

Missions Emphasis Sunday 2025

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Date: 02 November 2025

Preacher: Ramesh Landge

[0 : 00] It was approximately 15 or 20 years ago, the last time that Ramesh, the one who will be sharing today, was here in Spokane and that fourth.

We could not remember exactly the date of how long it was ago, but Ramesh has been here many years ago. And I've asked Ramesh to share with us, in part because I'm a little burdened for the nation of India.

Why is that? Something happened in April of 2023. I don't know if you took note of it, but it was in that month, in 2023, when the nation of India eclipsed China and being the most populated nation in the world.

There are 1.46 billion people in the nation of India with many, many unreached people groups. And so Ramesh ministers in a nation that is very strategic for the gospel.

And yet only two point something Ramesh will probably share with us. Only a little over two, less than 3% of the population are Christian.

[1 : 19] What an opportunity. And so I'm eager for you to have the privilege to hear from Ramesh and his wife, Gloria. And so Ramesh, would you please join me on stage?

And I appreciate you coming all the way from India to join us and welcome. Good morning, church. I'm so grateful to be with you this morning here. And I want to thank Pastor Scott, all the elders of the church, and especially Nancy and Dave for hosting us in their home all these days.

So thank you. Without you, I wouldn't have been here. And it's such a great joy. You know, this has been a missions week and so many missionaries from around the world that they are here.

And they all have been speaking about the work of God they have been doing in their respective countries. The work of God they've been doing in order to advance the kingdom of God.

[2 : 25] So I'm so grateful to hear your story and know how God is working over there. And I was told that since this is going to be a mission week, so let's talk something about why we should do work of the Lord.

And what is kingdom of God? You know, when we see Bible, when Jesus came, he started preaching kingdom of God.

When he came, he said, kingdom of God is here. I'm here. I'm with you. What does that mean for the church?

You know, when we look at the word term kingdom of God, it's simply God's rule. And it's God is in charge of heaven. And he has his kingdom.

And his will is done whatever he will say. So what does he mean when he says that your kingdom is here, that his kingdom is here?

[3 : 27] So we can describe this kingdom in three parts. First thing we can say that first category is when Jesus came into this world, he started preaching that kingdom of God is at hand.

And he proved that by healing the sick, he started driving away the demons. He started doing the work that he was supposed to do, liberating the people.

And he proved that kingdom of God is here. And he says that I have to continue to preach the word of God. So he went on and continued to do the work that he was sent to do.

The second category of the kingdom of God, when we talk about it is kingdom of God in the hearts of the believer. Today, we are gathered here and we are gathered here by the fact that we have believed in his word.

We have repented of our sins and we come in his presence as a new creation, a new believer. So that is the second category we can say.

[4 : 35] And the third category is Christ's kingdom on earth when he is going to come during his second coming. That is going to be the millennium, thousand year reign.

And when we see Bible, the purpose of Jesus was all these gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, whatever he did, whatever he preached, whatever he spoke, everything was regarding kingdom of God.

We try to look into all the aspects of what he has been speaking to us. Because every time he unfolded the mysteries of the kingdom of God, the kind of parables he gave, the teachings he gave, and he was speaking about the house built on rock.

He was trying to say that my kingdom is built on his word. And this is what he wanted to emphasize through the different parables when he spoke about the prodigal son.

And he was trying to explain the forgiveness in kingdom, the kind of forgiveness that will happen over there. And when he was speaking about the laborers in the vineyard, he was speaking that reward in the kingdom.

[5 : 51] Everybody is going to share the same kind of reward, whether you have worked for 30 years, 40 years, 50 years. We all share the same reward. And when he spoke about new patch on old garment, this is the fashion these days.

He was speaking that something old, something new, we cannot enter into the kingdom of God by having all our old nature and going into the kingdom.

He wanted us to say that you need to be totally renewed. You need to be a new creation in order to enter into the kingdom of God. And when he gave example of great banquet, he wanted to say that there is joy in the kingdom.

