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Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York

December 9, 2013

"Behold, These shall Come From Afar"

Isaiah 49:5-13

Prayer: *Father God, we do praise you and thank you for your grace, we thank you for your goodness, we thank you for the incredible gift that we are focused on this month, and that is the gift of your son. Father God, we thank you that buried in the Old Testament is the heart that you have toward your son and that as we are looking into the servant songs of Isaiah, Lord, we just again pray that your Holy Spirit would guide us as we are opening up these songs, that you would just bring us into your word, bring us into a greater and deeper appreciation of what it is that your son has given us in this gift, and we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

We are doing the servant songs of Isaiah and these are again, prophetic messages that are speaking to and about the servant of the Lord, Jesus Christ the Messiah. We call them songs because they're written in a unique form of Hebrew poetry and they're scattered throughout the book of Isaiah. And in these songs God speaks to and he speaks through and about his son, and we said it's entirely possible that Jesus as a man learned of his role as

Messiah through studying these songs.

We've been looking at the second song, and take a look at that this morning and this is *Isaiah 49:1-4* which says this, it says: *Listen to me, O, coastlands, and give attention, you peoples from afar. The LORD called me from the womb, from the body of my mother he named my name. He made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me a polished arrow; in his quiver he hid me away. And he said to me, "You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified." But I said, "I have labored in vain; I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity; yet surely my right is with the LORD, and my recompense with my God."*

Well, we saw last time that Jesus had been chosen by God from the womb and he had been given great and mighty gifts only to have God temporarily take them away. He had been given a mouth like a sharp sword, and he had been made into a polished arrow, but these gifts, they had been hidden away until God used them in Jesus's life and ministry. You see, the glory of the Father and the Son was the ultimate goal and it meant into the darkness Jesus would come to bring the light. Jesus understood how difficult and frustrating it was bringing light to those whose first love really was the darkness. And it brought him to the place where he cried out, *"I have labored in vain; I have spent my strength for nothing, and*

vanity." We saw the willful ignorance and rejection of the crowds, the religious leaders, and even Jesus's disciples as a source of incredible frustration and pain for him, and yet we also saw that in the midst of that pain, Jesus was able to focus and put his focus and place right where it belonged where he says: "Surely my right is with the LORD, and my recompense with my God."

We want to continue on this servant song this morning picking up at Isaiah 49, verses 5 through 13, it's a long reading, so bear with me. It says: And now the LORD says, he who formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him; and that Israel might be gathered to him -- for I am honored in the eyes of the LORD, and my God has become my strength -- he says: "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth." Thus says the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One, to one deeply despised, abhorred by the nation, the servant of rulers: "Kings shall see and arise; princes, and they shall prostrate themselves; because of the LORD, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you." Thus says the LORD: "In a time of favor I have answered you; in a day of salvation I have helped you; I will keep you and give you as a covenant to the people, to establish the land, to apportion the desolate heritages,

saying to the prisoners, 'Come out,' to those who are in darkness, 'Appear.' They shall feed along the ways; on all bare heights shall be their pasture; they shall not hunger nor thirst, neither scorching wind nor sun shall strike them, for he who has pity on them will lead them, and by springs of water will guide them. And I will make all my mountains a road and my highways shall be raised up. Behold, these shall come from afar, and behold, these from the north and from the west, and these from the land of Syene." Sing for joy, O heavens and exalt, O earth; break forth, O mountains, into singing! For the LORD has comforted his people and will have compassion on his afflicted.

