

# Praising God

by George Verwer

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*George Verwer's sermon emphasizes the importance of praising God amidst challenges and the call to support global missions.*

**Duration:** 38:53

**Scripture:** Psalm 145:1-3, Psalm 148:1-5, Psalm 149:5, Psalm 150:1

**Topics:** "Praising God"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares his recent experience in mainland China and the impact of the gospel in that country. He mentions a friend who brought back slides and shared stories of the work of God in China. The speaker emphasizes the power of prayer and the movement of the Holy Spirit in reaching millions of people in China. He highlights the testimony of a man who, despite being imprisoned and facing hardships, remained joyful and became a radiant witness for Jesus. The speaker encourages the audience to praise God for what is happening in China and reminds them of the importance of praising God in all circumstances.

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## Transcript

I want to read from the Psalms. I want to read starting at Psalm 145, just a couple of verses, because I believe it's such a wonderful thing to begin this conference in praise and thanksgiving. And you're going to have to follow me quickly because I'm going to jump right to the last Psalm.

I still love the old King James Bible. I've been living in England now off and on for 18 years and so I have no trouble understanding this English. If you don't understand the King James then I really apologize and again I'd be happy to talk to you after the meeting and we could, you know, show you what it means.

Let's praise the Lord through the Psalm. I will, Psalm 145, verse 1, I will extol thee my God, O King, and I will bless thy name forever and ever. Every day will I bless thee and I will praise thy name forever and ever.

Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised and his greatness is unsearchable. One generation shall praise thy works to another and shall declare thy mighty acts. Then 146, verse 1, praise ye the Lord, praise the Lord all my soul.

While I live will I praise the Lord. I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being. Put not your trust in princes nor in the son of man in whom there is no help.

His breath goes forth, he returneth to his earth. In that very day his thoughts perish, happy is he that hath the Lord God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God, who made heaven and earth and sea and all therein, who keepeth truth forever. Psalm 147, verse 1, praise ye the Lord, for it is good to sing praises unto our God, for it is pleasant and praise is fitting.

The Lord doth build up Jerusalem, he gathereth together the outcasts of Israel, he healeth the broken in heart and bindeth up their wounds. He appointeth the number of the stars, he calleth them all by their names. Great is our Lord and of great power, his understanding is infinite.

The Lord lifteth up the meek, he casteth the wicked down to the ground. Sing unto the Lord with thanksgiving, sing praise upon the heart unto our God. Psalm 148, praise ye the Lord, praise ye the Lord from the heavens, praise him in the heights, praise ye him all his angels, praise ye him all his hosts, praise ye him sun and moon, praise him all ye stars of light, praise him ye heavens of heaven and ye waters that are above the heavens, let them praise the name of the Lord, for he commanded and they were created.

Verse 5, let the saints be joyful in glory, let them sing aloud upon their beds, let the high praises of God be in their mouths and a two-edged sword in their hand. Psalm 150, verse 1, praise ye the Lord, praise God in his sanctuary, praise him in the firmament of his power, praise him for his mighty acts, praise him according to his excellent greatness. Let's pray and praise the Lord.

Our God and Father, we lift our hearts in praise to you tonight. We thank you for the reality we have in your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank you our great God that you know all about us and love us still and are wanting to bless us in these days of conference together.

You are wanting to renew our vision, you are wanting to refill us with your Holy Spirit, that we will be men of vision and men and women of passion. We thank you for your word which is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our pathway. We thank you for this testimony here in Akron and the power of your Holy Spirit that has been manifest here through many decades.

And we believe that our God we come to you in a spirit of expectation, believing you to move in our midst in these days together. May each one of us not miss our heavenly portion as we wait upon you morning and night, as we gather in your name, as we go the extra mile to discipline our lives and to get into the exposure of your Holy Word and your children who you have brought here from almost every state in the United States and every province of Canada and Mexico and from around the world. Lord we know that it's in your providence and in your divine timing that we are here tonight.

Help us to see this in our own personal individual circumstances, for we pray in Jesus name, Amen. I believe the Lord would have us start this great conference on a note of praise. It's so easy to be negative in these days.

I notice everybody's complaining about Cuba and the Cubans, not everybody but many. How did your great-grandfathers come across? Were they invited over by the president? And I praise God despite whatever difficult circumstances our nation may be facing. And there are always problems that God is God.

