



## **From Surviving to Thriving – Part 5 In the World**

If you have a Bible—and I hope you do—let me invite you to open it to two places. We’re going to be in Acts 13 and then Revelation 5. We’re at the end of this series on moving from surviving to thriving in our lives. We’ve been using lemon trees as a simple picture of how, when we do simple but significant things in our lives—like prayer, fasting, meditating on God’s Word, spreading God’s love in the world—God has designed us to thrive. When we neglect these things, then we wither.

Now we come to the last Sunday in this series. We’ve mentioned at different points this month how our prayer and fasting is going to culminate in an Acts 13-like day, when we will ask whom God might be sending from among us to spread His Word among people who currently don’t have access to it.



Let’s look at these lemon trees as an example one more time. This one is definitely struggling. I had it out in the snow last night to help that struggle a bit. The other tree was lit by a nice lamp and was watered regularly. It still hasn’t blossomed in ways that would be so powerful for this illustration. However, in all of my new-found lemon tree expertise, I have learned that they are not made to thrive in our cold winters where it is snowing a lot right now. This tree was made to thrive in southern California where it’s 70 degrees and sunny right now.

I want to propose today that God has called some of us to thrive right here where we live. However God has wired some of us to thrive in another part of the world. If we stay in here when He’s wired us to thrive somewhere else, we will wither. This is what I think is going on in Acts 13:1-3. Look at it with me.

In a worship gathering in the church, God says to specific people, “I’m calling you to thrive somewhere else.” There were prophets and teachers in the church in Antioch and the Bible says this to them:

*Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy*

*Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.*

As the church was worshiping, fasting and praying, the Holy Spirit spoke and said, "Barnabas and Saul, I'm setting you apart to do work in another place I am calling you to go, specifically in a place where the gospel has not yet gone."

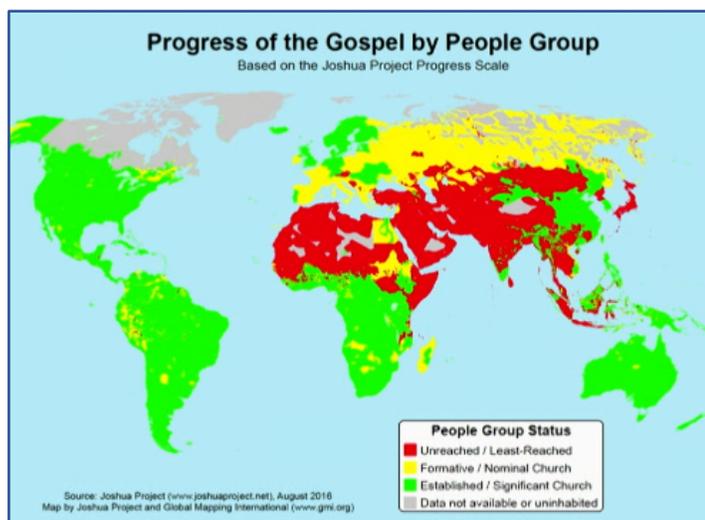
Let me show you a map that represents the places where the gospel had gone at this point in time, by Acts 13. There's a little bit of yellow around Rome and over near Jerusalem. Then in Antioch, which is where Acts 13 is happening, there's a little bit of yellow there. Those are the regions that are known to contain Christians during the time of Acts 13.



On that particular day, God led some people from Antioch to go throughout this region, where the gospel had not gone. Over the years to come, this would become yellow as shown in the circle on the second map. All these places would start to hear the gospel because the Holy Spirit sent Saul and Barnabas into those places. While some stayed in Antioch and thrived there, God was calling others to thrive out there.

So with that picture from the Bible in mind, let me show you this contemporary map of the world around us. It shows the progress of the gospel in the world today by people group. You'll notice there are three distinct colors on this map:

- **The green areas** on this map indicate where the gospel has gone, where disciples have been made and churches have been planted. Obviously, that does not mean everybody in these green areas is a follower of Jesus. We know that in our country, yet it is mostly green. That is simply saying there are Christians and churches who know the gospel in those places.