I'm sure all of us have heard of the term "raising consciousness." Some of you have heard it as "raising awareness." There is a lot of effort made by a lot of people to raise consciousness on a host of different things. There's global warming, there's racism, there's sexism, there's homophobia. If you are part of this culture, you've heard over and over and over again the attempts by some folks to get other folks to think differently about lots of things that they may never have given a passing thought to. Such is the idea of "raising consciousness." And some of it is very legitimate. Much of it is not. Much of it stems from the fact that our culture has left its convictions of the most basic understanding of right and wrong as defined by God and his word and

is now desperately seeking an alternative form of morality to fill in the collective gaps in our soul. We are actually seeing played out before our eyes CK Chesterton's quote, he said this, he said: "When we cease to worship God, we do not worship nothing, we worship anything." And this new center of worship for our culture, it's either the ever warming planet or our every deepening moral confusion about our sexuality or some new form of personal autonomy that our pop culture is now serving up, and whatever it is, rest assured, that the press and the Internet will do all it can to raise our consciousness about what it is that we need to worship.

Well, God's servant song in Isaiah is in many ways, it's a biblical form of consciousness raising. What we have here is that God the Father is speaking to us about the wonders, about the joys and the blessings of what he is doing in our world through his son Jesus Christ. And in this servant song, God is seeking to raise our consciousness about the grand mission that Jesus is central to, and that can't help but raise our consciousness about our part in this, and that part is all about global missions. Listen to that with this in mind, this is what our servant song says in *Isaiah 49:5-13*, it says: *Now the LORD says, he who formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him; and that Israel might be gathered to him -- for I am honored in the eyes of the LORD, and my God has become my strength -- he says: "It is too light a thing*

that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth." You see, God is here telling his servant Jesus that not only will he raise up the tribe of Jacob and bring back the preserved of Israel but he will also become a light for all of the nations with a salvation that will extend to the ends of the earth. You see, God's plan right from the very beginning in Genesis was to redeem the nation of Israel so that in receiving that blessing, they would be a blessing to the entire earth. *Genesis 12:1-3* says this, it says: *Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and from your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."*

Unfortunately by the time of Jesus' beginning of his public ministry, the nation of Israel was not nearly so sanguine about sharing that blessing. Now I mentioned before that Jesus, the suffering servant, in his very first public statement in his own hometown, he read from one of the servant songs of Isaiah, and he read it to his hometown congregation. This is what happened. This

is Luke 4:16, it says: *And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."*

Amazing event. Jesus announces to his hometown congregation that Isaiah's servant song was written specifically about him. And do you remember what happened after he did that? Remember what happened after he makes that statement? It's in Luke 4:22, it says: *And all spoke well of him and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth. And they said, "Is not this Joseph's son?"* So everything appeared to be going extremely well at first. And it did go well until Jesus suggested that God's blessings were not limited to just the nation of Israel but to every nation even to the ends of the earth. And when he suggested

that God in the past had singled out non Jews like the widow of Sidon or Naaman the leper and that he had blessed them instead of exclusively Israel, well his hometown, they literally flipped out. They became enraged. *Luke 4:28* says: *When they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath. And they rose up and drove him out of the town and brought him to the brow of a hill on which their town was built, so they could throw him down the cliff. But passing through their midst, he went away.*

Now, I have to tell you, I've had some -- I've had some less than stellar responses to some of my messages, but I've never had a response like that, thank God. You see, God's kingdom agenda in bringing his salvation to every single corner of the globe led by the King himself, comes face to face with earth's fallen agenda, and there's literally hell to pay. You see, in Israel's case, it was deep resentment over the idea that God's blessing would be extended to the entire world, that God would say to his servant what he had said in his servant song in Isaiah: *"I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."* Jesus's hometown congregation was so enraged at that thought that they sought to end his ministry right then and there, and only because it was not God's appointed time, Jesus just simply slips through the crowd. And we know it was the first of many insults, indignities, persecutions, and finally execution that

Jesus had to endure at the hands of a world in the darkness that deeply resented the light.