And as he brings many interesting people from all over the world into our nation, those who love his name, and we must always love his name even more than our country, are going to take this as a challenge. And this was the challenge I heard in David Vernon's sermon a few weeks ago, to reach people right here in this country. This is as much on our hearts as reaching out to even the ends of the earth.

There was in a campaign we had among Cubans about 17 years ago that a young son of a missionary who had turned agnostic at one of our so-called Christian colleges had his life turned around as the director of OM India today, a work with 350 full-time workers. And I believe God is wanting to do great things. Limits to the complaining and the murmuring and the grumbling and the economic crisis that supposedly our nation is in.

I believe God's people are still to be a people of praise. God's people are still to have a spring in their step and a joy in their heart that cannot be taken away by circumstance or suffering. Just a few weeks ago, at least it seems a few weeks, I was walking the streets of mainland China.

I wish I could have had every person here tonight with me on that short trip into China. It was a brief trip, but one of my closest friends was on a much longer trip. And he brought back with him a series of slides.

And when he got back to England, he showed me these slides and he shared with me. And then we showed them in a public meeting. And there's a cassette tape available in that meeting if you're interested in getting it.

It's not available here, but we could send it to you. And this dear brother Peter Conlon was the first foreigner to interview Wang Mingdao. Now, that name may not mean too much to you, but there is a book called Three Mighty Men of China.

Watchman Nee, whose books you'll find on the book table, one other great Christian leader, and then Wang Mingdao. He was the pastor of what would be equivalent to this church in one of China's great cities. 23 years ago, he was put into prison.

The enormous change from this great pastoral ministry to life in a prison broke his mind. And on a piece of paper, he denied the Lord Jesus Christ and was released from prison. When his mind came back to him out of prison, he went back to the prison a couple of years later and spoke forth his testimony for Christ, asked that this paper be destroyed, and they re-entered him into prison where he was for the next 20 years.

Wang Mingdao has only been released, probably many of you haven't even heard this news yet. With only one tooth in his head, partly blind, unable to hear very well, he gave his testimony and shared on this little cassette that I was able to listen to. And I can tell you, as I heard this man's testimony of joy in a communist Chinese prison, after such a fall and fruitful ministry, to be put into prison with hardly any fellowship, with no Bible most of the time, and yet coming out a radiant witness for Jesus.

I will tell you, if that doesn't cause you to praise the living God, your spiritual battery must be completely dead and you're in trouble. And how we praise God for what is happening in China. In one area alone in China, there are 2,000 house fellowships.

Some of these house fellowships don't have a single Bible. The churches that are now the official churches are often packed. Literature is going in.

When I went in, I carried literature. The customs people didn't even look in my case. Others who have been with us have been carrying two or three huge suitcases in.

The hunger for the Word of God is unbelievable in China at this present time. I might say that I don't feel these things are wise to put into print, in case any of you are newspaper people. But we are faced with a challenge right now in China that I believe every Christian should know about and be praying about.

There is even the slight possibility that our ship Lagos, now in Japan, soon to go to Korea, will be able to go into China. And we're in negotiations now with top-level Chinese leaders about the possible visit of the MV Lagos. It's not an open door for traditional missionaries.

But God in His sovereignty has given us in OM over 100 Chinese young people from Malaysia, Hong Kong, and Singapore. I was just in Singapore. I was speaking on a Saturday night.

They said no one's going to come. I was competing with a world champion badminton tournament. I was competing with the biggest football league in town.

And I was competing with the Chinese New Year. They said no one's coming. By faith, they hired the largest Congress hall, or one of them in Singapore, and 700 Chinese young people were there, many of them recommitting their lives and determining to be missionaries back to their home land of China.

China considers every overseas Chinese as a member of their own country. They can go in, they can buy property, they can study, they can witness. And it's just an unusual open door.

You know, when God led us to become totally international, and this is why we kept a low profile in this country, so that the Asians and the Europeans would be at least in total equal status with Americans, numerically and every other way, little did we know what God had in store in bringing in this army of Singaporeans, clever young people, backed by their churches, more than the average American, because the churches in Singapore mean business, certainly more than the average church in this country. God is moving in Asia. Some estimate there may be two million believers still worshiping the Lord Jesus in China.

