

Psalm 96
“Why Missions Matter”

I. MISSIONS MATTER WHEN WE LOOK AROUND

- A. People are lost from their birth
- B. People are lost in their beliefs

II. MISSIONS MATTER WHEN WE LOOK ABOVE

- A. Our God desires to be proclaimed
- B. Our God deserves to be praised

III. MISSIONS MATTER WHEN WE LOOK AHEAD

- A. The ruler that is coming to this world
- B. The reckoning that is coming for this world

1. On October the 31st of 2011, the 7th billion human was born into the earth's population.
2. I'm not very good with numbers, but I do know that 7 billion is a seven with nine zeros after it. I also know that my mind cannot really conceive of 7 billion of *anything*, much less living breathing people.
3. I want to give you a more manageable number. It is 6,921. According to an organization known as *Joshua Project*, 6,921 is the number of unreached people groups in the world.
4. An unreached people group is a unique segment of the global population that is less than 2% evangelical Christian.
5. Many of these 6,921 people groups have no churches, missionaries, or Christian witnesses among them whatsoever.
6. Why would the number of unreached people groups be important to you? – Because it is important to your God.
7. David Livingstone, the famous missionary to Africa, once said, “God had only one Son and He made that Son a missionary.”
8. Jesus left His home in heaven to travel to a world that did not know Him. He spent His life seeking those who were lost and gave His life that they might be saved.
9. Our Lord Jesus is the master missionary, and all those who truly follow in His steps know in their hearts that missions matter.
10. In Psalm 96, we read what Charles Spurgeon described as a “Missionary Hymn.”¹ It is an Old Testament song written with New Testament notes.
11. Reading it with the Holy Spirit in our hearts, we are reminded of God's desire for all the nations and people of the world to hear His gospel and know His glory.

12. I want us to examine this Psalm and be reminded of why missions should matter to us as much as it matters to God. First of all, notice with me that:

I. MISSIONS MATTER WHEN WE LOOK AROUND

1. Though Jehovah was uniquely the God of the Jewish people, He was never exclusively their God.
2. Though they often forgot it, they were supposed to be lights to the Gentiles, and witnesses to the world of the glory of their God.
3. We are reminded of this in Psalm 96 when we find reference to “all the earth” (v. 10), “all people” (v. 3), “the nations” (v. 5), and “kindreds of the people” (v. 7).
4. This Psalm calls for the people of God to look around and realize that there are many others in this world who need to hear about their God.
5. As Christians living in the 21st century, the need to look around is greater than ever before. As the world’s population increases, so do the number of those who are lost and in need of the gospel.
6. Consider their need as it is seen in this Psalm. For one thing, when we look around, we see that:

A. People are lost from their birth

1. Look with me at verse 3. It says, “*Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people.*”
2. Notice particularly the word “heathen”. Growing up, I thought “heathen” was just a term used to describe the deacon’s kids.
3. The word translated “heathen” here was actually a title that referred to anybody that was not a Jew. It applied specifically to those who were not in covenant with God.
4. The truth is that all men are born this way. All of us were born, as Ephesians 2:12 puts it, “...*aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.*”
5. When we look around the world at the thousands of people groups and the billions of people that make them up, we must be mindful that we are not “all God’s children”.

6. People are born into sin and separated from God. Humanity is born spiritually dead and on their way to hell, apart from the grace of God and the hope of the gospel.

7. I will never forget years ago, my friend, Ronnie Brown, preached a message entitled, "I See Dead People".

8. The line, of course, he stole from a popular movie, but the truth comes straight from the Bible. When we look around the world, we see dead people, lost from their birth!

9. When we look around, we see not only that people are lost from their birth, but we see also further that:

B. People are lost in their beliefs

1. Notice what the Psalmist says in verse 5. *"For all the gods of the nations are idols: but the LORD made the heavens."*

2. The people that fill this planet are not only born lost, but they believe lost as well. The multitude of gods and deities they worship are nothing but idols; creations of man's hands and minds.

3. I recognize that this message is not well received in our culture of inclusion and "anything goes" spirituality.

4. I've seen the "coexist" bumper stickers, cleverly spelled out with various religious symbols.

5. Nevertheless, anyone who honestly considers the various religions of the world recognizes that they cannot all be right, and in fact, they are counter to one another.

6. Furthermore, anyone who truly accepts the claims of Jesus Christ cannot honestly say that He offered but one option among many for salvation.

7. Jesus proclaimed that He is the way, the truth, and the life and no man can come to Father unless they come through Him.

