

Opening Prayer

Introduction

On a cold London morning in April 1912... A young Baptist pastor from Scotland carried his only child, a wee six-year-old lass, up a ship's steep gangway, followed closely by his niece. He didn't register the "**chill wind**" **bite** through his worn overcoat & suit. He was too distracted by the excitement he felt. He was returning to **The** Moody College in Chicago for his second 3-month guest-speaker position. He was known back home as a man utterly consumed with God's heart for the lost. His friends described him as "always on fire for God and souls," often praying face-down on the floor while crying out, "O God, give me souls or I die!" This faithfulness endured through the heart-breaking trial of losing his wife from complications following childbirth. The Lord knew his needs and provided for him beforehand. His wife's niece had been living with them for some time before his wife died and she took up the mantle of nanny to his daughter.

Once aboard the ship, John Harper, his daughter Annie—affectionately called Nana— and his niece Jessie, stood at the ship rail and watched all the people below waving to their families and friends as the RMS Titanic left port.

When the Titanic struck the iceberg on that freezing cold night, chaos erupted. As the "unsinkable" ship began to sink, people panicked. Harper made sure his daughter and niece were safely in a lifeboat. Then, instead of fighting for his own survival, he ran through the tilting decks shouting, "Women, children, and the unsaved into the lifeboats first!" He handed out life jackets, preached the gospel to terrified passengers, and urged the ship's band to play "Nearer, My God, to Thee" as a comforting message of hope in a terrifying situation.

Plunged into the icy Atlantic, Harper swam frantically from person to person in the darkness, pleading through chattering teeth: "**Are you saved? Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved!**" One young man, who clung to debris drifting nearby, declined Harper's message. Witnesses later said that even as hypothermia set in, Harper removed his own life jacket and threw it to the man, saying, "You need this more than I do!" Harper pointed him to Christ one last time before he sank into the depths.

John Harper died in the absolute best way that we could ever hope to.

Four years later, at a Titanic survivors' reunion in Canada, that very young man stood up and testified: "I am John Harper's last convert." As he floated alone on that piece of wreckage, he had cried out to "The God" Harper had told him about—and was eternally saved.

We all have a desire to share our faith, to see others saved, to see our families saved. We have to, because that is the desire of the Holy Spirit, and He dwells in us if we're truly born again in Christ Jesus. The Holy Spirit prompts us to reach out to the lost.

But do you heed that prompting. Do you have a passion to share the Gospel? Do you feel an extreme urgency for it? Do you feel **any desperation** for unbelievers? Do you **plead** for them to turn to Jesus?

If not, why not? Isn't this what Jesus died for? Wasn't he mocked, beat, spat upon? The skin on his back literally flailed off when scourged and subsequently crucified, all at the demand of the Jews. **Isra-el**. His **chosen** people.

What will it take for us to be burdened for our unbelieving family, friends and neighbors? Those who know Christmas only as a feast of celebration and not as a feast of redemption?

We're going to focus on 3 points related to a believers' mission, **our** mission, of outreach.

(we'll look at)

1. **The Heart of God**
2. **The Horror of the Lost**
3. **The Hope We Carry**

If a man who literally froze to death in 28° water refused to be silent, then how can we, who have warm homes, worn Bibles, and likely, years of life ahead of us in this world, stay quiet while people around us are perishing unto eternal suffering?

Today, let's follow Pastor Harper's example and allow the Holy Spirit to awaken a passion within us as we study God's Word. Lost people **matter** to God... so they **must** matter to us. Let's pray that tonight every one of us will call out to God, "Here am I, Lord—send me!"

Sharing the gospel flows from God's passionate love for the lost and the Holy Spirit who dwells in us and empowers us to fulfill His command.

The Gospel message is the "great divider,":

- to **Salvation** for those who truly believe Jesus is their Lord and Messiah, and
 - to **Damnation** for those who don't.
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1. The Heart of God

As we examine the scriptures we can see that evangelism flows from **the heart of God**, who desires that **all** people be saved. This is **why** we go.

Keep reminding yourself that evangelism is not optional—it's **The Mission** Jesus has given to every believer. We were called to serve in different individual ministries but the same **Great Commission**: (**Matt 28:19-20**), **19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 "teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you;"** then one of the most comforting things spoken by Jesus, "**and lo, I am with you always, [even] to the end of the age."** Amen.

The end of the age in this world, and eternity in the next.

You've probably heard it said—**and I'll say it again**— Jesus didn't make a suggestion here, He gave us a command. The authority given us "to go" comes from our risen Christ, when he says, "Go and make disciples."

The Great Commission isn't just for those who were called to be missionaries or pastors — it's for **every disciple**. Again, it's not optional; it's the heart of God.