Well, the servant song goes on to say in verse 7: *"Thus says the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One, to one deeply despised, abhorred by the nation, the servant of rulers."* So we see the father saying to the Son you will be despised, you will be abhorred, you, the king of all kings, will become the servant of rulers. But then he says: *"Kings shall see and arise; princes, and they shall prostrate themselves; because of the LORD, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you."*

So we wonder how is it that God can make such sweeping statements about his servant that they go from the extreme of being despised and abhorred to the other extreme of having kings and princes prostrate before him? Well, what God is identifying here is his grand plan, and it's a grand plan in which his servant son wins the ultimate victory through his ultimate loss. You know, myriads upon myriads are going to bow before Jesus but not before he is utterly crushed by his own creation. And in God's economy you cannot have one without the other. There's a big picture here and we get a glimpse of that in Revelation 5. There Jesus is presented as one who has been despised but now who is sovereignly claiming victory. It's in Revelation 5:1-6, it says this, it says: *Then I saw in the*

right hand of one seated on the throne a scroll with writing on the inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals. I also saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?" But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or even to look in it. And I cried and cried because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or even to look in it. Then one of the elders said to me, "Stop crying. Look! The Lion from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has been victorious so that He may open the scroll and its seven seals." Then I saw One like a slaughtered lamb standing between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent into all the earth.

Now if you'll notice, the one who's receiving all of the praise, all of the honor and all of the glory is the one who looks "like a slaughtered lamb." Our servant song in Isaiah describes God's slaughtered lamb as taking his salvation to the ends of the earth. God goes on to say in verse 8, he says: *Thus says the LORD: "In a time of favor I have answered you; in a day of salvation I have helped you; I will keep you and give you as a covenant to the people, to establish the land, to apportion the desolate heritages."* Now this covenant, this covenant God's servant will give is the covenant of his blood shed on the cross to pay the

penalty of sin. He is *his Holy One, one deeply despised, abhorred by the nation, the servant of rulers*, who now stands having won the victory by giving his life blood for the redeemed, and then God says it will be apportioned even to the desolate heritages. That's to the most distant outposts. And God says to them in verse 9: *"Saying to the prisoners, 'Come out,' to those who are in darkness, 'Appear.' They shall feed along the ways; on all bare heights shall be their pasture; they shall not hunger nor thirst, neither scorching wind nor sun shall strike them, for he who has pity on them will lead them, and by springs of water will guide them."*

So here we have God calling out to his chosen who are in the darkness just like he did to the Jews in Egypt, so he says I will feed, I will nurture, I will protect them along the way as well. Who do you suppose God was speaking to, and who do you suppose he's speaking about? Well, the good news is that God there is also speaking to us. You see, when God wrote this servant song, you were thousands of years and even more thousands of miles away. You and I were part of that desolate heritage. And the fact that you are right here, right now in this building is proof that what God says, he accomplishes. I mean, you may think you're here simply because you got in your car and you headed to church and you wound up on 25 Sullivan Avenue, but the grand picture that God had even back then in Isaiah's day is that you are here because he has fed

you, he has anointed you, he has nurtured you, and he has led you by springs of living water so that what I'm saying makes sense.

Here's the point that is absolutely critical to grab. Without God's feeding, nurturing, and protection, none of this gospel would have made any sense at all. I'd be standing here like some kind of Charlie Brown cartoon opening my mouth and it would be blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, that's all you'd hear, and that's because *1 Corinthians 1:18* says: *The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but it is God's power to us who are being saved.* So whatever spiritual sense I'm able to make with you is not proof of my cleverness; it is proof of God's faithfulness. It is a faithfulness that God insists will extend to every single corner of the earth. And God goes on to say in verse 11: *"And I will make all of my mountains a road and my highways shall be raised up. Behold, these shall come from afar, and behold, these from the north and from the west, and these from the land of Syene."* *Sing for joy, O heavens, and exalt, O earth; break forth, O mountains, into singing! For the LORD has comforted his people and will have compassion on his afflicted.* See, God says he will go ahead of us to make these impossible mountains into roads and crooked pathways into highways that are raised up. And the highway here is God's Holy Spirit who alone can make the gospel make sense. And God's telling us that that highway will bring people in

from all corners of the world even from the land of Syene, which most scholars believe even back then was a reference to China. See, that same highway ultimately is what brought you here this morning. And it will bring people from every tribe, tongue, and nation before God's throne.