8. When we think about the multitudes of people who live on this planet with us, we cannot pillow our heads at night with a synthetic comfort that they will all be all right in the end.

9. No, we must look around and realize that every single person who lives without Christ is lost, and if they die without Him, they will spend forever without Him in a place called hell.

10. Missions matter when you and I as God's people look around at the hoards of humanity that are still lost and still without the hope of the gospel.

11. Consider a second truth we draw from this missionary psalm. We see not only that *missions matter when we look around*, but more importantly, we see that:

II. MISSIONS MATTER WHEN WE LOOK ABOVE

1. While the billions of lost people around us should move us toward the cause of missions; that is not the primary reason the Bible gives us for taking the gospel to the world.

2. In this Psalm, as with the rest of Scripture, what truly fuels and furthers the work of missions is the glory of God. That is, missions is not so much about the lostness of man as it is the worthiness of God.

3. An article I read this week, written by a professor at Southern Seminary said, "[Missions] has as its ultimate motivation nothing less than to see the name and glory of God spread throughout the earth and among the nations because that is his right and due."ⁱⁱⁱ

4. When we know fully who our God is and His worthiness, then we will understand better the importance of missions in our world.

5. Consider what we see when look above. For one thing, we see that:

A. Our God desires to be proclaimed

1. Look at verse 2 of this Psalm. It says, "*Sing unto the LORD, bless his name; shew forth his salvation from day to day.*"

2. Notice that phrase, "...*shew forth his salvation...*" I found it interesting that the word translated "shew" literally means to publish or to preach.

3. This command is very similar to the one from the lips of our Lord Jesus, "*Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.*" (Mark 16:15)

4. When we look above to our God, we realize that His heart is for men to know Him! He desires to make Himself known and for His people to declare who He is.

5. God is no recluse. He is not hiding out in the heavens, trying to keep Himself hidden from the world.

6. He came into the world through Jesus, died for the world on the cross, and now calls to the world through the gospel!
7. What we must realize is that the same God that revealed Himself *to* us one day now desires to reveal Himself *through* us to those who have yet to hear of Him.
8. Today, people often say that a person's religious beliefs are a private matter. But God doesn't think so! He feels that His salvation is to be a very public matter!
9. God has no concerns about protecting His privacy. He desires for all men to come to know Him, and when we know Him, we will want others to know Him as well!
10. When we look above, we see not only that our God desires to be proclaimed, but we see also that:

B. Our God deserves to be praised

1. Listen to what this Psalm says. First of all, verse 4 says, *"For the LORD is great, and greatly to be praised: he is to be feared above all gods."*
2. Then verses 7-9 form the heart of the Psalm. There we read:

"Give unto the LORD, O ye kindreds of the people, give unto the LORD glory and strength. Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come into his courts. O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth."
3. Here is the highest and ultimate motivation for missions! Our God is worthy and deserves all of the praise, honor, worship, and glory that mankind can give Him!
4. Yes, we should be concerned for the souls of men. We should grieve over the billions that are dying and on their way to hell.
5. Even more than this, however, we should weep over the fact that God does not receive all the glory that He deserves, and that men die without ever praising the name of Jesus Christ!
6. John Piper put it this way. He said, "Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exist because worship doesn't."
7. Don't miss this! It is when we are most concerned with the glory of God that we will become more concerned with the salvation of men!

8. I fear that the majority of folks in our churches are not really involved in missions, *not* because they do not see the lostness of men around them, but rather because they do not see the full worthiness of the God above them!

9. The greatest missionaries and missions supporters are not those who love men the most; they are the ones who love God the most!

9. If you could only see the eternal glory and universal worthiness of Jesus Christ, I would not have show you pictures of black faces in Africa or quote you statistics of the unchruched, unreached, and unsaved of the world.

10. If you would only realize how worthy and wonderful Jesus is, your single, solitary, and sole ambition would be to make Him known to everyone who lives under the sun.

11. In Isaiah 6, we find the prophet saying, "Here am I, send me!" He says that, *not* after he has seen the wickedness of Israel and the sinfulness of his fellow man. No, he said that immediately after he had seen the Lord, high and lifted up!

12. Like Isaiah, if we will see the surpassing worthiness of God for worship, we will not hesitate to enlist ourselves in the cause of telling others about Him!