There is feasting in the kingdom. We would be present in the presence of bride and groom.

And his church will be there and there is going to be joy in the kingdom. And when he spoke about the pearl of great price, he was speaking about the cost of the kingdom, that it is not easy and it is expensive.

[7 : 05] And he has paid the price. And when he spoke about the lost sheep, he was trying to explain about the least are cared in his kingdom. Everybody is looked after and God is the one who is going to go out and search people who are lost.

And that is why Jesus came into the world. And when he spoke about the virgin, he wanted to say that we need to be prepared. We just can't say, can't take our life easy.

We have to be prepared. So he was speaking about the preparedness. And when he spoke about a good Samaritan, he was speaking about creed of the kingdom. What is expected out of the kingdom.

So this is what kingdom of God, everything that he did, everything he spoke, everything was about kingdom of God. And this is same with regard to when we started our church planting ministry in India.

We wanted to plan out what should we do, how we go into the community, country that we live in, where we have over 33 million gods and goddesses.

[8 : 20] And they have God for every occasion, for every purpose they have a God. How do we present Jesus to them? And we sat with our team and we discussed what should we do.

And we discussed that, okay, let's do what Jesus did. He went to the places where people were hurting. He went to the places where people were in need.

And he started preaching. He started meeting their needs. So we also started doing some of those work. We said we just cannot go and preach the gospel and expect people to turn to God because they have 33 million gods.

So they will have a lot of alternatives. As Pastor already said that we are 1.4 billion. And out of this 1.4 billion, we have more than 3,000 unreached people group, which have not been reached out so far, which have not been able to have scripture in their word, in their language.

So we decided, okay, what we can do. So we analyzed what Jesus had been saying. You know, Jesus, once again, he said in Luke chapter 13, 18, he wanted to simplify after having given all these parables his disciples, they never understood.

[9 : 47] So he wanted to simplify. He said, what shall I compare kingdom of God with? He says kingdom of God is like mustard seed. Kingdom of God is like yeast, liven, which grows slowly, which grows small, and it grows big.

We went out into the community and we started looking how we might be able to share the kingdom of God instead of just having that head knowledge among ourselves and try to do things that we were doing.

So we went out into the community and we started working with the children. As you will see some of those photographs, some of the slides.

As we went out into the school, into the community, started schools for the children. And in the past 30 years, as we started those schools, we have several thousand children who accepted the Lord. We not only met the needs of the children by providing them what they did not have, because most of the children, as we see, city of Delhi that I live in, it has over 35 million people living in.

[10:57] And out of those 35 million people, about 30% of the people, they live in the slums. They come from various areas and they do not have, when they come into the city, they do not have all the papers, documents, and then they are left high and dry.

And that's where we started doing the education work. And along with the education work, we started sharing with them the good news, spiritual formation.

We started doing VBS. And out of all those children, thousands of children have come to the Lord. And they formed the core of the church.

And these children have grown up. And now many of these children have become teachers in our community. And they are the ones who have taken up this challenge in order to reach out their own community.

So this is how we started the work. And through those thousands of children, we have access to all those homes, because that's where people, they love that we are going and taking care of those children.

[12:11] So we have been trying to provide all their needs, whatever we can, like partnering with different philanthropic organizations, trying to gather whatever we can and meeting their needs.

So we provide every day 700 cooked meals to the children and their families come together, part-sit together. And we have been able to share good news on a regular basis.

So our team has been stationed in different, different places in all the areas that we have, our program centers. And through that, meaningfully, the word of the Lord has been going.

And when we saw that all these people are coming to the Lord, we felt the need that we needed to equip and train leaders. So we started collecting all the people who had the potential, who had the vision, who had the passion in order to reach out to the communities.

And these communities, we gathered those leaders and started giving them training. And through those trainings, now we have been able to bring out about 200 leaders, those who have been working in different, different areas.

