

# Suffering And Mission In The North

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Date: 20 September 1987

Preacher: Harry Robinson

[ 0 : 00 ] Pray, take my lips and speak through them. Take our minds and think through them. Take our hearts, O God, and set them on fire with love for you, our strength and our redeemer.

Amen. First of all, I should say how grateful I am for an opportunity of sharing in this time of worship with you.

To be the guest of your rector is perfectly true that I was invited to be at another place in the presence of the Bishop of Rome, and I had to make a choice I was offered.

They knew that the meetings we had finished yesterday, and I was told that if I could get to Edmonton last night, I would be flown in to be among the receiving party.

So the choice before me was the Bishop of Rome or the rector of St. John's. And pausing not too long upon our theological affinities, I'm with you here this morning.

[ 1 : 16 ] But I'm sure that as the Bishop of Rome's voice is heard over so many channels that we trust that somehow the word of God and his standards will reach folk for whom he has special regard.

From the Old Testament reading today, I suppose that we feel some sympathy for those wandering tribes who were called from slavery to a new life.

They must have known that everybody else, all the other nations, had deities that could be seen and touched and handled and all the rest of it.

And here they were being called out by a God who was invisible. But somehow, this God of great power, undoubtedly, was seen through the actions and the inspirations of their leader, Moses. For it was his rod that seemed to bring about tremendous, miraculous interventions. And at this stage in their pilgrimage, they lost even him.

[ 2 : 49 ] They had an invisible God and now for some reason of delay, an invisible leader. And judging from their time and culture and whatnot, it was all so easy for them to desire something tangible that they could focus upon and find hope in and offer praise to.

And so we have this remarkable story of the creation of images to satisfy the vacuum in the life of these Israelites.

Communication seems to involve the possibility of really understanding and touching the one who is trying to communicate to us or the ones we are trying to communicate to.

And I think in actual fact that this is one of the great factors that we as the children of God, the community of faith, have to grasp in our communicating the gospel of Christ to others.

Sometimes we seem to think that if we repeat a text or give a testimony in traditional accepted evangelical language that we've preached the gospel and there should be a response.

[ 4 : 37 ] We seem to forget that there are tremendous barriers to the reception of truth, barriers that are found in differing cultures, histories, and languages.

We have our own histories and we might use words like propitiation and redemption but to somebody who in this new age has been brought up without any knowledge of the Bible, any contact with the church, any remotest visit to a Sunday school, find these things incomprehensible. There are enough words about the gospel, the airways are filled with them, thundering out and calling people to repentance and seemingly without very, very much result.

There has to be a dimension of communication which, generally speaking, we have lost. And that's what I want to speak about today, not to join in the sense of loss, but to demonstrate from recent church history how that when we are in tune with the spirit of God and blessed by the wisdom that is offered liberally to those who ask, we may somehow get into the business of sharing the faith and seeing response, for that is what the Lord of the Harvest is really after.

I know he's after faithfulness, but his word is not to return void. Now, we're meeting this last week, or have been, in the Council of the North, in this diocese, because I believe there is an initiative of reaching out.

[ 6 : 46 ] I know it has a price tag. They all have price tags. The Council of the North has a price tag. It's so difficult and expensive to minister the word of God in the North.

We had a synod a few weeks ago. To get our 90 delegates to Frabish Bay, the aircraft companies picked up \$85,000 from the limited ex-check of the Diocese of the Arctic.

And I almost said, Lord, Lord, why didn't you choose the Presbyterians to have this work? But he knew I didn't mean it, and so he didn't answer.

There's a price tag in reaching out to the lost, of which you have hundreds of thousands in your mission field in this city. But money and mission and activity and plans by themselves will never accomplish what is needed.

Not for one moment. Jesus must be incarnate, taking shape, reaching out, expressing love, compassion through his body, which is the church.

[ 8 : 24 ] And that's what I want to talk about. And to say how wonderfully powerful the Holy Spirit is in fulfilling his ministry, glorifying Jesus through the saints.

and how impossible a task for him when his children are given wholly to him and in obedience. How impossible tasks turn into victorious results to his praise and glory. glory. Now it says in 1 Corinthians 1st chapter in a verse 27 and in that chapter and the words before, Paul says that this gospel is absolute foolishness.

he says, as God in his wisdom ordained, the world faileth to find him by its wisdom, and he chose to save those who have faith by the folly of the gospel.

Jews call for miracles, Greeks look for wisdom, but we proclaim Christ, yes, Christ nailed to the cross that through this stumbling block to Jews and folly to Greeks, yet to those who have heard his call, Jews and Greeks alike, he is the power of God and the wisdom of God.