And all this brings me to a sermon that I heard at T4G a while back. It's been a while since I'd been to the Together for the Gospel conference, but there David Platt gave a message on missions that was so powerful -- I don't know if you remember, we came back and replayed that message for the entire church, John Piper tweeted at that time, he said, "this may have been the most powerful missions message I've ever heard. I needed to be quiet before God." The sermon's title was this: "Divine Sovereignty: The Fuel of Death-Defying Missions." And it had one overarching truth to proclaim and it was this, this is the subtitle: "A high view of God's sovereignty fuels death-defying devotion to global missions." What David Platt was saying is that once you really grasp God's absolute control of this planet and the scope of his grand scheme for all of the earth, then you will agree with this audacious exhortation that he opened the message with. This is what he said. He said: "Pastors who believe that God is sovereign over all things will lead Christians to die for the sake of all peoples." That's pretty audacious. But that, too, is the logical

conclusion to understanding the implications of what the servant song of Isaiah is saying. So let me try if I may this morning to connect David Platt's sermon and his one overarching truth that directly links it to our servant song this morning. It is this: You know those far flung highways that God speaks of in his servant song, those highways that draw people from all four corners of the world? They draw those people and those people are the key, the center, the goal, the very source of the glory of God that Jesus enjoys in Revelation 5. Let me repeat Revelation 5. It says: *Then I saw One like a slaughtered lamb standing between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders. Verse 9 says: And they sang a new song: You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because You were slaughtered, and You redeemed people for God by Your blood from every tribe and language and people and nation. You made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they will reign on the earth.*

Did you get that? Do you get what he's saying? Do you see why global missions are such a critical part of the victory that the servant song is pointing to? It's a song that looks right through Jesus's profound humiliation to the glory he so rightfully receives. And the source of that glory: *You were slaughtered, and You redeemed people for God by Your blood from every tribe and language and people and nation. You made them a kingdom and*

priests to our God, and they will reign on the earth. What it's saying here is that the glory of Jesus Christ is not just a gathering of his redeemed but the gathering from every tribe and language and people and nation of the redeemed. The song puts it this way in verse 12, it says: "Behold, these shall come from afar, and behold, these from the north and from the west, and these from the land of Syene." Sing for joy, O heavens, and exult, O earth, break forth, O mountains, into singing! For the LORD has comforted his people and will have compassion on his afflicted.

Okay. So what does this have to do specifically with global missions? Well, if you remember at the beginning of this message what I spoke about was raising consciousness or raising awareness about cultural issues. I said a lot of those efforts were misplaced. Raising consciousness and awareness about global missions is not. You know, last month we celebrated IDOP Sunday. IDOP stands for the International Day of Prayer for the persecuted church, and one of the blessings that we have as a church of visiting that once a year is the realization over the years that we have moved as a church from simply raising awareness about the persecuted church to where we understand now that that awareness, that's now part of the fabric of our church. This is not the case with global missions. And hence, we need to raise awareness. And David Platt's message does just that. And he focuses in on the

concept of particular atonement as the driving force behind global missions.

Now, particular atonement is a very controversial doctrine. You've ever heard of the statements limited atonement, unlimited atonement. Particular atonement is a description of what others call "limited atonement." It's the doctrine that says Jesus Christ went to the cross specifically to secure without any possibility of failure the salvation of his sheep. That is, Jesus came with a particular goal of ransoming a particular people, a vast number no doubt, people from every tribe, tongue, and nation, but nonetheless a particular group of people chosen before the dawn of time itself. Jesus went to the cross to pay for and secure the salvation of these people. *Revelation 5:10* says: *You made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they will reign on the earth.* Now on the other hand, there are many who claim that Jesus Christ went to the cross to secure an unlimited atonement, an unlimited atonement made available to anyone and everyone who by faith decides to access it. And according to this belief, salvation is there for anyone by virtue of their faith, but no one by virtue of their unbelief. They believe the key to unlocking the atonement rests with the person's individual decision as to whether or not to believe. Unlimited atonement claims that Christ paid the sin debt for the entire world on the cross but it only becomes effective for

an individual when he places his faith in Christ. And in essence that is saying that Jesus Christ went to the cross to make salvation possible but by no means certain. Particular atonement states that Jesus Christ from the beginning of time knew exactly which sheep he was going to die for, and he set out with the goal of securing with absolute certainty the salvation of those sheep. Hence the Good Shepherd says in *John 10:11*: "*I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.*"