In **Luke 19:10**, Jesus says, "**For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.**" This is why Jesus came and died for us. As it says in **John 4:22**, when Jesus tells the Samaritan woman, "... **salvation is from the Jews.**" He sought out the lost, and His mission has become our mission. The heart of God is set on rescuing those who are far from Him. Let's look back a couple of verses to see the context of this statement that "**He came to seek and to save.**". Starting in Luke 19 verse **8** **Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold."** We see here a repentant man who has found faith in Jesus and Jesus says as much in verse **9** **And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham;** What is He talking about here? Son of Abraham? Don't **all** Jews consider themselves sons or daughters of Abraham? They do, but Jesus is saying they aren't true sons of Abraham because they have moved so far from God. And He "**has come to save that which was lost.**" Here we see Zacchaeus was one of the lost, and now he has become a "real" son of Abraham. He has found true Faith. Faith in Jesus, the Messiah. And it is accounted to him

as righteousness as it was Abraham. **Gen 15:6** And he [Abraham] believed in the LORD, and He [God] accounted it to him for righteousness.

1 Timothy 2:3–4 says, **3** For this [is] good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, **4** who desires **all men** to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. God's will is that **all people be saved**. This isn't just a passing desire — it's **the Heart of God**.

God tells us this throughout the scriptures.

In **John 3:16**, "For God so loved **the world** that He gave His only begotten Son, that **whoever believes** in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. Salvation is available to everyone.

Again His command in **Matt 28:19** "Go therefore, and make disciples of all the nations..."

And... why do we obey? Jesus tells us in **John 14:15** "If you love Me, keep my commandments."

And we do love Him, because He first loved us.

We see in **2 Peter 3:9** that He is waiting so all of us have a chance to answer the Holy Spirit's "call to salvation." Not everyone will accept His gift of grace but He is patient with the lost.

In **2 Pe 3:9** it says, **The Lord is not slack concerning [His] promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.**

His patience is not a sign of indifference, but a **desire to give people time to repent**.

Question: Is it true that every time a bell rings an angel gets his wings?

I don't think so, but I do think that every time someone accepts Christ's gift of Grace there is rejoicing in heaven.

Jesus taught us in **Luke 15: 7** **I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.**

Wasn't this the message Jesus illustrated in the parable of the prodigal son?

Turn to Luke **15:28-32**. The second son in the parable was envious that his rebellious brother is receiving so much affection from his Father. We read, **28** "But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore his father came out and pleaded with him. **29** "So he answered and said to [his] father, 'Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends. **30** 'But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.' **31** "And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. **32** 'It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.' "

There is great joy and celebration for the lost who repent. Every time a soul is saved, God rejoices. When we engage in evangelism, we align with God's heart, participating in the celebration of the saved.

Conclusion:

If lost people matter this much to God, they must matter this much to us. Evangelism is not just a duty — it's an invitation **to share in God's passionate pursuit** of those who are lost. **Think about this:** witnessing to someone and seeing them become saved is a **tremendous** blessing for us, and it is an amazing experience that we will never, ever, have the opportunity to experience again **after** this life is over.

2. The Horror of the Lost

The Horror of the Lost motivates us and helps us to understand why acting immediately is so crucial. Sharing the Gospel has everlasting effects. **Silence is not love** when people's eternal destinies are at stake.

Creeeeeekk! Do you hear that? That's the door of salvation closing. Every living person has an opportunity to repent and accept the Lord's Gift of Grace. That choice won't be available forever. This is why we must go now.

In **Luke 9:59-62** a couple of men in the crowd tell Jesus they want to follow him but they have to take care of other things first. Starting in verse **59** Then He said to another, "Follow Me." But he said, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." **60** Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God." **61** And another also said, "Lord, I will follow You, but let me first go [and] bid **them** farewell, who are at my house." **62** But Jesus said to him, "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

Don't be like these men who wanted to return home to take care of things before they would be ready to follow Jesus. Go immediately. Don't wait until you think you will be ready or that it's convenient.

This is especially important when we acknowledge the fact that we don't know when it's our time to die. Especially in these end times. **Our end, AND the unsaved**, can be at **any** time. **""Blip!""**

Ecc 9:12 says, For man also does not know his time: Like fish taken in a cruel net, Like birds caught in a snare, So the sons of men [are] snared in an evil time, When it falls suddenly upon them.

Or instead of death it might be the Rapture/Tribulation. **""Snap!""** At any time now.

1Th 5:3 For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape.

In **Romans 3:23**, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, The wages of sin is death. Every person without Christ is **under the sentence of eternal separation** from God. Once they are in the lake of fire, who can they cry out to in that eternal torment? Everlasting Hell isn't just a theological concept — it's a **very real and urgent reality**. We must wake up to the gravity of this truth. The Billions of lost are heading for this destination if they aren't saved. **[Rom 6:23] 23 For the wages of sin [is] death, but the gift of God [is] eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

In John 3:18, Jesus says, **18 "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.**

Whoever does not believe stands condemned already. Jesus is very clear: without faith in Him, a person is already in a state of condemnation. This is **the horror of the lost** — people around us are spiritually dead, separated from the hope of eternal life.

That's why the Great Commission is so critical and where we come in. **[Rom 10:17] 17 So then faith [comes] by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Let's proclaim the Word to all!**

Here's the **positive side** of **accepting** the Gospel, **Rev 21:1-7 1 Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. 2 Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God [is] with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them [and be] their God. 4 "And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." 5 Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful." 6 And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. 7 "He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son.**

Here's the **Horrific side** of **rejecting** the Gospel: **Rev 21:8** "But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

God doesn't want any to be condemned.