- **The yellow areas** show where there are formative or nominal churches. That means there are churches that are just getting started, or churches that have waned significantly in their influence. That means there are a lot fewer followers of Jesus and a lot fewer churches proclaiming the gospel there.
- Then **the red areas** on this map show areas where there is little to no access to the gospel. There are very few if any Christians in many of these places who know the gospel. There are very few churches that are proclaiming the gospel. The red on this map comprises about three billion people and about 7,000 people groups. Just to be clear, “unreached” does not just mean lost or separated from God by sin. People are just as spiritually lost in Metro Washington DC or Washington state as they are in any of these places in the world. The difference is there are churches and Christians in Metro Washington DC and Washington state who are sharing the good news of how people can be reconciled to God through Jesus. But in these places that are red, there are not churches and Christians sharing this good news of the gospel. This means that if you live in one of those red areas, the likelihood is great that you will be born, live and die without ever even hearing from someone else that Jesus died on the cross for our sins and rose from the grave, so that anyone who trusts in Him as Savior and Lord can be forgiven of their sins and have eternal life with Him. In practicality, you probably would never hear that. The likelihood is you’ll be born, live and die without ever hearing the gospel.

The Bible is clear that if you never hear this gospel, if you don’t have it communicated to you, then you can’t believe this gospel and you can’t be saved from your sins. Romans 10:17 says very clearly, *“Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.”* That means if unreached people never hear the gospel before they die, then they will experience eternity in hell when they die. Some of you might immediately think, “Surely God wouldn’t let them go to hell when they’ve never heard,” which is why we walked through that question extensively last year and we’ll walk through it all again today. If that’s a question on your mind, just search online for what happens to people who never hear the gospel, with my name in the search, and you’ll find plenty on that topic. The Bible is crystal clear that people cannot be saved from their sins by Jesus if they don’t believe in Jesus, and they can’t believe in Jesus if they don’t hear about Jesus.

We’ve also talked before about how unreached people are different than, for example, babies or people with severe intellectual disabilities, those who don’t have the capacity to understand, believe and receive the gospel. That’s a different picture altogether.

What we’re talking about now is billions of people in thousands of people groups who have the capacity to know God, who have rejected God and who have the ability to receive and believe the gospel if they hear it. But they haven’t heard it. This is why Jesus has commanded us to do what we quote to one another at the end of every one of our worship gatherings: to make disciples of all the nations, of all the *ethne*—ethnic groups, people groups—in the world (Matthew 28:18-20).

If you put all this together, this means that if we are going to obey the Great Commission as a church in this world, then at some point some of us must go, according to the Spirit’s leadership, to places where the gospel has not gone. God has not designed all of us to thrive here. God has designed, created

and called some of us to thrive over there. This makes practical sense, doesn't it? We have thousands of people in our church family worshiping here today, yet there are three billion unreached people in the world. So it makes sense that God would say to some, maybe many, who are here, "I'm calling you to take the gospel there, where they still haven't even heard it."

Now, I want to also be clear that all of us have a part to play in getting the gospel to unreached people. None of us is on the sidelines of this mission. So today we're going to talk about what God is calling all of us to do. At the same time, we are asking that God might do Acts 13 in this worship gathering right now or online. We are asking "God, who among us—students, young adults, singles, couples, families, senior adults—who among us are You calling to move to these places?"

Before I say anything else, I want to lead us all in a simple prayer. "God, I will do whatever You call me to do to spread the gospel to the unreached." I want to invite each of us to pray that, then challenge you to listen to His Spirit in the next few minutes. I encourage you not to say to God, "Here are all the reasons I know You're not calling me to go." Instead, say to God in a fresh way today, "My life is Yours. Please speak to me now. I will do whatever You call me to do to spread the gospel to the unreached."

Every night this week, my family has been praying, "God, speak to us. Show us however, whatever You want us to do." I just want to lead us all to pray that today. Then at the end of our time in God's Word a few minutes from now, I'm going to give an opportunity to indicate our response to whatever God is saying to each of us. In other words, this is not a perfunctory worship gathering, where we're just going through a religious ritual. We are actually meeting with God right now, asking Him to speak to us.