13. Looking further at this Psalm, notice not only that *missions matter when we look around*, and *missions matter when we look above*, but consider also that:

III. MISSIONS MATTER WHEN WE LOOK AHEAD

1. This Psalm is not only missionary, it is millennial. What I mean is that this Psalm speaks of the coming day when Christ will set up His kingdom on this earth, and reign for a thousand years.

2. The closing verses of the Psalm pick up this theme. Notice verse 10. It says, "*Say among the heathen that the LORD reigneth: the world also shall be established that it shall not be moved: he shall judge the people righteously.*"

3. When we as God's people remember that Jesus is coming back, and when we recognize what His coming will mean for this world, we are further motivated for the cause of missions.

4. Consider with me what is ahead and what it means for the work of missions. First of all, consider:

A. The ruler that is coming to this world

1. Look again at verse 10. It says, "*Say among the heathen that the LORD reigneth...*"

2. Notice that our message to the world is not that the Lord *will* reign; but that He already reigns. The truth is that Jesus is not waiting to become the King; He is already the King of kings.
3. His kingdom has already begun in the hearts and lives of His people. However, there is a day coming when the King who reigns in Heaven is coming to rule on the earth.
4. The first time Jesus came to this earth He came through the womb of a virgin, was wrapped in swaddling clothes, and rested in a humble manger.
5. The next time He comes, He'll be riding a white horse, wearing a blood-stained robe, and will sit upon His throne in Jerusalem.
6. With that in mind, when we look ahead we realize that the second coming of Jesus will mean very different things for the world to which He returns.
7. No longer will men be called to follow Him by faith. No longer will they be allowed to love Him or leave Him as they see fit.
8. No, He came the first time as man's Redeemer. He comes the next time as man's Ruler! He came the first time to call them with the blood of His cross. He comes the next time to conquer them with the word of His mouth!
10. With that in mind, we plead with men to come to Christ today, offering them the Lamb of God now before they must face the Lion of Judah then!
11. As Paul put it in II Corinthians 5:11, *"Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men..."*
12. That leads us to another aspect of our looking ahead. When we look ahead, we recognize not only the ruler that is coming to this world, but we recognize also:

B. The reckoning that is coming for this world

1. Though in this Psalm the coming of the Lord is surrounded by calls for rejoicing from the heavens and the earth, there is a truth that reminds us that His coming will not be joyful for everyone.
2. Verse 13 says, *"...for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth."*
3. When Jesus returns, He is coming to execute judgment and to bring the people of this world to account.

4. Revelation 1:7 describes it this way: *“Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him.”*

5. His coming will mean rejoicing for those who love Him, but it will also mean a reckoning for those who do not.

6. We as the church in this day act as assistant D.A.’s on behalf of the Judge and the Advocate. We offer to men a plea bargain.

7. We say to people, “You are guilty. The evidence against you is overwhelming. If you stand trial before the Judge, you will be convicted and you will be condemned.”

8. However, we also tell them that the Judge is merciful; so merciful that He is willing to grant a full pardon to all who will confess their sins and trust in His Son, who has paid for their crimes on His cross.

9. We urge all people to settle their case *now* out of court; to be justified before they are judged! Because when judgment comes, there will be no more time for pleas and pardons.

10. When we look ahead our hearts are stirred to call men to repentance and faith in Jesus knowing that when they see Him face to face, it will be too late to negotiate for their souls.

1. One of the greatest missionaries that ever lived and served was J. Hudson Taylor. In September of 1853, as a 21 year-old man, Taylor boarded a little ship in Liverpool, England and set sail for China with hopes of winning people to Christ.

2. At that time, only a handful of missionaries had ever entered that country. By the time Taylor died some 50 years later, thousands had volunteered to go, motivated by his preaching and writing.

3. Taylor once said, “Would that God would make hell so real to us that we cannot rest; heaven so real that we must have men there, Christ so real that our supreme motive and aim shall be to make the Man of Sorrows the Man of Joy by the conversion to Him of many.”

4. Missions really matter. However, only God can truly open our eyes to see the reasons why it matters so much to Him as it should to us.

5. My prayer is that your eyes will be truly opened; that you will look around and see the many that are dying without Christ; that you will look above and see the worthiness of Jesus to have His name praised by all men; and that you will look ahead and see that the time for sharing the gospel is now, before the end of this age.

6. May what matters most to Him, matter most to us as well!

ⁱ Spurgeon, Charles H., The Treasury of David: Vol. 2, (Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA,) p. 180

ⁱⁱ Wellum, Stephen J., The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology: Vol. 9, No. 4, (Winter 2005), p. 3