Some say four million. Now that isn't much compared to the population of a billion souls. But what can happen as we pray and as the Spirit of God moves among these two or four million, and as they begin to fan out across China, armed with literature and cassettes and films, that by God's grace we would like to be able to supply them.

I believe China stands as the great challenge of the Church of Jesus Christ. Tuesday night, as we gather here for a night of prayer, in which all of you are welcome, usually only a half night of prayer, so don't be afraid. You can leave when you want.

We will be praying for China, and we will be believing God for great things. I remember when I was a student at Moody, in our nights of prayer, we would take a whole hour just to pray for China, 23 years ago. We even assigned different cities to different students.

And Greg Livingston, now the director of the North African Mission, came to me recently and he said, Hey, I'm still praying for that city you asked me to pray for in China. And now some of our young people, Chinese-speaking young people, are moving in those cities, sharing Jesus Christ. I will tell you, it was an emotional experience for my wife and I, after 23 years of prayer, to walk the streets of China.

You know, we hardly saw a private car. It's a land still gripped in poverty, though not starvation. And when you walk into the Chinese city, as we did, you are just faced with just hundreds and thousands of bicycles, and then thousands of people walking.

One of the most crowded cities I've ever seen was this small city we were visiting in this bus tour in southern China. Will you pray for China? Would you sign up as a prayer partner with Operation Mobilization, making use of this little coupon so that we can keep you informed about where the ship is? Most people don't even know where our ships are from the United States. And sometimes people are praying for the ship in England, and in fact it's in South America.

It's like a phone call I made to the church tonight. I think the OM people are taking care of the switchboard just suddenly, at least one of the numbers. And apparently the one who normally does the job went off for supper and someone new was just given the switchboard.

And so I phoned in to this great church and I said, can I speak to David Vernon? And the fellow said, well, I'm not sure where he is right now. Can you tell me, is he with the church? That's the truth. And I said, well, actually he's the pastor of the church.

That poor fellow probably had a heart attack. So if you phone in these days and you get some unusual answers, don't be discouraged. Just get in your car or get on your horse and come on over here because God is going to be moving in this place, I believe, in these next three days in a mighty way.

And then I'm praising God for what he is doing in India. I no longer can get a visa in India long-term. So we were aboard a ship and just went into the Bombay Harbor for a couple of days.

And our leaders, about 25 of them came together from all over the nation. I think it was in God's providence that I, in 1968, could no longer get back into India long-term. I moved to Nepal for a couple of years.

Then I moved down to the ship for a couple of years around the ports because that forced us to make the work even more Indian and based on Indian leadership. And God has given us some of the finest Christian leaders we have in our entire work worldwide from among these Indians. We now have some 350 full-time in India.

And I would ask you to pray for that work. We're launching into a massive campaign to reach 10 million people with the word of God in Maharashtra, one of the states that we have not worked in very much. Almost every day there are several people who come to Jesus Christ through this testimony in India.

As young men move out with films and with preaching, in church planting, in Bible studies, and mainly in discipling young Indians to evangelize and reach their own nation with the gospel of Jesus Christ. We're told here in Psalm 145, one generation shall praise thy works to another and shall declare thy mighty acts. I will speak of the glorious honor of thy majesty and of thy wondrous works.

And it's that scripture, the freedom just to share with you some of the things that God is doing. I don't feel a burden when I come here to teach the word of God as I believe this church has some of the finest Bible teaching and more Bible teaching than any church you could find. And so I feel that what I come with must be complimentary.

It must be to share in a different way. But of course, anything I say will have to be rooted and grounded in the scriptures. And that's why tomorrow night I'm going to speak on what the Bible says about that great subject.

Verse three, great is the Lord, greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable. You know, it's easy to praise the Lord for something that happens locally, and there's nothing wrong with that. My aunt and uncle from Pittsburgh, who I hardly ever see, drove here from Pittsburgh to be with us yesterday.

They were here this morning. They drove back, and as they drove into the driveway in Pittsburgh a few hours ago, I just spoke with them on the phone, they saw a strange sight as a tornado had whipped right through their backyard and destroyed 20 trees and barely touched the house at all, or their two children who were left behind. And of course, my aunt, who's a very outgoing dear southern belle, she was really ding-a-linging on the telephone an hour ago.