[13:28] They have gone and joined different organizations. And different levels of training that we have been providing. One of the training we provide to the senior leaders, those who have been coming in, some of the professors from Biola universities, they have been traveling.

And they provide three years cohort and degree program for them. So that is one level of training. Another level of training is the people, those who come from villages, they have a passion.

They have a desire to work in their places. But they are not educationally qualified. They do not have degree program in their hand in order to be enrolled in the university for the BTH or MTH or MDiv.

So we started providing them short-term courses, equipping them wherever they are. And through that, we have been able to release over about 800 leaders into the community in the past.

And these leaders have been working in different, different areas. And they've been trying to plant those churches in the villages, in the community where other people would not like to go.

[14:42] I'm so happy to see how you have been flying into Africa in the same way. These are unreached places, the places where nobody wants to go, places where there are no schools, places where there are no proper roads.

Even in this time in our country, so many places where nobody wants to go. And that's the reason these people, when they come from there, we train them, equip them, and send them into their community so they can go and do the church plant.

And we have about 285 churches planted so far in those communities in the villages. And also, we have a lot of discrimination in our country because we are a country that is divided on caste system. There are four castes. One is priestly caste. Another is warrior caste. Third is business class. That is another caste.

And the fourth is Dalit. And Dalit, usually they constitute about 80% of the population. And Dalit had been deprived of all kind of privileges.

[16:04] Until 60 years ago, they were not even allowed to go into the schools. They never had access to the clean drinking water. So, I had gone to one of the villages.

And I saw the need of the community. And one of the community, as I went, you would see a slide over there. One of the community I went, and that community was snake charmers community. And that snake charmers community, they didn't have water. People never allowed them to fetch water from their village because they were from the lowest community.

And the profession of this community is they have snakes in the basket, the cobra. And because in India, there is a festival called Nag Panchmi.

And they go place to place with the cobra. And they will be displaying over there. And people will give them some donations, some money, and all that. So, you would see, I think, if you can play that video, that is the snake charmers community.

[17:18] And that's how, that's their business. So, in that community, when I saw these, they were, since we were providing water well, because people are not allowed to fetch water, this community members, because they are the lowest class people.

So, what happened when we went there, we said, okay, our team said that this community is very needy. So, we provided some bore wells and clean drinking water.

And once I went there and saw there were about 96 children sitting there. And these 96 children, I asked them, today is school day, why you did not go to school?

They said, children from other castes, they don't allow us to get into classrooms because we belong to this snake charmers community.

And I was so upset about it, knowing that all these 96 children, as you see in the next slide, all these children are standing and had basically nothing and they couldn't go to school.

[18:50] And school authorities did not care. So, we all sat together and we said, what can we do for you? And they said, sir, if you can help our children. So, we said, okay, if you can provide us a building that we can help you out.

So, they said, fine. They discussed next week with the authorities and they had a school building, but that building was not given to them because they belong to this community.

So, we approached the authorities. And then, after having discussed with the authorities, we said, okay, we will work with you. And we will provide teachers. We will provide all the facilities for the children, their uniforms, their educational supplies.

And after that, when we provided all these children, they were so happy. The whole community, when we inaugurated that school, whole community came to watch the children.

And that is the photograph of the children as they came together. They all were given uniforms. They were given other things. And they started to hear the gospel for the first time, the entire community.

[20:06] The kingdom of God was made real to them. Nobody had ever gone there because nobody wanted to go. By choice, they didn't want to go. Because that community is such that that is isolated.

That community is such they are dirty. The community is such there is nothing to see. And this is the first time that these children had clean clothes. And this is the first time they started hearing gospel.

Now, we have been conducting regular VBS over there. And these children have been responding to the gospel. So when we talk about kingdom of God, it has to be basically done in practice.

And this is what all the missionaries have been doing. And this is what the work has been going on. And that's how the kingdom of God can progress.

That we can start small. We don't have to see the big thing happening, a big program happening.

But once we sow the seed, everything will go out. But the seed is sown in the heart of the people, in the heart of the children.