The same God Who did this in Acts 13 is the same God we're meeting with right now. We're asking Him to set some of us apart today: "God, I will do whatever You want me to do, whatever You call me to do to spread the gospel to the unreached," Lest you think this is a high bar to pray, let me remind you this is simply what it means to be a follower of Jesus. It's what it means to be a Christian. If you are not willing to go wherever Jesus leads you to go, then what makes you think you are following Jesus? This is what it means to follow Jesus.

So I invite you to bow your heads with me—in this room or wherever you are—and let's pray.

O God, we have been praying that You would do an Acts 13 movement among us today. So together, as we're in this room and in hundreds or thousands of other places right now, we want to pray this prayer with one voice together.

Church, I invite all of us to say this prayer out loud: "God, I will do whatever You call me to do to spread the gospel—the good news of Jesus—to the unreached. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen."

May God speak to us now through His Word, beginning in Revelation 5:1:

*<sup>1</sup> Then I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals. <sup>2</sup> And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?"*

Just for context, this scroll contains God's plan for the consummation of His Kingdom on earth for the ultimate eradication of sin, evil, suffering and death in this world. The question is: who can bring that about?

*<sup>3</sup> And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it, <sup>4</sup> and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it.*

John, who is writing this letter, is realizing, "I can't end this. You can't end this." He's considering the prospect of all the evil, sin, suffering and death of this world never coming to an end. He's weeping loudly over that prospect...until verse five:

*<sup>5</sup> And one of the elders said to me, "Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals."*

Who is this? What follows is one of the most vivid scenes in the entire Bible, with a picture of Jesus at the center that is filled with symbolism from all over the Bible:

*<sup>6</sup> And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. <sup>7</sup> And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne. <sup>8</sup> And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. <sup>9</sup> And they sang a new song, saying,*

*"Worthy are you to take the scroll  
and to open its seals,  
for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God  
from every tribe and language and people and nation,  
<sup>10</sup> and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God,  
and they shall reign on the earth."*

*<sup>11</sup> Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands,  
<sup>12</sup> saying with a loud voice,*

*"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain,  
to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might  
and honor and glory and blessing!"*

*<sup>13</sup> And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying,*

*“To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb  
be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!”*

Why must we all say to God, “I will do whatever You call me to do to spread the good news of Jesus to the unreached”? Here’s why. Because Jesus is worthy of the worship of not just some people in some parts of the world, but among every people group in every part of the world. Because Jesus was slain on a cross, where He shed His blood to ransom—to rescue. What a word! One Bible dictionary says ransom means “to cause the release or freedom of someone by a means which proves costly to the individual causing the release.”

Jesus is the only One Who can ransom—rescue—three billion people in over 7,000 tribes and languages and people groups and nations who at this moment still haven’t even heard Who He is or what He has done for them. Now, I’ve used these numbers a few times today, but I’m guessing these numbers haven’t really affected you. Numbers don’t work like that. Numbers feel distant and hard to comprehend. How do you even picture three billion people or 7,000 people groups?

I want to bring it down to just one person in one people group. For the next few minutes, I want to introduce you to just one unreached person in the world. Her name is Maliha. Before I tell you her story, I will say that her story is not easy to hear and may even uncover hurt in ways that only the gospel can heal—which is the point, because the gospel cannot heal if someone doesn’t have it.

## **Maliha’s Options**

Let me introduce you to a nine-year-old girl named Maliha. Her name means beautiful. She was born into a remote unreached people group that lives high up in the Himalayas. From the moment she entered the world, Maliha and her family struggled to survive, lacking clean water, sufficient food and basic medical care. Imagine her mother’s hope when a young man came through the village and saw Maliha outside washing the family’s clothes in the local water tower. The man knew where Maliha lived, so he went to her home and introduced himself to her mother. The man began to speak to her in the local language of the region.

“I’ve noticed that your daughter is very beautiful,” he said.

“She is,” the proud mom responded. “She’s a hard worker, too. She takes care of her younger siblings and helps me with whatever I need.” Maliha had never been to school. Besides the fact that no school existed within a day’s walk, even if one did, Maliha wouldn’t have been able to attend. Her father had left her mother years prior and Maliha had a younger sister and brother to help provide for. This didn’t bother Maliha, though. She loved her family deeply and prided herself in helping provide for them. A year before, Maliha’s younger brother had become severely sick from a simple stomach infection due to dirty drinking water. Maliha’s mom had trekked down the mountain that week and it fell upon Maliha to nurse

her brother back to health which she did successfully. As long as her mom and her siblings were healthy, Maliha was happy.

