

Text: Revelation 5:9

Title: “A Vision for the Nations”

ILLUSTRATION – Fifty years ago last week an event occurred in New York City that most of us never knew happened, and yet it affects our lives today. On March 13, 1964 Kitty Genovese got off work at about 3am, drove home, parked her car and walked toward her apartment door. Immediately she was met by a suspicious man. She turned to run, but the attacker caught up with her and stabbed her. Kitty screamed for help, and one neighbor heard her and yelled for the attacker to stop. He stopped the attack momentarily, but then returned to attack a second and third time. It wasn't until about a half-hour later that the police were finally called. As it turned out 37 people witnessed the murder of Kitty Genovese and didn't call the police. The event shocked New York City. The question was asked, “What's wrong with our city that 37 people could watch a murder and not do something to stop it?” The attack, and the investigation after it, caused psychologists and sociologists to coin a phrase called the “Genovese Syndrome,” a term that describes the phenomenon that people are less likely to take responsibility for an action or inaction when others are present. The theory is that people assume that someone else is responsible for taking action, or that someone else has already done so.

Christians are not immune to the Genovese Syndrome. It's easy for us to assume that because there are millions of us, then surely someone has their eye on the billions around the world who have not heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

And so my aim this morning is to stir you up to care about the 6 billion people on the face of this earth who do not speak the same language we speak, who do not have the same customs we have, who do not have the advantage of a Gospel saturated society like many of us have enjoyed. I pray that God will awaken in you a desire to join God in developing passionate followers/disciples of Jesus Christ among all the nations on the face of this earth.

Matthew 28:19 - Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

So because Jesus commanded it, it must be the concern of the entire church that the entire commission of Jesus be fulfilled ... disciples made of all nations.

Mark 13:10 - And the gospel must first be preached to all nations.

And because of the purpose of Jesus this must be the passion of the church in every land ... to feel the necessity in each of our hearts for the priority of preaching the Gospel to the nations.

I'm afraid that many of American church members in the 21st century are afflicted with a kind of spiritual shortsightedness. If we care at all about the lost around us, it is typically for those who are just around us. Sure we want every member of our family to be saved. And if we are intentional about it we care that our neighbors, co-workers and classmates are saved. But that's where it stops for most of us. All the while Jesus commands us to join Him in what He is doing to insure that the Gospel is preached to all nations.

This is the vision of God that heaven will be populated with people from every imaginable distinction among human beings. Turn with me to Revelation 5:9. The Apostle John is transported to heaven where he sees and hears what's going on in heaven. And as you're turning I want to remind you that next Sunday I am beginning a new series of messages that will take us through Easter entitled "Heaven ... Really?"

Revelation 5:9 - And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.

Here we see the vision and the purpose of God in the death of his Son, the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ. The make-up of the population of heaven is not by human chance; that is that it just so happened that people were saved from all these groups of people. In fact, we know that there are some groups of people who are so resistant to God that it's virtually humanly impossible for people to be saved from that group. The only way people will be saved is that God would move on the hearts of believers to take the Gospel to them, and that God would work in the hearts of those who hear the Gospel that they would believe. And God intends for this to happen in every imaginable distinction among human beings.

God purchased people from every tribe, language, people and nation. He paid dearly for their redemption through the death of His Son Jesus Christ. Their souls have been purchased; they must not be left unclaimed.

To help us get a better picture of what this challenge looks like in our day and in churches like ours, I've invited some friends to help me out. If you don't already know them, let me introduce you to Bill and Frankie Falkner, as well as Neal and Jana Seaborn.

Neal and Jana are new members of our church. They have served for 23 years with the International Mission Board, having served for many years in the Philippines. Their current assignment is as IMB Personnel Consultants for Texas and Oklahoma. In that capacity they assist people who are feeling the call of God to the mission field somewhere in the world. Some of you may know Neal from his days of growing up here in Fort Worth.

Bill and Frankie Falkner are temporary residents here in Fort Worth. Their son and daughter-in-law, Kyle and Toni Falkner, are very active members of our church. Bill and Frankie have been with the IMB since 1994. They have served in a variety of different capacities, primarily in Canada. Their current assignment is as Personnel Consultants for Special Projects working with the office of Global Strategy.

- SEABORNS: When Jesus and other NT writers speak of the "nations" (*ta ethne*) they have in mind more than just nations like the ones that were represented in the Winter Olympics as we watched them march in under each country's flag. The word means more than countries with borders and capitals and governments. Today we call them "people groups." Help us understand this concept as it pertains to the task of global missions. What is an Unreached, Unengaged People Group (UUPG)?

Our church has adopted a UUPG ... the Rama Shatriya people group in southwestern India in the state of Karnataka where our church has partnered for many years. Let's pray for them now.

- **FALKNERS:** Our church partners with the International Mission Board (IMB) and the North American Mission Board (NAMB) through our giving to the Cooperative Program in our budget (9%) as well as through our World Missions Offering. Give us a picture of this great army of missionaries that are working to fulfill the Great Commission here in the United States and to the world beyond.
- **SEABORNS:** As we think about the task of penetrating these various "nations" or people groups in our own country and around the world, what are the greatest challenges we face? What parts of the world are in need of missionaries? What special skills are needed?
- **FALKNERS:** For many years you were involved in preparing missionary families to go into the great urban centers of the world with the Gospel. Briefly describe for us the process of discerning God's call to missions all the way to assignment and commissioning.
- **SEABORNS AND FALKNERS:** What encouragement would you have for us as a church as we strive to be engaged in the great task of joining God in developing passionate followers of Jesus among the nations?

CONCLUSION

What does it look like for members of Travis Avenue Baptist Church to join God in developing passionate followers of Jesus among the nations? If the entire church feels the weight of responsibility to fulfill the entire mandate of Jesus what does it mean for us? (Write down five words on your note sheet this morning.)

1. It means we will have a genuine **INTEREST** in and concern for the people groups of the world. Do everything you can to learn about the various cultures of our world and their spiritual, physical and emotional needs. And that leads me to the next thing it will mean for us.
2. It means that, armed with this information, we will **INTERCEDE** in very specific and strategic ways for people from the nations to be saved. It won't cut it to simply pray for God to save the lost and help the missionaries. We must be more specific and strategic than that.
3. It means we will **INVEST** our financial resources so that the Gospel can be preached to the nations. It's like we need to have a wartime mentality. Some in our older generations remember during WWII that all the energies of the nation had to be focused on defeating the enemies of freedom around the world. So there was rationing and conserving of resources so that more could be made available for the war effort. As believers in the 21st century we must trim down our lives so that we can give more away for the effort of taking the Gospel to the nations. It means **INCONVENIENCE** for us. Something has to give if we are going to get more resources to reach the nations. As you give your tithes and offerings to our church 10% of that goes to the Cooperative Missions through the Cooperative Program of the SBC and through Tarrant Baptist Association. As you give designated gifts to our World Missions Offering, those funds go

directly to the IMB, NAMB and for state missions. And as you give to our Wings Offering you directly assist individuals in our church who are going on short-term mission trips.

It means we will directly **INVOLVE** ourselves in going. Perhaps it will mean for you that you will sign up for one of our short-term trips in the coming months. In your worship folder today there's information about several trips that are forming. Maybe the first step for you in getting a vision for the nations is to take part in one of the short-term mission projects. For others, you are feeling the tug of the Holy Spirit that God wants you to prepare to move to another part of the world or our nation to spend your life proclaiming the Gospel to people groups.