And there's nothing wrong with that. Praise God when he answers prayer locally. George Mueller, at the end of his life, had 20,000 answers to prayer.

He kept a list. He prayed in by faith, equivalent to a hundred million dollars. And when we see God provide, when we see God provide to fill that ship with fuel, we don't do that anymore.

We just go day by day. If any of you are digging in the backyard in the coming week and you discover some oily material, just just phone me, and I'm sure we can make a special deal. You'd have a lifetime free trip on our ship.

But I would ask you to really pray, because it's the most unbelievable crisis that in some ways we could ever face. And it's wonderful to praise the Lord for that which happens in your own life. But I believe it takes a greater degree of spiritual reality and vision and passion to praise God for what he's doing in other places and other countries, even if you are in a situation where it seems that God at present is not hearing your prayer.

And maybe as you praise God for what he's doing in other lives, and maybe as the Lord is able to deliver you from living in too small of a world, you will then see also a greater touch of blessing in your own situation. It's so easy to pull down the shades and to live in our own little isolated world. This is why there are many, many people in the United States now, even in the evangelical community, who don't really feel that world missions is a priority.

And this is sad. And I pray that we may see that world missions is still a priority, because it's a priority with God, and because we base our actions on God's word. And then I had to praise the Lord for what I saw in the Middle East, the toughest situation we are in.

I was in Egypt. Our work is very much linked with the local churches. And it was exciting to hear yesterday that almost 50 people have gone from this church to be involved in O.M. Very ordinary people.

All kinds of people, of course. And that's a great challenge. When I was in Egypt, I was talking to some of the leading pastors, and I wanted to see what they felt about the work, because personally, to be honest, I felt we weren't getting very far in Egypt.

And we're willing to close the work down in a country. We're not trying to build monuments or put a name on the letterhead. And those pastors shared with me that they felt the O.M. team there, several of whom

already know Arabic, they felt that they were fitting into the situation.

They felt they were among them. And they begged me to keep O.M. going in Egypt. And they shared a number of other very positive reactions.

A pastor at one of the largest Presbyterian churches in the country. Very Bible-believing people. And I will tell you, I was praising God when I sailed out of Egypt.

The next country I went to was Israel, another land where O.M. has made an enormous impact. Probably 80% of all the believers in Israel would know about O.M. and would appreciate what they are doing in that country. Most of these lands, we do not work under the name of O.M. We just work.

And Israel is a unique land where we're having an open door, both among the Arabs and among the Jews. And it's exciting to see the word of God going out and the open door in that country. I've never been able to do much touring in my 10 or, I guess, 7 or 8 trips to Israel.

I've always been so busy speaking 2 or 3 times a day. I've never had a chance to tour. Well, my wife, she's very much into prophecy.

I'm not the prophecy type. My wife's into prophecy. And she wanted to visit all these places, the Dome of the Rock.

So for the first time, we went around and we just saw a little bit of some of these places. You know, as we stood on that hill that looked over that field where the battle of Armageddon will someday take place, we were made aware again. We see the budding of the fig tree that we don't have much time to obey God in world evangelism.

The writing is on the wall. I believe now is the hour to pull the stocks out. Now is the hour more than ever to lay our lives totally on the altar and to commit ourselves to evangelism, both home and abroad.

And I pray that even during these days together, as we deal with some of the practical implications of spiritual reality and the spiritual warfare, that it will lead to one of the truly great evangelistic thrusts of this decade. There's so much I would love to share with you about what he's doing across the world. The answers to prayer in Europe.

I've just been ministering at Cambridge and Oxford University. I cannot tell you what a challenge that was as I came in the footsteps of Billy Graham, who was just there and who made an enormous impact on those two universities. And there are dozens and dozens of students going on for Christ now who came to Christ just a few weeks ago in those unusual meetings.

And again and again, Billy had the opportunity to face the whole nation of Britain on television, and they threw the most weird, difficult questions. And God gave him the grace to present the saving grace of Jesus Christ right there on the media across Britain. And there are 55 million people in Great Britain speaking about world missions.

And again, God has given us a nucleus of young men in this country, perhaps because of our low profile and because of the complicated evangelical situation. O.M. has never broken into the university scene very much. We get some, a few dozens.