“Yes,” the man said. “I’ve notice that your husband is gone. You have three kids to take care of by yourself. I would like to help provide for your family.”

Maliha’s mother was intrigued. “What can you do?” she asked.

The man said, “There is opportunity for work down in the city at the base of these mountains. So many jobs exist that can provide so much money for families like yours in these villages.” Maliha’s mother leaned in, now listening intently as the man said, “I know that you need to stay here in order to provide for your other children and tend to your land, but I would be willing to take your daughter with me down to the city. There she could do some of the same jobs she does around the village here, get an education and make money that could be sent back to you to support your family, her younger brother and sister included.” The man continued, “She’d be well taken care of, with plenty of water and food, a nice home along with other girls her age.”

At this point, the man had Maliha’s mom’s attention. As she listened, she thought, “Could this really be true? Could this be the answer to what my family most needs, for me and my little boy and little girl to be provided for, all while my oldest daughter is cared for by this kind man in the city?” As these questions swirled in her mind, she immediately thought, “No, I can’t be separated from Maliha. She means so much to me.” So Maliha’s mom looked back at the man and said, “Thank you very much for your kind offer, but I believe my daughter needs to stay with me.”

The man was disappointed, but said, “Why don’t you think about it some more? I may come back another day to talk about it again.”

Maliha’s mom, hesitant to acquiesce even to this request, but not wanting to shame the man, politely said, “That will be fine” and sent him on his way.

In the days that followed, as hard as Maliha’s mom tried, she couldn’t get the man’s offer out of her mind. She would look at beautiful, hard-working Maliha and think, “I suspect Maliha would want to go with that man, knowing she could provide even more for our family. The man seemed so nice. I’ll bet Maliha would enjoy his company. Maybe somebody like him would even marry her one day.” But she still couldn’t bear the thought of sending her daughter away while she was so young.

Then one day the man returned to Maliha’s home. Again Maliha was out doing chores. He approached Maliha’s mom with a smile and greeted her, saying, “I’ve been thinking more about our conversation a few weeks ago and I understand that you are hesitant to send your daughter to the city with me. Today I have a pledge that I hope demonstrates my desire to provide for you.” Maliha’s mom sat down across from the man, who continued, “As a pledge of my promise to provide for your family here and for your daughter in the city, I want to give you 10,000 rupees.” Maliha’s mom’s eyes immediately widened.

Ten thousand rupees is the equivalent of about \$100, an amount equal to half a year's wages for Maliha's mom. "This man is more generous than any man I've met in my entire life," she thought.

"In addition," the man said, "I promise to bring your daughter back up these mountains with me once a year to see you and spend time with her brother and sister. I know this would be important to her and to you."

About this time, Maliha returned home and saw the man conversing with her mom. Maliha's mom looked over at her, then after a long pause she asked Maliha to come sit on her lap. She said, "Maliha, this man has come to offer help to you and our family." Maliha smiled hesitantly, as her mother continued. "He's willing to take you down into the city at the bottom of these mountains. There you can live and work with some other girls your age. You'll have all the food and water you want and a nice place to live. You'll be able to go to school. This man will take care of you. You'll do some of the same kind of work you do here. The difference is you'll be able to make a lot of money that you can send back to help your family here. Then after you've worked for a while, this man will bring you back up the mountain so you can visit us and see all the ways you've helped us."

As her mother spoke, Maliha's eyes welled up with tears. She immediately thought, "No, I can't leave my family." But the more her mother talked, the more she realized this seemed like a wonderful opportunity to help the people she loved most. Sure, there was risk. Maliha had never been out of these mountains before. But even if things didn't go well, she would be able to come back to her village and live with her family again.

Maliha's mom gazed at her daughter, both of them now crying. She said, "I believe it would be best for you and for our family for you to go with this kind man." Maliha looked up into her mom's eyes, believing her mom loved her and knew what was best. She said, "I'll do whatever you want me to do to provide for my sister and my brother."