[ 10 : 06 ] If there was any area in the world where the gospel is utter foolishness, it has to be the Canadian Arctic. For in that upper third of Canada, which now forms the Diocese of the Arctic, of which I have under God-given pastoral responsibility, in pre-Christian times, there was not any logical reason why this message could be accepted by the people of that day.

The area is harsh and forbidding. it has a very small group of people who came long ago from Asia and who were out of touch with any of the southern civilizations, even the Indian civilizations of the Aztecs and the Mayas and those.

They had no time for philosophy to speak of. They were busy eating and trying to find shelter. It's a land when you look on the map, you will see all kinds of not very inspiring names given by European explorers.

I doubt their imagination when someone has to call a body of water Committee Bay, I think, or Navy Board Inlet. It must be they had their eyes on certain groups of people who sponsored them financially.

If you understand the language of the people, which we do, you find other names that speak eloquently of the life before. Inuanguit, a place north of Coppermine where I served for 19 years that means a place where everybody died.

[ 12 : 07 ] Thaluit, northern Quebec, which means the place of pinched cheeks through starvation. Inuctorgvik in Baffin Island, which means a place where we were reduced to eating human flesh.

That's the background. Starvation. No God. No knowledge of God. Spirits, yes. Lots of demons and spirits are haunted and breathed upon them fear and doubt.

When you hear people talking about the insolence of Christian missionaries to upset native cultures and pre-Christian religions, Christians, sometimes even breathed by Christians, churches, sometimes finding expression in motions, asking forgiveness for going to them.

You must with me shake your head if you've any knowledge of what it was like before Christ, Christ, with no knowledge of truth, being at the mercy of capricious spirits who would give and then take away and see you starve.

All that life was darkness awaiting the gospel. people. But as I say, how could they relate to the gospel?

[ 13 : 39 ] No God, therefore he had no son. In the Eskimo culture, with which I am certainly more familiar than with the Indian groupings that we have in our diocese, there was no aboriginal sense

of sacrifice.

That's very common in nearly all societies, but they didn't have any. take away the theme of sacrifice from the scriptures, the Old and New Testaments.

You've not got very much left. In the gospels, they had no wheat and therefore no tares. They had no vineyards and husband, no fruit trees.

shepherds. They had no sheep and therefore no shepherds. They hadn't a word, believe it or not, for love in the entire Eskimoid region from Alaska to Greenland.

And as I say, no trees with which even to make a cross. With that, how do you think you can minister to the gospel?

[14:57] Bilingual excellence? No, no, no. Some of the early attempts as translations go, and I speak as a Bible translator, did not really adorn the gospel.

I told the story at the Bible Society meeting not long ago that one of our early missionaries in translating, endeavoring to translate the gospel of John, was trying to find the best word for joy.

And wisely, he tried to get a context. You must, in translation work, get a contextual situation.

Otherwise, asking the question out of context, you get the wrong answer.

He had a good context. For he was, obviously, we deduce, seeing the feeding of a dog team at night. By the way, should you ever need this wisdom, you never feed them in the day.

If you feed your dogs in the daytime, they're so lazy they won't pull very hard. You wait until night.

That's a little bit of information you might want to tuck away. And these dogs were being fed at night, and there's a tremendous noise and leaping around and all the signs of joy.

[16:13] So he asked, he must have asked whoever was doing it what was happening. He wrote down the word, and in the gospel he translated, it says, and when the disciples saw their Lord, they all wagged their tails.

And tail wagging was the word used for joy in that entire gospel. People are not coming by wisdom to the truth, as you can deduce.

How did they come? Because through the lives of the early missionaries, their patience, their stumblings, their mistakes, their association, their learning of the language, their accepting isolation from their own culture, one male a year sometimes, watching their children die as Archdeacon Whittaker in the Western Arctic buried four of his children in the Arctic.

somehow they understood what love was all about. A new concept, we created words for it, and they met Jesus Christ.

That's what it was all about. The Jesus of the New Testament took shape in the lives of the missionaries. So their words, those strange, the concepts they spoke about, difficult to comprehend, empowered by the Holy Spirit, took rootage, and the church was born.

[17:49] And today, in this strange, cold land, which is not always cold and has great beauty, and has both times of scarcity and times of riches in food, there's a church, 51 congregations, or together.

It's a suffering church. In my early day, it was a traditional church in a sense. We lived long before the erosions of the present age, 37 years ago.

