot church organizations like Friends of China and other mission organizations so that through our work together, God's accomplishing his purpose in this world. He's using us to do it.

In this world, you are going to see, you are going to experience, you are going to get the opportunities to see all sorts of wonders because there are a lot of wonderful things out there, but it's my prayer for you today that you never forget the greatest wonder of all...the wonder of God's Word.