And that brings us to David Platt's message. Here's what David Platt says, he says: "A high view of God's sovereignty fuels death-defying devotion to global missions." And he adds this practical exhortation: "Pastors who believe that God is sovereign over all things will lead Christians to die for the sake of all peoples." Pastor Platt is not speaking hyperbole. He is making the case that pastors should be training their flocks to be willing to go into places where death is a very real possibility. Why? Why would someone be willing to risk their life to bring the gospel to people who just might kill you for your act of kindness? Well again, he says the answer lies in the general sovereignty of God which is the source of confidence for any missionary endeavor. I mean, if you genuinely believe that God is in absolute control of everything, then you will have the confidence to believe that he will sovereignly guide you in every place including places where

angels fear to tread. The answer also lies in God's particular atonement which is part of God's sovereignty. *Ephesians 1:4-6* says this, it says: *For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will -- to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.* God says he has chosen a vast group of people that he has raised up for the express purpose of giving praise to his glorious grace. In *John 6:37*, Jesus says this, he says: *"All those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all those he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day."*

You see, the goal of missions, whether it's down the street or on the other side of the world is to present the gospel so that souls might -- quote -- *"Look to the Son and believe in him and have eternal life."* God's will for all time is that his people should fan out into all the world doing that very task until the very last chosen sheep comes into the fold. *Matthew 24:14* says: *"And this*

gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come." And if you truly see that, then you will see why a high view of God's sovereignty fuels death-defying devotion to global missions.

You know what he pointed out is that there are 6,000 people groups left in the world who are considered to be unreached peoples. And he pointed out the difference between unsaved people and unreached people. You know, unsaved people might be right outside the doors of this church, or for that matter right inside the doors of this church. These are people who may have heard the call of the gospel but they're not interested in surrendering their lives to Christ. Unreached peoples are people who don't even know that there is a call of Christ on their life. They don't even have the remote possibility of responding to the gospel because they've never been exposed to it. You know, David Platt pointed out that North Yemen has over 8 million people, and out of those 8 million, there's estimated to be between 20 and 30 Christians. As he said, more than your typical Sunday school is the entire population of Christians in North Yemen. So we can say the vast majority of North Yemen is unreached, that is people there don't even know there's a gospel and they've never ever heard of the name Jesus Christ. And so Platt asks what is the fate of the innocent native who's never heard the gospel? And his answer is he goes straight

to heaven. The problem is is there's no such thing as an innocent native of anywhere, because God holds every single human being guilty of suppressing the truth about who he is and about what he has done in creation. *Romans 1:18-20* says this, it says: *The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities -- his eternal power and divine nature -- have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.*

See, what God is saying here is that every human being on the face of the planet stands before God without excuse because every single one of us stands on his earth and we can't help but see his creatures, his mountains, his forests, his seas, we look up into his sky, we breathe his air and then we pretend that either evolution or some other false god is the author of all of this. And none of those gods has the power to save. And God says every single one of us stand before God without excuse. So Platt says there are no innocent unreached people in the world. They are guilty before God and thus they need the gospel.