So arrangements were made over the next couple days. The man returned with his 10,000 rupee pledge. A tearful departure ensued as Maliha hugged her mom, little sister and brother. Then she set off down the trail with the man. After a long journey they arrived in a city late one evening and immediately went to a restaurant to get something to eat. This restaurant was different from other restaurants. It's called a cabin restaurant. It sat alongside a row of restaurants where families would come and eat. But the booths in this restaurant were unique. They were more like cubicles, wood frames starting at the floor and reaching all the way to the ceiling, dividing each booth from the next, so that no one could see into or out of the booth. A small table sat in the middle of each booth with a bench wrapped around it. Other girls, all of them older than Maliha, sat at the front of the restaurant. She assumed they were resting after a long day of work and she smiled as she walked past them. The man led Maliha into one of the booths, where she sat down. Soon a large plate of food was placed before her. Famished from the journey and quite honestly

never having seen this much food on one plate before, she ate it all. Then the man escorted her to her room upstairs.

It was a small room with a cot-like bed in the corner. A dirty sheet covered the thin mattress. The man said, “You can give me your bag. I’ll get you some brand new clothes that you can wear tomorrow. In the meantime, you sleep well tonight and I’ll see you in the morning.”

Maliha obliged. She was tired, to say the least. Though she missed her family, she was thankful that she had finally arrived at the place where she could live and provide for them. She thought, “I need to get a good night’s rest so I can work hard tomorrow like those other girls who are coming back here for dinner.” With this she fell quietly asleep, never dreaming that this would be her last peaceful night of sleep for years to come.

For a number of reasons, I won’t share the details of what happened the next day...and night...and day...and night, to hurt Maliha’s body and break Maliha’s spirit, with no way out. Maliha was told that she had to do whatever they told her to do in order to support her family back home, that if she stopped, they would bring her little sister to take her place. Little did Maliha know that her mom never received another rupee. Meanwhile, for all her family knew, Maliha had completely forgotten about them when she got to the big city. Even if Maliha could have escaped, where would she go? She had no clue where she was and no idea how to get home. She knew no one but the people who owned her. She had nothing to her name. The only thing she had was her shame—an accursed woman in a religious culture that believes your present place in life is what you deserve, based on your behavior in a past life. *Ke garne*, she would think to herself on many days, a common phrase that simply means, “Life is what it is, deal with it.”

Numbers seem distant. But I know personally that everything changes when you walk through Maliha’s village in those mountains, when you walk through city streets filled with cabin restaurants, where girls sit as slaves outside, waiting to provide services in cubicles inside. Don’t miss the ultimate tragedy in it all. Maliha has never, ever, ever heard Who Jesus is or what Jesus has done. Which means Maliha is living in an earthly hell where no one, no one, no one has ever told her how she can be saved from an eternal hell.

No one has ever told her that God loves her so much that He gave His Son to give His life, to shed His blood, so that she could be ransomed, rescued. Jesus has come so that Maliha—and three billion other people in this evil, broken world—can be ransomed and rescued forever. Now, obviously not all three billion unreached people are in Maliha’s physical situation. But don’t miss the point. We have in our minds right now a picture of unimaginable earthly suffering—a picture, by the way, that is played out in different ways among millions and millions of unreached people. All three billion of them are on a road that leads to unimaginable eternal suffering, suffering that will last forever and ever and ever, without end.

## Our Options

You and I have the news of rescue. You and I know the Rescuer. We know the One Who has laid down His life for people in a sinful world, all over the world. We know the One Who has paid the costly price to secure the ultimate release from sin, evil, suffering and death for people from every tribe and language and nation to reign with Him forever.

Do you see it? Are we just saved? There's nothing, no one better, than Him. He turns graves into gardens. He turns death into life. He turns mourning to dancing. He turns shame into glory. And this is what He wants to do in Maliha's life. He wants Maliha to enjoy citizenship in His Kingdom. He wants Maliha to reign with Him forever. Jesus wants that. The question is do you want that for her? Do we want that for her? Do followers of Jesus want that for Maliha? Do followers of Jesus want Maliha—and billions like her from every tribe and language and people and nation—to be ransomed and rescued by Jesus, so much that we will pay whatever price our Savior calls us to pay to reach them?