[21:10] That will continue to grow. And that is the word of God. So that's what we did. And then we see the next slide. The kind of persecution that exists in our community.

We have here, this is Asif and Yusuf. There are two people, the two families. They are in Kashmir. And especially Asif has one child here in yellow shirt that we see.

Asif, he lives in Kashmir. And both of them are from Muslim background. And Asif accepted the Lord. And he started coming to the church.

And when he started coming to the church, and both of them, they live in Kashmir. So one day what happened, all the people, they noticed what is happening around, why these people are going to the church.

And one day when he was returning from the church, all the Kashmiri Muslims, they gathered together, and they stopped his vehicle where he was traveling in.

[22 : 19] And there was a big commotion on the road. And there was a big crowd. And they said that he has done blasphemy immediately. Without knowing anything. And they wanted to burn his vehicle.

Fortunately, on the road that day, some ministers' convoy was coming, security convoy. And when they saw that something is happening on the road, they stopped. And they arrested Asif.

And they took him and put him in the jail. He and his wife were there. Both of them were put into the jail. And every day, the police guards and the officers and everybody, those who came to visit them, they would spit on the cell where they were locked up.

And then they realized, and they said, now we know what it means to be persecuted. Every day they were beaten up there in the cell. And after several weeks, they could come out of the cell.

So the persecution has been rampant all over India. And then there's another, Yusuf. He's also in Kashmir.

[23 : 29] When he accepted the Lord, his family had thrown away from his property, from everything. He lived with his friend. And there are two other people also living away from the family because they have been deprived of all property rights.

Because other brothers, they see opportunity that, okay, he has become Christian. He has opposed it. And then they grab their property. And this is what happened. And then he consistently prayed and worked with the family.

And in three years' time, his brother, who used to beat him up every day, he accepted the Lord. His parents accepted the Lord. And his relatives, those who used to torture him, they accepted the Lord.

And today we have a thriving seven churches in Kashmir Valley. Because they continue to persevere. They continue to work towards their goal, continue to share the love of Christ.

And they are making kingdom of God real in the valley. Just as we were traveling here, we had a training in Kashmir. And these people have been continually advancing the kingdom of God.

[24 : 41] And as we talk about persecution, you know, government of India has also imposed anti-conversion laws in several of the states in northern, north and south, all over India.

And they've been trying to have this universal law so that nobody can convert. And the penalty for converting a person from one religion to Christianity, it's life sentence.

Life sentence is given to the people who commit murders. But the churches have been slowly and steadily growing.

Many, many pastors in India, as some of you may be getting reports, every day they are put behind the bars by putting false cases against them.

And this is what is happening throughout the India. And Chhattisgarh is one of the states where village after village, they have been driven away because they had accepted the law and the demographic of the village had changed.

[25 : 47] So other people, they came up and they drove them away, took their cattle, took their fields, took their houses. And that has been a huge human right violation that is happening.

And the court cases are going on and government has been working. So it has been a grim situation right now where government is hand in hand with the fundamentalists and they've been trying to torture anyone who tries to convert.

The narrative is that the Hindu religion is in danger and Christians have come. They are trying to distort our culture.

They are trying to distort our religion. They are trying to distort our peace and harmony. And that is what the cases have been put up. And thousands of pastors, they are still behind the bar.

And every day there are hundreds of court cases that go on. So this is how the persecution has been so rampant. When the word of God advances, the kingdom of God advances, Satan's not happy.

[27 : 00] And that is what is happening in our country that the government and the fundamentalists, the Hindu fundamentalists organization, they have joined hands together and they

have been trying to subvert whatever is happening.

Then we have, as I said about the leadership among this persecuted church.

There have been many, many pastors who have come out of those persecution and they have stood firm. And now they are the ones who have been trying to take training and trying to go out and encourage the people, those who have been persecuted.

Because as we met, we met several of the homes in the past one week for Bible study, for sharing.

They cannot even meet in their homes for a birthday party.

