

Our Heavenly Mandate.

No Twenty-three

A pastor from a Presbyterian church in the United States with a strong missions tradition took a group to India to visit an effective work that has seen 100,000 untouchables converted, gathered into churches, and elevated socially and economically. But one member questioned why Hindus should be converted to Christianity. This question reflects the degree of uncertainty among many North American Christians about whether the rest of the world really needs the gospel message. We don't only see fuzzy theologies in many denominations, but the unsettling question we ourselves face is: Do our people, our church leaders, our pastors in North American churches really believe that people are lost without Christ? The time has come for the reaffirmation of the historic belief in the absolute necessity of faith in Jesus for salvation. Missionary work is not an option but a divine mandate. Moments before Jesus ascended to heaven He commissioned His disciples to preach and teach the Gospel throughout the whole world (Matt. 28:19f; Acts 1:8). The ascended Lord directs the missionary endeavour from His throne room in heaven and with His Father sent the Holy Spirit to empower the Church. Over against the false propaganda of the world, we have the mission of Christ's Church. The false prophets, who are leading millions astray, must be opposed by the prophets of truth. We have a story to tell to the nations. And we have no liberty to stop telling it until the ends of the earth have been reached. The spread of the Gospel also heralds the coming again of Jesus Christ, Who said: "This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come" (Matt.24: 14). Our Lord did not say that all individuals must be reached before His return. He addressed nations. The end will come when God will have gathered in the last one of the elect from among the nations. We don't know when the Lord will be finished with His ingathering. New converts may come from the most unexpected places. One of the most exciting developments in missions is the receptivity of the Gospel among Muslims, the translation of the Bible in so many different languages, the use of radio, television and videos in Gospel proclamation, the eagerness of Christians from the Third World to witness to unreached tribes. God uses missionaries and evangelists at home and abroad and the witness of each congregation member to build His church. Stone by stone will be added until His building is complete. A Church awaiting with eager anticipation her Lord's return is involved in consistent mission outreach. We must use the opportunities we still have to carry out our heavenly mandate. Jesus warned: "As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work"(John 9:4).