But in Europe, our whole work is in basically the university scene. I think this is one of the reasons I find even here in Aix, people do not understand Operation Mobilization. They maybe meet someone who goes on O.M., who maybe would not have been accepted by another mission, maybe would not have so much education.

And they, because of their mentality, feel, well, you know, this mission takes these people who are not really quite women, don't have all their act together, and you know, what kind of a movement is it? But you know, God uses all kinds of people. And it's worked out in his sovereign purposes that in O.M. we have a little humbler group of Americans, because I can tell you, the Europeans don't want to work with the people who've got it all in here and not too much down here. If you have the balance, which is an unusual combination, and we've got some of those, I can assure you, out of this country as well, from our seminaries and from our colleges, then of course that kind of person will make an impact whatever country he's working in.

And I would ask you to pray for Great Britain. I would ask you to pray for these universities, as we're now having a ministry in almost every university in the British Isles. And God is calling out men and women to serve him.

Remember the Cambridge 70? Men like C.T. Stunt? Does the name of Hudson Taylor mean anything to any of us? I'm sure it does. And this nation is still in God's program. We're expecting over 400 British recruits to launch out with us this summer.

We're having an increasing number of pastors and Christian leaders spending a summer with us. There's a booklet that'll be available on the literature table of a pastor of one of Britain's largest churches who just spent his second term of service in India, and it's revolutionized his whole congregation where I was just ministering again a few weeks ago. God is working in Britain, that country where they say only seven percent of the people go to church.

A recent survey says it's 13 percent. In a few weeks I'll be speaking at the Keswick Convention, where four, five, six thousand will gather in the name of the Lord. At the Filey Convention, nine thousand gather in the name of the Lord.

God is working in Europe. We're seeing even more unusual works of God in Germany, Sweden, and Switzerland. All very small numerically compared to what you have here, but at the same time real, because God's great concern is not necessarily numbers.

And I hope that many of us during these days will sense a greater linking with Europe. We have a number of Europeans with us. The coordinator of our conference here from the OM side is from Great Britain, a former chief engineer on the N.V. Dulas.

He's on shore leave, and I think he's wanting to leave and go back to the engine room on the ship, but he's coordinating this conference meanwhile. Actually we have young people here from almost every single state in the United States, every province in Canada, Mexico, South America, and many nations of Europe and other parts of the world. I believe it's truly an international conference that God has brought us together to celebrate in his name.

Yes, we have much to praise the Lord for. At the same time, it's important to keep all of this in balance. And a verse that helps me keep things in balance is found in 2 Corinthians 6. If you could turn with me for

our sort of closing remarks.

If you know me, you know that I try to squeeze in at least three messages to each session, much to the frustration of those who attempt to take notes. But I want to look at 2 Corinthians 6. I would love to expand that whole chapter, but I'll leave that to David. And I'll just speak on verse 10 to bring what I've said into balance.

It speaks of the true believer, the true disciple of Jesus Christ. And it starts, of course, right up there in verse 1. And the crescendo picks up as we get to verse 9, as unknown and yet well known, as dying and behold we live, as chastened and not filled, as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing and yet possessing all things. What a paradox.

And that chapter presents one of the most powerful pictures of what a true minister and true worker of God is. As it says in verse 1, we are workers together with him. And so though there is much to praise God for, and the gospel is advancing across the world, and there are new churches planted every day, our own fellowship alone has reached a quarter of a billion people with the Word of God.

250 million we have presented face-to-face through preaching or personal evangelism, which is our main method, or through literature. And yet we realize we're now in a world of 4.4 billion, according to what I read this morning. What a challenge.

And I believe God is wanting to cause some of us during these days to begin to live in the light of population explosion, to begin to live in the light of the global village in which we find ourselves. One of our main leaders came to this conference on a Freddy Laker flight to Florida for \$120, London to Miami for \$120. Through going back and forth, she saved \$200 on that trip, and with \$200 she can buy an unlimited continental airline ticket that covers the entire United States.

It's unbelievable in the age of inflation. We live in a global village, and it doesn't take much even to move an army like the young people are here to Europe. And they probably, including their travel expenses, will function far cheaper in Europe this summer, including the air travel, than any of the young people I can assure you who stay around here and are tempted to spend money in many interesting ways.