We traveled by dog team to little camps that were untouched by the outside world to speak of, except for the things they could buy at the Hudson's Bay Company. We had no vocabulary words for alcoholism, prostitution, drug addiction.

There weren't any words for them. They were not there. There were lives in those days of hard work and industry, and every young boy was going to be a hunter, and every young girl was going to learn to be a housewife and to sew.

And there was a kind of idyllic, in a way, albeit for human frailty and all certain troubles, but compared with the world that was to come, it was beautiful.

[19:13] And everybody prayed. Nobody would dream of having a cup of tea on the trail, but what a prayer to God and thankfulness.

We lived near, close, to the unknown God, certainly revealed through the scriptures in Jesus Christ, but anyway, if you didn't feel too intimate with Christ, at least you had to pray to whoever was going to send the caribou and the fish in the sea.

And then, over the last years, the southern world came in, and now we have all the social problems with which you are familiar in big cities.

people have and this folk faith has almost disappeared. You don't need God anymore now because you have a generous government, and you have all the kind of support systems if you get sick, and promises of help if you get your education, and you can be educated without God.

And what about this church then? Well, of course, it's still there. And despite all that's coming in, we have an opportunity now, stripped of this folk religion, so to speak, to see where the saints of God really are shining, and the power of God still operative.

[ 20 : 38 ] operative. Indeed, we need that same life of being representatives of Jesus Christ in love and sympathy, and it's harder these days, I believe, than it ever was.

What hope, then, that when we read the scriptures, we find that the people of God, spirit-born and spirit-filled children of God, were found in the most inhospitable places, in areas of licentious living and paganism, not really suitable for quiet little Christian upbringings.

And if God could bring about through his son and the power of the spirit communities of faith in places like Antioch and Ephesus and all of those pagan cities, he must be able to do it today.

And thank God, he is in measure. And in some of our parishes, we are seeing moves of the spirit, changed lives in dramatic ways, powerful ministries.

In others, it is more barren. The faithfulness of those who are there tested more than in other places. They are representing Jesus, however, and in faith, believing that the seeds that are so will come to fruition.

[ 22 : 12 ] What's that got to do with you? Because we're in the same mission. We belong to the same body. We worship the same Lord. We gather at the same table.

And if we are hurt, you should feel it. If we're deprived, you should be concerned about it. And if you are in trouble, we should pray about it. We are not separate little individual bodies.

We are one body. We share the same cup, break the same bread. We must understand far more about each other, pray for each other, look for seeing Christ in each other, so that the purposes of our great Lord may be in this generation brought to where in his mind and purpose he wishes it to be for the sake of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen. Now I would invite you to turn in the Book of Alternative Services to page 110 as we kneel in prayer.

prayer. You will find in this litany a series of petitions, petitions followed by a congregational response.

[ 23 : 50 ] After each response, there will be a few moments of silence for you to, in your hearts and perhaps aloud, mention people or circumstances relating to each petition that are particularly on your hearts and your minds as you worship this morning.

in peace, let us pray to the Lord saying, Lord, have mercy. For peace from on high and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy. For the peace of the whole world, for the welfare of the Holy Church of God, and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy. For our bishops, particularly Michael, our primate, and Douglas, our archbishop, and John, bishop of the Arctic, and for all the clergy and people, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy. For Elizabeth, our queen, for the leaders of the nations, particularly those who must be involved in the reduction of nuclear arms, and for all in authority, let us pray to the Lord.

[ 25 : 41 ] Lord, have mercy. For this city of Vancouver, and praying also today for Cambridge Bay and Bay Chimo Harbor in the Diocese of the Arctic, for every city and community, and for those who live in them in faith, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy. For good weather, and for abundant harvests for all to share, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. For those who travel by land, water, or air, for the sick and the suffering, especially those known to each of us, for prisoners and captives, and for their safety, health, and salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy. For our deliverance from all affliction, strife, and need, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy. For the absolution and remission of our sins and offenses, let us pray to the Lord.

[ 27 : 29 ] Lord, have mercy. For all who have died, especially those who in their lifetime influenced our growth in Christ, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy. Remembering all the saints, we commit ourselves, one another, and our whole life to Christ our God.

To you, Lord. Now, if you would please turn to near the back of the communion service we've been using to page 214.

Near the bottom of that page. All your works praise you, O Lord.

Gracious God, we thank you for feeding us with the body and blood of your Son, Jesus Christ. May we who share his body live his risen life.

