In January of 2024, Pope Francis was asked about hell.  He replied, “It’s difficult to imagine it.  What I would say is not dogma of faith, but my personal thought: I like to think hell is empty.  I hope it is.”  Three crosses on Calvary say otherwise.  Jesus would not have mentioned hell more than heaven if it weren’t real … and He certainly wouldn’t have died to save us from an empty threat.

The cross on one side of Jesus reminds us of a man who understood the true peril of his soul and called for Jesus to remember him.  He’s now in Paradise.  The cross on the other side of Jesus speaks to the issue that some, even in their most desperate moment, deny the identity of Jesus or the reality of hell.  We can all wish hell was empty but that doesn’t change the truth of what Jesus said about it and did about it (*Wall Street Journal, 3/8/24, p.A13).*

Yes, the danger is REAL. Hell is a real place and an actual situation. Unsaved people spend eternity separated from God and heavenly bliss in a place of anguish and torment. Surely Jesus did die so that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord might be saved (Ro 10.13). Jesus rose again, so that whoever believes in Him might not perish, but have eternal life (Jn 3.16).

In the passages we read this morning, the truth is plain. We are God’s team to win the world. We are the witnesses who make Jesus known. “Make Jesus Known” is the theme for this year’s Annie Armstrong Eastern Offering for North American Missions.

NAMB targets the US, Canada, Puerto Rico, the US Virgin Islands, Guam and American Samoa. These areas have a population of about **371 million people**. These people speak about **350** languages.

It is estimated that **281 million** of these people are **lost**. That is **281 million people who do not know salvation** by grace through faith. That is 281 million people who are **bound for hell**.

**How** can these 281 million people be rescued from eternal separation from God in hell? They need to be **saved**.

How can they be saved? THEY **NEED TO HEAR THE GOSPEL**.

How can they hear the gospel? They must **hear the truth about salvation** in Jesus.

How will they hear? **Somebody must tell them**; it takes a witness to Make Jesus Known!

Look at Acts 1.8 again. Here is our message for this morning :

**Purpose** “shall be witnesses unto Me”
**People** “YOU”
**Promise** “when the Holy Spirit has come on you”

 “you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit in a few days” (1.5)

**Power** “you will receive power”
**Plan** “in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth”

**God’s PURPOSE is that His people be His witnesses.**

That is ***US***. WE **are** His witnesses. We are all He has. There is NO “Plan B.”

God’s plan is for His people to witness to salvation. PERIOD. What ***IS*** a witness? Merriam-Webster says ([www.Merriam-Wbster.com](http://www.Merriam-Wbster.com)) :

1 **:** attestation of a fact or event **:** [testimony](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/testimony)

2 **:** one that gives evidence - specifically **:** one who testifies in a cause or before a judicial tribunal

3 **:** one asked to be present at a transaction so as to be able to testify to its having taken place

4 **:** one who has personal knowledge of something

5 a **:** something serving as evidence or proof **:** [sign](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sign)

 b : **:** public affirmation by word or example of usually religious faith or conviction

“a WITNESS is ***a person who tells what they know***” - Bro Johnny 101

WE are God’s witnesses. So, by DEFINITION . . .

 WE attest to the fact that Jesus saves.

 WE give evidence.

WE were there when we got saved, so WE were present at the transaction so WE are able to testify to its having taken place.

 WE have personal knowledge of salvation and life in Christ.

 WE must make public affirmation by word and example .

The coldest game in the history of Arrowhead Stadium took place during last year’s playoffs. On January 13, 2024.  The Kansas City Chiefs hosted the Miami Dolphins in the wild-card playoff game with a temperature of **minus 4-degrees** and a wind-chill of **minus 27**.  Patrick Mahomes’ helmet famously broke as the frozen plastic cracked on a hard tackle.

Such commitment from players is expected but the month of March revealed something new.  Research Medical Center reported that some of the people attending that game are now having fingers and toes amputated due to frostbite.  The hospital noted that more surgeries were expected as the “injuries evolve.”  The commitment of football fans to risk amputations in support of their team should challenge every Christian to evaluate our level of commitment to Christ and His Kingdom. (*Houston Chronicle, 3/9/24, p.B6).*

We are not just “fans.” We are the team. We are the family. We are the plan. Jesus’ purpose is that WE ***will*** be **witnesses**.

**WE are the PEOPLE**

 “*YOU*”
 “*shall be witnesses unto Me*”

**Here is the PLAN**

 “*in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth*”

During the spring of 1944, with D-Day rapidly approaching, General George Patton delivered a strong exhortation to the Third Army.  It was a mandate for success just a couple of months before they would storm the beaches of Normandy.  The iconic soldier said, “I don’t want to get any message saying, ‘I am holding my position.’  We are not holding a thing… We are advancing constantly and we are not interested in holding on to anything … Our basic plan of operation is to advance and to keep on advancing regardless of whether we have to go over, under, or through the enemy.”  Jesus declared His army, the Church, would perpetually & victoriously advance (Matthew 16:18). (*Charge: History’s Greatest Military Speeches, Steve Israel, 2007, p.203)*

**WE have His PROMISE of POWER**

 “*you will receive power*”

 “*you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit in a few days*” (1.5)

 “*you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you*” (1.8)

 While dying of pancreatic cancer, Randy Pausch (1960-2008) wrote a book that’s sold more than 5 million copies.  It’s a memoir filled with advice for his young children who would never know their dad be yond childhood.  While talking about priorities, he explained how we must ask ourselves if we’re spending time on the right things.  He referenced an article in his files from a newspaper in Roanoke, VA.  A pregnant woman lodged a complaint against a construction company citing concerns that the noisy jackhammers were injuring her unborn child.  She’s holding a cigarette in a photo next to the article.  Pausch wrote, “If she cared about her unborn child, the time she spent railing against jackhammers would have been better spent putting out that cigarette.”  It’s easy to focus on the wrong things.  (*The Last Lecture, Randy Pausch, 2008, p.108).*

What are we **doing** with the power available to us??

OK, so ***HOW shall we engage***?? What should we **do**?? **GLAD** you asked!

 **1. WE can SHARE**

 Share your testimony

 Share the Romans Road using your marked NT

 Share John 3.16

 **2. WE can SUPPORT**

 ***Pray*** about giving to the AAEO.

***Do*** what God says

 **3. WE can SUPPLICATE**

 Pray like it’s important!

 Pray like you mean it!