There are over 2 billion -- with a "B" -- 2 billion people in this

world at this moment whose knowledge of God is only sufficient to damn them to hell forever. But there's hope. God speaks of that hope in his servant song saying in *Isaiah 49:6*: "*I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.*" Now we know that in order to do that, God had to leave heaven itself and enter into flesh, and this is what we celebrate at Christmastime. We celebrate the fact that he was born flawless and that he lived this life of absolute perfection and then he went to the cross where he offered up his life exchanging his righteousness for our sins. The servant of the servant song of *Isaiah* is the only one capable of making his fallen sheep fit for heaven. The one who's described in *Isaiah 49:7* as "*One deeply despised, abhorred by the nation, the servant of rulers*" is the only one who can open up the scroll and the seven seals. He's the only one capable of offering his perfection for our sins, making us worthy to stand before God. You see, it is the previously despised one, abhorred by the nation, the servant of rulers who God tells us in *Revelation 5* is now receiving what? The glory of the nations.

And all this points to one great conclusion. This is the reason why global mission is so crucial. It's also the reason why you and I are sitting here blessed to be members of the kingdom. And the reason is this, it's simply this: Before the foundation of the world, God set his sights on a particular group of people. If you

are one of his, you are a member of that group, and this group exists to bring glory to the king. And what God is saying is that before time even began, God chose members out of every single different people group that would ever exist on planet earth. And by his blood, he ransomed people from every tribe, tongue, and nation. And as yet there are 6,000 people groups who have been chosen of God but are still outside the fold. They were chosen before the foundations of the world as well, and God has set, sealed, and delivered these people by his particular atonement purchased for them at the cross. And the own thing stopping them from coming into the fold and giving the ultimate glory to Christ is us. You see, all of history from the creation of Adam to the final return of Christ as king is unfolding and it unfolds exactly according to His plan and His purpose. And so we see kingdoms rise and kingdoms fall and we got caught up, each of us, in our own individual kingdoms and we think of things like Obamacare and the national debt and taking the nuclear weapons out of Iran as something of critical importance, but God says in the book of Isaiah, the planets themselves are small dust on the scales. You know what small dust on the scales is? Small dust is -- you know, when a merchant wanted to make sure he was being absolutely precise in weighing something, he would -- he would kind of blow on the plate to blow the small dust off the scales so something as insignificant as that dust wouldn't affect the weight. Here's what

God says, God says compared to the majesty of Christ as the king of the universe, even the planets are small dust. He says this in *Isaiah 40:13*, he says: *Who has measured the Spirit of the LORD, or what man shows him his counsel? Whom did he consult, and who made him understand? Who taught him the path of justice, and taught him knowledge, and showed him the way of understanding? Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket, and are accounted as the dust on the scales; behold, he takes up the coastlands like fine dust.* The servant song says in verse 7: *Thus says the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One, to one deeply despised, abhorred by the nation, the servant of rulers: "Kings shall see and arise; princes, and they shall prostrate themselves; because of the LORD, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you."*

The Holy One of Israel has chosen us as his means to bring the rest of the world into the fold. And so David Platt says there are four consequences of a genuine belief that God's sovereignty and his particular atonement drives global missions. Number one, we pray confidently. *Revelation 5:8* says this, it says: *Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the 24 elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.* That's astounding when you stop to think about our prayers go up, they don't just

bounce off the ceiling, they go into the very throne room of God himself. They're part of the process of God bringing the entire world into the fold. And secondly, we give sacrificially. As he pointed out, we are the wealthiest nation in the history of mankind and we have been blessed with that wealth to be a blessing. He pointed out that for every \$100 a Christian in North America makes, an average of 5 cents goes to the unreached. We have to do better than that. Thirdly, we go intentionally to all peoples, whether it's short term, long term, medium term, anything in between. We foster an attitude that says we must go. And fourthly, we lead our churches to die willingly. *Matthew 24:14* says: "*And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.*" You know, it's no secret that the last remaining 6,000 people groups are by far the most difficult, and clearly all of the low hanging fruit is been plucked and what remains are people who will only be reached by people who are willing to not only go but to go and to possibly die in the process of bringing the gospel to these people.