[ 28 : 49 ] We who drink his cup bring life to others. We whom the Spirit lights, give light to the world. Keep us firm in the hope you have set before us, so that we and all your children shall be free.

And the whole earth live to praise your name. Through Christ our Lord. Amen. Go forth into the world rejoicing in the power of the Spirit.

Thanks be to God. Please be seated for the announcements. Good morning.

Welcome to St. John's. We hope that you'll join us for a cup of tea or coffee in the lounge after the service. You will see in your bulletins this morning a yellow sheet.

I commend it to you. Our harvest supper is coming up on August 16th. And we need help from all of us in one way or another. Please use the yellow sheet to tell us how you can help.

[ 30 : 10 ] The other good news that I have for you this morning is the Kathy Nichols Bible study starts again this coming week on Wednesdays. Wednesdays at 1230.

Please join us at that time. Sean Love has an announcement. Sean is our youth leader, as you know. And he has an announcement.

Well, good morning. If you look in your bulletin on the second to last page, just opposite the week's calendar, you'll see an announcement that talks about Brand X.

And what Brand X is, in essence, is a junior youth group. And some of you may know that we have, well, especially those of you that are parents, we have a number of children in the parish that are in grades 6 and 7.

And since the age for eligibility for youth group is grade 8 to 12, they can't come to youth group.

And sometimes they don't really want to go to church school because, you know, they figure they're too old.

[ 31 : 23 ] So what I've been trying to do is set up a kind of a group where they could feel comfortable with kids of their own age group. And what has happened is that we've sort of established this group as a component of church school.

That is, it used to be. It's now being called by a different name. And in it, if you look at the chart there, it shows you the spacing of it.

There's kindergarten to grade 5 in the church school. And Brand X, or junior youth group, goes from grade 6 to 9. And the youth group goes from grade 8 to 12. So those are the divisions in the church school.

And so anyway, the announcement is fairly self-explanatory. But I just wanted to bring to your awareness that this has happened. And if you have children that are grades 6 and 7 or 8 and 9, there is now a group for them on Sunday mornings.

We'll also try and do some activities for them twice a month, I think. And I'm still trying to get that going. The other announcement is there's a BCAYM, which is a British Columbia Anglican Youth Movement conference happening at St. Philip's Church.

[ 32 : 33 ] And they have a need for billets because they're expecting about 350 kids to be coming to this. And the dates are October 9th to 12th over the long weekend.

So there's a sign-up sheet near the information table in the church hall if you feel inclined to do that.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you, Sean. We've seen and heard Bishop Spence.

We'll have an opportunity to meet Bishop Sperry, pardon me. At the end of the service, he will be here at the front and he has the Arctic news and can tell us a little bit about his work in the Arctic and how we might help him.

Please see him then and join us for coffee or tea afterwards in the lounge. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. I publish the bands of marriage between John David Valance Newlands and Helen Louise Malkin and also between James Bradley Chichi and Leslie Jane Ebern.

[ 33 : 44 ] If any of you know any just cause or impediment why these two couples should not be joined together in marriage, you are to declare it. This is the first time of asking in each case.

Now we will be singing together our final hymn, Hymn 58, following which you can meet Bishop Sperry here at the front of the church or you can go over and join in fellowship for coffee and tea over in the hall.

If you're a newcomer, we hope you will sign our guest book either at the back of the church or at the information desk in the midst of coffee hour. First, we sing hymn number 58.

OTHER ORCHESTRAL MUSIC OTHER ORCHESTRAL MUSIC OTHER ORCHESTRAL MUSIC  
OTHER ORCHESTRAL MUSIC OTHER ORCHESTRAL MUSIC OTHER ORCHESTRAL MUSIC  
Praise the Lord, He has the glory, Praise His exalted to the high, The glory and glory, Praise Him,  
Lord, His heart and blood.

Praise the Lord, for He has opened, For His glory was the way, From His heaven and glory away,  
For His glory was the end.

[ 35 : 32 ] Praise the Lord, for He has opened, And His glory was the end.

The glory was the end. Praise the Lord, for He has opened, For His glory was the end.

The glory was the end.

Let us pray. As a sign of identification with our people in the north, Following the blessing in  
English, You can hear how it will be offered On the edge of the world, Where the children of God  
are worshipping at different times.

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, Keep our hearts and minds in the knowledge  
of God And of His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. The blessing of God Almighty, The Father, the Son,  
and the Holy Spirit, Be amongst you and remain with you now and always.

[ 37 : 05 ] Amen. Amen. God bless you all. Amen.

Amen. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 39 : 16 ] Thank you.