What a challenge. Population explosion. And so on the one hand we're praising God, we see the open doors, we see what He's doing.

I'm overwhelmed with what He's doing in our small fellowship. I used to sense that I was leading the work, now I sense I'm following it by, by, by, by a long way behind. Watching God work through an army of men, many of them more committed than I am, certainly more disciplined than I am, many of them certainly smarter than I am, with a greater knowledge of the Word of God than I've ever had.

And I just, I just, I don't even know what I'm doing half the time. This is why I'm emphasizing praise, because when I feel so totally overwhelmed I just have to praise God. And yet at the same time, there are the moments of sorrow.

And I would be, I would be a deceiver if I didn't share some of the things that, that cause our hearts to ache. I was listening to a great Anglican preacher at a funeral, funeral of one of my closest friends a year ago, a man who was the chairman of our board of directors in England, a great businessman, who died suddenly of a heart attack. And I heard one of the most powerful sermons at a funeral I've ever listened to, and he spoke about the legitimate value of sorrow.

Last Sunday in my office when a long-distance phone call came in from Singapore, and one of my closest friends in this world who worked with me in pioneering the ship Lagos as the chief engineer suddenly threw cancer, and then his heart giving out went to be with the Lord. Fifty-some years of age, four children left behind. And as I talked to his wife a few minutes later in Australia on the telephone, I can tell you I was weeping.

Every funeral I've ever gone to I've wept. I used to feel guilty about this, and this preacher at this funeral recently just really helped me to understand that God understands when we are sorrowful. Some of you are sorrowful about things that have happened, and this is legitimate.

You can't dwell there. Jesus wept. Paul wept.

You can weep, but you can't dwell there. And I feel sorrowful tonight for a number of things, things far more traumatic even than the death of a close friend. Another one of my close associates, though I didn't know him very well, just driving back to our base in Bihar, one of the neediest states in all of North India just a few weeks ago, in a very freak way this young man in his early 20s, a tree, fell on him on his bicycle, and he was dead within minutes.

It was just a year ago, my wife's birthday, one year and a few days ago, June 2nd, one of our men on the doorstep of his own home in Turkey was gunned down and killed by terrorists. I will tell you Billy Graham once said life at its best is filled with sorrow, and I believe it. And I am one of those who is tonight sorrowful and yet always rejoicing.

I feel sorrowful because I feel that opportunities across the world are being missed by the Church of Jesus Christ. In our own feeble fellowship, and we are only one, and perhaps one of the more feeble efforts that God has in the world today, opportunity after opportunity is missed. Millions seem to slip in eternity that we could have reached but we did not reach.

And so often it's because God's people don't seem to have the vision. God's people seem to be caught up in other things, and this includes even at times the very people who are on Operation Mobilization. If you think OM represents some group of super disciples, if you think this group of young people are some kind of reincarnation of the Book of Acts, you are going to be in for some big surprises this week.

But I can tell you I believe these young people know what they want, and they have set their sights on the Lord, and they have set their sights on New Testament Christianity, and some of them are tired of words, and they're longing to drink deep at the wells of living water which we pray will flow in these days together as we worship and as we pray. I am convinced that a church like this and a gathering like this has potential to shake the entire world for Jesus Christ. If one woman could pray in New Jersey, send me a Gospel of John that led to my conversion in the beginning of this movement that has touched a quarter of a billion souls, what can happen as we seek God's faith in these days together? As we come become, as C.T. Studd once said, not nibblers of the possible but grabbers of the impossible.

As we come together in our sessions with a spirit of expectation, believing God for great things. Matthew 9 says the harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few. And one of the things that breaks my heart and makes me sorrowful is that so few recruits are coming from North America in comparison to the size of the church.

One missionary leader says there's an increased interest in missions evident at Urbana but not an increase of dedicated committed men and women who are willing to put feet on their prayers and feet on their talk and move out to the Muslim world and to the unreached people which we of course are concerned about. I think of the Lord Jesus Christ as he walked along the Sea of Galilee recorded in Mark chapter 1. And it says, and Jesus said unto them, speaking to Simon and Andrew who were casting nets, and Jesus said unto them, come after me and I will make you become fishers of men. And straight away, immediately, immediately they forsook their nets and they followed him.