Now, I don't know if you've been following the news, but just this past week you may have heard of an American by the name of Ronnie Smith. He was a 33-year-old high school chemistry teacher with a wife named Anita and a son named Hosea, and he was executed on the streets of Libya by Islamic terrorists this week. He was out

jogging right by the embassy in Benghazi when he was shot down, and I heard that news and I thought well, that's a terrible thing, they said an American teacher was killed in Libya and I'd heard that he was deeply beloved by his students. But what you might not have known is that he went to Libya to share Christ, and that he was very much a disciple of John Piper's. John Piper said yesterday -- quote -- "Ronnie wrote to us at Desiring God last year and told us that one of my messages was significant in leading him and his family to Libya." Now Anita is a widow and his son Hosea has lost his father. A statement on the Austin Stone website which is Ronnie's church said "Smith had served on the church's staff before moving to Libya. Ronnie and his family moved to Benghazi to teach high school chemistry and to be a blessing to the Libyan people. Ronnie's greatest desire was for peace and prosperity in Libya and for the people of Libya to have the joy of knowing God through Christ." Speaking that truth cost Ronnie Smith his life, and only eternity is going to prove the wisdom of that decision, but just yesterday John Piper wrote this, he says, "How do I feel about sharing in the cause of his going to his death?" Piper said, "I came to tears this morning praying for Anita and Hosea. Weep with those who weep was not a command in that moment; it was a sorrow rolling over me. I remember being 33. That's how old I was when God called me to the pastorate. I started my ministry at the age Ronnie's ministry ended. And Jesus's. Ronnie is not the first

person who has died doing what I've encouraged him to do. He won't be the last. If I thought death were the worst thing that could happen to a person, I would be overwhelmed with regret. But the whole point of Ronnie's life is that there's something worse than death. So he was willing to risk his own life to rescue others from something far worse. And he could risk his own life because he knew his own risking and dying would work for him 'an eternal weight of glory.' And he knew God was able to meet every need of his wife and son. We are not playing games. When I preach that risk is right, I know a what I am doing. When I say, 'God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him -- especially in suffering,' I know what suffering may mean. When I say, 'Fear not, you can only be killed,' I take seriously the words of Jesus: 'Some of you they will put to death but not a hair of your head will perish.'"

You know, if you are a parent and your child elected to go to seek out those unreached people groups or any global mission of risk, how would you feel? How do you suppose Ronnie Smith's parents and his wife feel? I know for myself, I would be absolutely terrified and absolutely honored and blessed that if my kids thought they were called by God that they would understand enough about God and his glory to want to affect that glory no matter what it costs. That needs to be our attitude as a church as well. See, it's God's

glory that is at stake, and we see that take place in Revelation 5 and we see it predicted in our servant song. Again, let me just read to you Isaiah 49, verse 6: He says, "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."

In verse 9 he says: Thus says the LORD, "In a time of favor I have answered you; in a day of salvation I have helped you; I will keep you and give you as a covenant to the people, to establish the land, to apportion the desolate heritages, saying to the prisoners, 'Come out,' to those who are in darkness, 'Appear.'

And verse 11: "And I will make all my mountains a road, and my highways shall be raised up. Behold, these shall come from afar, and behold, these from the north and from the west, and these from the land of Syene." Sing for joy, O heavens, and exalt, O earth; break forth, O mountains, into singing! For the LORD has comforted his people and will have compassion on his afflicted.

My point in all of this, brothers and sisters, is it is time to raise our consciousness about global missions. Let's pray.

Father God, I do thank you and praise you for the blood of the saints, the blood of the martyrs; it is the seed of the church. Father, I pray that every one of us would in our heart of hearts understand exactly what Ronnie Smith was willing to do and that we would, through the pain and through the difficulty, through the horror of what has happened to him see the wisdom of his choice, the beauty of his choice. Eternity will mark the wisdom of that choice. Father, I pray that every single one of us in this room, if we feel the call of God, no matter what, no matter what the risk, will understand the big picture, that you have chosen people from every tribe, tongue, and nation, that they are out there already called of God, already chosen of God, and it is our task to simply go through what you have given us to do. I pray for that unction, I pray for that anointing, I pray for that wisdom in Jesus' name. Amen.