Or would we rather sit back and settle for a casual, comfortable, infighting cultural Christianity that turns a blind eye and deaf ear to Maliha and three billion other unreached people like her? That is the question. I know some people are wondering, "Are you just trying to manipulate my emotions with a story like Maliha's?" No, but I am praying that God will awaken our emotions to see just a tiny glimpse of what our God sees every single day, what He's seeing right now, happen around the world to so many people. I pray that we might feel just a tiny bit of the love our God has for individual people who are hurting in this broken world, without even any knowledge of His love for them, any access to Him. I pray that we might refuse to stick our heads in the sand and move on like they don't exist.

Let's face it, many of us have been uncomfortably listening to this story. We may even be concerned about young kids around us hearing this story. As a father of young kids, I get that. But that's part of the point. What if our concern was not our kids hearing this story; what if our concern was for the kids who are in this story? And the moms like Maliha's mom in the story? That's the point. Nobody in the story—not Maliha, not her mom, not her siblings, not her father who left his family, not the trafficker who took her down the mountain—none of them have heard about Jesus, but every single one of them needs to hear about Jesus.

This is why God has given us a crystal-clear command as His people, as His church. It's so baffling to me how much the church of Jesus Christ must be persuaded over objection after objection that we should actually work to get the gospel to unreached people. It's baffling that there's always pushback in the church to a message like this, when Jesus has plainly told us, "Make disciples of all the nations, all the ethnic people groups, not just some of them. Not just the ones closest to you. Not just the ones that are easiest or safest for you to reach. No, reach all of them. This is what I've called and commanded you to do. This is My goal in all history."

What is Jesus doing right now in the world? Revelation 5 makes this crystal clear. He's the Rescuer Who's redeeming and ransoming people from every tribe and language and nation to be a part of His Kingdom. That's what Jesus is doing right now in the world. Lift your eyes from all the distractions in your world. This is the destiny of this world. And if this is what Jesus is doing right now, then this is what followers of Jesus must do. It's what we live for. The purpose of your life, the purpose of my life, in this world is to make the worth of Jesus known throughout this world.

You say, "Well, how do I do that? Practically, what do I do for Maliha—and three billion other unreached people like her?" God's Word says, "Start here." God's Word says pray. Pray continually, confidently and passionately for the spread of the gospel to all the nations, particularly the unreached. Start on your knees. You saw in Revelation 5:8 the vision of heaven containing the bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

A few weeks ago, we looked at how fundamentally Jesus taught us to pray. "*Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, our will be done, on earth as it is in heaven*" (Matthew 6:9-10). God, cause Your Kingdom to come to every nation and tribe and tongue. Bring it about. Cause Your justice to reign and Your mercy to rule, all over. We're pleading for this. So we pray continually and confidently. Amen.

Think of it. You can be a part of what God is doing in the Himalayas from your knees beside your bed tonight. You don't even have to get out of bed. Just laying there, you can be a part of what God is doing in places like where Maliha lives. You can do this with your family around the table in the morning, in the evening. Pray continually and with confidence that God will hear and answer your prayers for people and people groups around the world. Pray passionately, like your prayers matter—because they do.

If you don't already have it, download "Unreached of the Day." It's just a simple app on a phone. Every day they have a new people group—and it just so happens that today is the Bodh people of India. There are over 100,000 of them, with no followers of Jesus known among them. They live in a remote region high in the Himalayan mountains. Pray for the spread of the gospel. Pray for people with the ability to climb high mountains and overcome the obstacles of Satan, leaning entirely on the power of His Holy Spirit. Pray for the spread of the gospel in the Ladakhi language. This is exactly what Revelation 5 compels us to pray for.

God, do it. Cause the Bodh people to be reached with Your grace and mercy. Send out whomever You want. God, send out any one of us. We want to get the gospel to them. Just show us. Pray, all of us, for the spread of the gospel to all the nations, particularly the unreached.