Ezekiel 33:11 "Say to them: '[As] I live,' says the Lord GOD, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?'

God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked. His heart is not vindictive. He **longs for people to turn from their sin** and find everlasting life in Him and with Him. **He wants to rescue them** — and He calls us to be part of that rescue mission.

Jude v20-23 says, **20** But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, **21** keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. **22** And on some have compassion, making a distinction; **23** but others save with fear, pulling [them] out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh.

We are to "snatch others from the fire." This is not metaphorical. **Hell is real**, and the stakes **are eternal**. When we don't share the gospel, we allow people to walk proud in their rebellion toward eternal destruction.

Paul wrote in **2 Corinthians 5:11**, **Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences.**

Paul is saying when we know God, we also fear God, so we need to persuade men for their own good. The **terror** of standing before a holy God without Christ is real. It will actually happen for unbelievers. Evangelism isn't just a task; it's a **rescue mission**. We are called to warn the world of the eternal consequences of rejecting Christ.

Conclusion:

The **reality of being lost** is not theoretical; it's a very real and very urgent **life-or-death matter**. **We cannot! Must not**, stay silent when eternal destinies are on the line. The Holy Love of God we feel **compels us to speak**.

3. The *Message of Hope We Carry*

The Hope We Carry is the "Gospel Message of Grace" that Jesus offers us to escape their current path toward eternal Hell. Every believer is empowered by the Holy Spirit to share this Hope with others. When we go, it is by His power we are made capable of pursuing souls right up until our last breath. (**as exemplified by Christ while on the Cross**)

Let's look at the crucifixion and the interaction of the three crucified men. [**Luk 23:39-43**] **39** Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, "If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us." **40** But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, "Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? **41** "And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong." **42** Then he said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." **43** And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise."

He wasn't the only one who came to believe the truth of Jesus at that moment.

Mat 27:54 So when the centurion and those with him, who were guarding Jesus, saw the earthquake and the things that had happened, they feared greatly, saying, "Truly this was the Son of God!"

Look what is included in Luke's account.

Luke 23:47 So when the centurion saw what had happened, **he glorified God**, saying, "Certainly this was a righteous Man!"

Even while hanging on the Cross, Jesus brought men to the truth.

Acts 1:8 "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses." Evangelism is not done in our own strength. The **Holy Spirit empowers** us to be bold witnesses, and **He goes with us** to accomplish the mission.

Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.

Here Paul tells us, the gospel is the power of God for salvation. The gospel itself is **powerful**. There's **power in the Word!** We don't have to have all the answers; we just have to share the **message of hope** that saved **us**.

Even a new believer can evangelize with their testimony. You may know nothing in the bible or have any answers to questions, you do have a very powerful witness for unbelievers. Your testimony of what Jesus has done for you. He saved you. You know the gospel message and why you repented and the Holy Spirit now dwells in you. You are full of excitement. Your life is changed. You feel like dancing and rejoicing. As you should. You have entered into the Kingdom of Jesus. Share this with them, the Holy Spirit will give you the words and use you if you let Him.

In **Mark 16:15** Jesus said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.

Going into the world starts **where you are**. The people you know, the places you frequent — this is where you are called to bear witness.

1 Corinthians 9:16 For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel!

"Woe to me!" For Paul, evangelism wasn't just a task or a job — it was **life**. His life was defined by the Great Commission to share the gospel and teach the Word of God!

Remember that comforting statement we looked at before in **Matthew 28:20b** "and lo, I am with you always, [even] to the end of the age." Amen.

Jesus promises His presence in this mission. You are **never** alone. Wherever you go, **He is with you**, providing His strength, His Words, and the opportunities you need.

Lesson Conclusion

Before John Harper disappeared into the two and a half miles of dark, sub-zero water beneath him, he proclaimed, for the last time, the message of Christmas. The message that Jesus came to earth to die in our place, for the punishment we deserve, so we might be saved. We need only to accept His gift of Grace. Harper's example shows us that the Gospel may not spare us from drowning, but it **does** spare us from far worse, an eternal destruction if we don't turn to Jesus and accept His gift of eternal salvation. **Cost? Free! Paid-in-Full by our Lord Jesus.**

For Christmas, let's renew our commitment to the Good News that Jesus brought us; and let us share it with our family and friends. We need more than anything this Christmas to become people of prayer and outreach. Let us share the Good News with people drowning in hopelessness. And let's do it while we still have time.

[Heb 13:20-21] 20 Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, 21 make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom [be] glory forever and ever. Amen.

Here is your homework:

Tonight, think of 3 people you know who are far from God. Then starting tomorrow:

- **Pray** for them by name.
- Ask God for **one opportunity** this week to share your story and invite them to church
- Expect God to open doors and give you the words you need.

We don't have to be experts in evangelism — we just have to be **obedient**. We carry **the greatest hope in the world** — the message that **saves, heals, and transforms**. This is our purpose, our privilege, and our calling.

Closing Prayer