They cannot even meet in their, Christians cannot meet in their home for any other thing. Because somebody else will see why so many people are gathering. And even if you have a birthday party, they'll say that there's a conversion going on and that's what they've been trying to do.

[28 : 17] So the country has been going through a kind of situation where church has been put in a tight corner.

And we've been trying to work in a way that we want to advance this kingdom of God to everyone, you know, even those who persecute.

And those who have been persecuted and those who persecute, many of them, they realize what is happening is not right. But the thing is, the system is such they have to fall in line, whatever they do. So we need a lot of prayers. We need your encouragement when the teams come here and then they visit all those things. They see it's a great encouragement for us and for all of the believers what has been happening in the country.

So we need those prayers from you and we need you all to come and visit us sometime so we can continue to do what our teams have been doing, what our pastors have been doing, what our leaders have been doing, and we will continue to advance the kingdom of God.

[29 : 27] So we want to thank the church for having us here. We want to thank all of you for standing with us in prayer, standing with us in your support and encouragement.

So thank you and God bless you. Let's thank Ramesh one more time.

Let's let me join me in praying for him. Thank you, Lord, for this dear brother Ramesh and Gloria and for their ministry among much opposition.

We pray for your protection from your Holy Spirit upon them, and we pray that you'll give them boldness to carry the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to those who have yet to hear him.

Amen. Thank you. As we heard from Ramesh, what our Lord proclaimed and practiced in preaching the kingdom of God is being carried out by his people to this day to the ends of the earth.

[30 : 35] We thank you for Ramesh and Gloria and your family for the ways in which you're being faithful in carrying out the work of the Lord amidst much opposition.

One of the things that you may have noticed in the slides was that the number of different ethnic groups that they are ministering to. You may have noticed on the slides they're ministering to Afghan refugees in India.

We talked about Kashmir, which is a different linguistic ethnic group that is far away from where they are ministering. One of the beautiful things about this ministry that you heard is that India as a nation has approximately one-sixth of all humanity in one country, but it has more than one-half. More than 50% of all unreached groups are in that one nation. And the importance of this work in proclaiming the name of our Lord and being instruments of his kingdom in a place where there is so really needed is something that should motivate each one of us.

What should drive our decisions? What should drive our passions? What should drive our commitments as the people of God? What we see in Revelation 7, Apostle John is given a vision and he says, Behold, before him he could see this great multitude that no one could number from every nation, tribe, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne of the Lamb and giving praise to God.

[32 : 10] That glory in heaven that is attributed to our Lord Jesus Christ is something for which the church is supposed to be the instrument of that. In Ephesians 3, Paul tells us that it is through the church the manifold wisdom of God is made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.

This is not the work of anybody. This is the work of the church to proclaim the majesty of our Lord Jesus Christ so that he is praised and glorified in heaven and on earth.

This is why we saw this, our team of missionaries who have come back to do this work in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.

We are grateful for the different ways in which each of our missionaries are doing this work to proclaim the name of the Lord, to be his instruments, to be his witnesses to the ends of the earth. It is one thing to have a global ministries week and a festival that happens one day, but the goal is not for us to forget and move on with the rest of our lives.

[33 : 18] The goal is for us to catch a vision for how Jesus Christ is building his kingdom. He has promised that he will build this church and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.

So we must have the confidence and the assurance that Christ is doing his work, and our role is to come alongside, come behind our Lord to be his servants in this work.

So please join me in praying that we will be inspired and motivated to join his work. Thank you, Lord Jesus, that you are building your church.

We thank you for your promise and your protection that the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. Thank you for the privilege that you give each one of your followers, that you allow us to be your co-laborers in this work that you're doing.

I pray, Lord, that we would value your kingdom above all earthly kingdoms. We will value your glory above our comfort so that we may seek to see you exalted among the nations.

[34 : 29] So I pray that the lessons that we learn and the messages that we heard will stir in our hearts so that you may shape us for your service. For it is in your holy name that we pray.

Amen.