Then God's Word says to give. Give intentionally, sacrificially, cheerfully for the spread of the gospel to all the nations, particularly the unreached. We are some of the wealthiest people in the world in this church, as well as in most every place where people are listening and watching right now. Even if you

may not feel wealthy, the fact that you have shelter, food, water, access to education, health care and transportation—even if it's public—these things make us extremely wealthy in the world.

So why has God given us so much wealth? Read Psalm 67—it's the answer. God gives wealth for the spread of His worship in the world. God has not given us wealth—don't believe it. What's being sold to us every single day—don't buy it. God's not given us wealth for more indulgence in a world that is wasting away. God has given us wealth for the spread of His glory and grace in a world of urgent need.

So let's give intentionally to that which matters forever. Giving to the unreached will not happen accidentally. Give intentionally and sacrificially. We are followers of Jesus Who gave His life, so we give in ways that hurt—and we do so cheerfully. What will bring more joy? A new trinket in this world or seeing Maliha ransomed and rescued by Jesus? We give very differently. We spend money very differently.

This is why we are spending an increasing amount of our church budget on urgent needs right here in our city. Think of millions reached through our food outreach this last year. Think of urgent needs increasing among unreached people around the world. We want to send out missionaries whom God raised up, to support them and to support indigenous brothers and sisters in unreached places.

Then God's Word says, "Here's how you can live for Maliha and three billion others like her: go. Right where you live and wherever God leads for the spread of the gospel to all the nations, particularly the unreached. Go, right where you live." You don't have to get on a plane to put the Great Commission into practice. How will the gospel go to all the nations? By God's people making disciples of all the nations, starting right where they live.

So lead people to the Rescuer this week. It's not just Maliha who needs the gospel on the other side of the world. It is your neighbor across the street. It is your coworker. It's that girl or boy or mom or dad or family in need right here in Metro DC. And by the way, God has brought the nations to Metro DC. So let's make disciples of the nations right here where we live, knowing there are even Maliha's right here where we live.

Let me pause at that point and say to anyone listening who has been hurt in similar ways to Maliha, who might be tempted to think, "I've been broken in ways so I don't have anything to offer." I want to encourage you that as you walk through what seems like a never-ending process of healing in Jesus' hands, you have so much to offer to those who have no idea Who Jesus is. You have the greatest news in the world for those who are hurting in these ways; the good news that this healing process is not never-ending. Your healing will one day be whole, as a result of His ultimate rescue.

God's glory shines in this broken world, not only through our strengths, but also through our scars. So let's go together, as people who have met Jesus in a broken world, into a broken city right here where we live. Let's lead people to healing in Jesus, then enlist them all in the greatest mission in the world, as we all say, "We're going wherever You lead us, O God," trusting God will lead some, or many, of us to go

on short-term missions to the nations, particularly the unreached. I'm so looking forward to when global travel will resume so we can step back into these opportunities.

Then God is calling some of us to go longer than that. Disciples won't be made and churches won't be multiplied among all these people groups if some people just go take some short-term trips there. At some point, somebody must go and live and work and love among them. There are so many avenues for that to happen; we could spend hours talking about them. There are avenues to leave your job, as the church and others support you, individually or as a family, to live and spread the gospel among the unreached.

There are avenues to leverage your job. So many in this church family have employment where you can take a position overseas. Why not intentionally pursue one of those positions, prioritizing an unreached people group, working there instead of here for the spread of the gospel among people who have never heard it? This is not just in government or multi-national companies. I think about teachers, engineers, nurses—all kinds of medical professionals. I know an organization that has access to 2,000 jobs for nurses and doctors of all kinds, ready to be filled right now, in the Middle East, by Christians who will take them.

Before you go to school, you could do the Radical Gap Year here and spend part of that time among the unreached. Or after you graduate from school, you could work for a year or two among the unreached. McLean Bible Church family, if Mormon families are training their graduating senior daughter or son to spend a year somewhere else in the world spreading a false gospel, why are we not training our children to do that with the true gospel? Retirees, this is not just for younger people. Why not look for opportunities to use retirement money and time for the spread of Jesus' name among people who have never even heard of it?

