

TOMORROW IS HERE

Lincoln Park Baptist Church, West Newton, Massachusetts
March 7, 1965

Scripture:

Acts 16:6-10 Mission to Europe
I Corinthians 16:5-9 Mission to Ephesus

Introduction:

Acts 16:9 – *“And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing beseeching him saying: ‘Come over to Macedonia and help us.’ And when he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on to Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the Gospel to them.”*

This passage from Acts helps to explain what has happened in the last 150 years in the missionary efforts of our churches. Many leaders in our churches felt the call from other countries, *“Come over here and help us.”* They felt a challenge in the untold millions that had not yet a share in the gospel of Jesus. Considering the challenge as a call from God, they went out to preach and live the gospel. At the home base many followed them with prayer, love, and economic support. To a great extent this is still happening.

However, the situation of the missionary efforts of the church has changed. Last week we tried to point out how the political revolutions of the last 25 years have affected the missionary outreach. Actually, the great new political fact of our times is the emergence of some 50 new nations in Asia and Africa which have come to independence in the two decades since the close of World War II. This fact in itself puts missions in a new context.

The fact of the matter is that our own missionary policy, even before these changes took place, was aimed at the establishment of strong national churches, nationally led, self-supporting and self-propagating. This is not a future hope but already a reality. In all honesty, we must say that part of this is due in no small part to the democratic nature of our Baptist polity. We want Christians to stand on their own feet, theologically as well as economically.

I. Tomorrow is here in the sense that the new era in mission is already in full swing. The national churches are a reality and not a dream.

- A. Chester Jump, the new secretary for the missionary societies, has recently said: *“Today the missionary movement has come of age. The bright future of which Adoniram Judson dreamed and in which he believed is being realized. The seeds which he patiently planted in the soil of Burma and which others who followed in his footsteps have sown there and in other lands around the world, have blossomed into strong national Christian churches which are taking over the responsibility themselves for continuing the Christian outreach.”* This is true in Burma, in the Philippines, in Puerto Rico.

Today we have only 340 missionaries on the foreign field, but the Christian influence and witness is multiplied almost thirty-fold in over 10,000 national Christian workers who staff the churches, schools and hospitals related to the American Baptist program.

- B. We have been able to produce trained leadership. The leaders of these young churches and the congregations they serve are enthusiastic and alive to the opportunities that confront them everywhere. They are eager to move forward.

Ex. of Carolina Baptist Church:

- growth in church membership
- growth in economic support
- growth in physical plant
- day school – 900 students
- 4 acres of land for new church
- 10 to 15 missionary stations.

Ex. influence of laymen in government, in business, in the professions, in teaching.

- II. What kind of missionary do we need in this new missionary context? Only the one who is willing to be a servant.

- A. The Rev. Richard D. Beers, Recruiting Secretary for the A.B.F.M.S., tells of a conversation with the Indian Christian director of a large medical institution, who said to him: “If you have any doctors who want to come here to be head of one of our departments, don’t send them. But if you have doctors who are willing to come here to serve and meet the needs in whatever capacity they can, we want them. They may become the head of some department, but that’s beside the point.”
- B. Their presence there is a challenge; it is a confession of partnership. It is a source of comfort, where Christians are so much in a minority.
- C. The missionary is no longer the center around which the work revolves. He must be willing to be a subordinate.

Conclusion:

Today, as yesterday, we can say with Paul: (I Cor. 16:8-9) – *But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, for a wide door for effective work has opened here, and there are many adversaries.*”

The door of opportunity is wide open on the mission field. But many are the adversaries:

- From without -- nationalism
- From within -- pride, sluggishness, indifference.

The task of the church here is the same as that of the church in Carolina.