And when he had gone a little farther he saw James the son of Zebedee and John his brother who also were in the boat mending their nets. And straightway he called them and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and went after him. In the next chapter we find Jesus approaching a tax collector, a really weird fellow.

Jesus said follow me and he arose and followed him. And I believe with all my heart that the Lord Jesus Christ as he was in their midst along the Sea of Galilee is in our midst here in this chapel tonight. And I believe Jesus is walking among us though the word of God tells us he is also in us by his Holy Spirit.

That's even more significant. And I believe in these days he wants to say to some of you, follow me. Now we know in a real sense every believer is a missionary.

Whether you're working for a tire company or whether you're working for IBM or whether you're with OM, every believer is a missionary. Commitment and discipleship is for everyone. But we know also that in order to get the great job done that God has called the church into doing, he called and leads, I like that word better, he leads some to forsake their nets.

And I feel, though I strongly believe in both, that in these days God is wanting to say to some of you as Jesus said to those fishermen, follow me, I will make you a fisher of men. You don't come with all your credentials, you don't come already fully equipped to be a missionary in the Muslim world, to be able to communicate cross-culturally in southern India or China, but you come as those fishermen abandoning your previous occupation and ready to say, Lord here am I, send me. My heart breaks that there are not more who are volunteering.

And my heart breaks that so many when they do volunteer, their churches are not interested and in fact often discourage them. It would not be true here, I know. The very fact that you have welcomed this vagabond band of spiritual nobodies into your fellowship is a humbling experience for most of us, I can assure you.

Yes, sorrowful, but always rejoicing. And I pray that through the week as we see the different sides of the story, that by God's grace we will become this kind of person who sees the situation, who is not afraid to face the reality, and who is willing to weep, and yet who is always rejoicing. The joy of all of our Lord is our strength.

And through that I believe we will become an unstoppable people for God. Let us pray. Let us have a moment of silent prayer.

I'm going to give a special invitation for anyone interested in the possibility of World Missions serving Jesus with OM or any other group to remain behind in this auditorium after the meeting for a time of brief prayer and questions and answers. A lot of things I would like to do, a lot of things you would like to do, but

if you're serious about being a fisher of men, even if it's only in the question stage, you want some questions answered, you want miscommunications ironed out, anyone, maybe you just want to be a more fervent prayer warrior, I'm going to give this invitation to just remain behind, whether it be few or many, and I'm just going to share for about 15 minutes and answer questions. Of course, a more important invitation is even now, right where you're seated, to make a deeper commitment of your life to Jesus Christ.

To say, Lord, I'll be a fisher of men, show me your will. Because Jesus Christ perhaps is not physically walking among us, it takes greater faith, and that means it sometimes will take more time and prayer and discussion and fellowship with the Church to make such a decision. But at least we need to begin moving by faith in the right direction.

There is no such thing as a no-risk road if you're a follower of Jesus Christ. We're to be gamblers for God in the right sense, and I pray that some right now in this moment will in their heart take a step of faith, and to a deeper walk with Christ, and to know where he wants you to go, and do what he wants you to do, whatever the cost. Let's have a moment of silent prayer as we make these commitments.

He will hear you, just tell him you're worthy. Maybe there's someone away from the Lord. You can't, in one sense, think about missions.

You're drifting away from God in spiritual lukewarmness, but maybe someone doesn't even know Jesus Christ personally. This could be your moment of commitment, decision, as you trust Christ, or as you come back to Christ. Take this moment to pray in your own heart right now.

Lord Jesus, you know all about us, and you love us still. You know the particular sorrows and burdens and struggles that many of us may be facing at this time in our lives. We don't have to pretend that there's nothing that bothers us.

We don't have to pretend that our hearts aren't aching over a certain situation or circumstance, and Lord, I know I can't pretend, but at the same time we are your people, and we are a praising people. We are a rejoicing people. We are a victorious people, and we are learning how to drink deep at those wells of living water.

We are indwelt by your Holy Spirit who is wanting to fill us day by day and make us the men and women that we should be, that we may go where you want us to go and do what you want us to do, whatever the cost. Don't allow any of us to cop out of what you're trying to say to us in these days together, but enable each one of us to come to your cross afresh and to deny self and to take up that cross and follow you in fervency and love and zeal. Oh God, we pray that you would grant this in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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