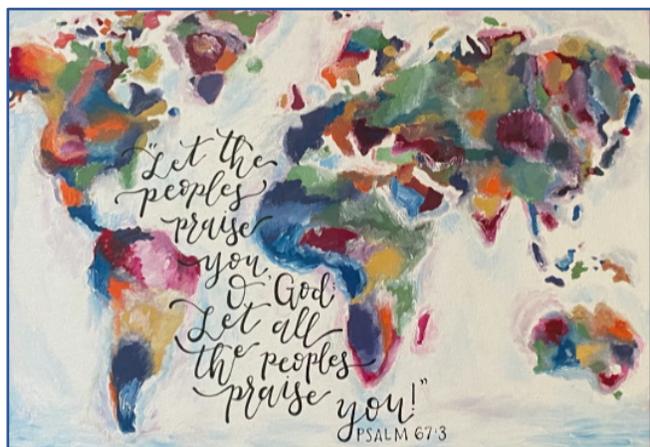
This is a very different way to think about your life in this world, and it's what happens when you actually believe Revelation 5 is the destiny of this world. When you actually realize that Revelation 5 is coming and the purpose of your life in this world is to make the worth of Jesus known around this world, however He leads.

Now, I want to make sure something is really clear before I close and give us an opportunity to respond to what God is saying today. I want to make sure it's very clear, in all this language of ransom and rescue, that we are not the rescuers. That's how mission in the world has often been painted, as people from one part of the world going to rescue and save people in another part of the world. That is not at all what we're talking about here. Church, we're not the rescuers. We are the rescued.

Every single one of us in the church was once trapped in slavery to sin and death. Praise God, somebody loved us enough to tell us that Jesus died to shed His blood to ransom and rescue us. We've seen Him and we've trusted Him with our lives. So now it just makes sense, doesn't it, when we see other people in slavery to sin and evil and suffering in this world, we don't sit back quietly when we know the

One Who can rescue them forever. We give our lives making the worth of the Rescuer—Jesus—known among every people, nation, tribe and language.

Let me show you a picture that hangs on the wall in my house. It's a picture that was painted by girls who have been rescued from trafficking in Maliha's city.



And these are their hands.



This picture was painted by young girls who have come to know Jesus as the Rescuer Who has redeemed them in a way that they can now sing, “Let the peoples praise You, O God. Let all the peoples praise you!” It’s what we’re asking today, as a church: “Who is God calling out from among us to write this story in the lives of more people like Maliha?”

Here’s what I want to invite us to do, everybody to the extent possible. I want to invite you to pull out your phone or similar device if you have one; if not, write this down somewhere. One, if you’ve never experienced the ransom of Jesus, I want to invite you to text JESUS to this number: 571-581-6297. We want to follow up with you so you too can know the ransom Jesus offers. If you’d just like somebody to pray with you or answer your questions, text JESUS.

For all who know Jesus—whether you’re a part of MBC or not—and you’re saying today, “I want to live for the spread of the gospel to the unreached however God wants me to live,” then I invite you to text UNREACHED to 571-581-6297. Here’s what will happen when you do that. You will then receive a link that will give you an opportunity to express one of these four commitments:

1. I will pray for the unreached on a daily basis. This is an opportunity for you to say before God, “I want to do this.” We want to help you with that so we will send you ways you can pray.
2. I will give intentionally for the spread of the gospel to the unreached. If you would say this, then we will send you ways that you can give intentionally for the spread of the gospel to the unreached.
3. I am interested in going on a short-term mission trip. You can check that box and we’ll follow up with you with opportunities for that.

4. I believe God may be leading me to move to the unreached and would like to talk with MBC Global Outreach about that. Now, I want to be clear here. This is not you signing up to get on a plane tomorrow or next week or anytime soon. It's not even you saying, "I've got that figured out." We have a whole process in place through which we discern with you if God is indeed leading you in this way, so this is the first step in the process of exploring that. We as a church family want to explore that with you. I want to invite you to check that box if you are willing to start that conversation.

Let's pray.

God, I pray, as people are going through this response time right now, that Your Spirit would direct them. I pray that You would help us all to be obedient to however You are leading us to spread the good news of Your love among the unreached. So be honored, as we respond and as we worship in this Acts 13 moment. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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