

## **“PRAYING THE GOSPEL FOR NIGERIA.”**

**Rev. Robert T. Woodyard**

**First Christian Reformed Church**

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**Scripture Texts: Psalm 2:8; 67:1-4; Matthew 28:18-20; Revelation 7:9-10**

### **Introduction.**

I am going to start my sermon this morning by telling you the destination, where we are going. Then I am going to back up and tell you why we are going there and how we will get there.

If this was a big bus and I announced that we are going to go to Thudpucker, Arkansas, I am sure I would have to make a good case for why in the world would we go there or I might have a mutiny on my hands.

So this morning our destination is to call First CRC to become a prayer advocate church for the nation of Nigeria and specifically for the Muslim Hausa frontier people group in northern Nigeria.

Now already a few of you are thinking, I would rather go to Thudpucker, Arkansas.

So let's back up and talk about the bigger picture and then zero in on why that destination.

*Why pray for others when we have so many problems of our own? Why pray for another nation, when our own needs lots of prayer and when we have relationships with missionaries in several nations already?*

We are not taking away or diminishing any prayers, we are multiplying. As we have been blessed so we pray blessing for others.

### **Why pray for the nations?**

*God calls us to pray for the nations.*

**Psalm 2:8** Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.

*Jesus calls us to pray for the nations.*

Jesus said pray to the Lord of the harvest.

Jesus said pray thy kingdom come.

Jesus' last words to the disciples focused on making disciples of all nations and taking the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

*Paul called us to pray for all peoples.*

**I Timothy 2:1** First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people.

**The hope of the Gospel is for all nations.**

God has a plan for reaching all the nations of the earth. He has announced it already.

**Matthew 24:14** And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

**Matthew 28:18-19** And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations."

And Jesus gives John a revelation of what the fulfillment of that plans looks like.

**Revelation 7:9-10** After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, 10 and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

*Scripture prophecies and promises and proclaims that the heavenly kingdom will be filled with people from every tribe, tongue, people and nation (ethne).*

That once prompted Martin Luther to observed, "Prayer is not overcoming God's reluctance, but laying hold of His willingness."

The nations are there for the asking. "Ask me and I will give you the nations."

Our Missions Ministry Team with the blessing of the council is calling us to pray for the soul of a people group, one of the least reached and most lost and hardest people groups in the world. The Muslim people group called Hausa in Nigeria.

**Why pray for the Hausa in Nigeria?**

Why did we decide on that least reached people group within that nation?

One reason was to do triage. When there is a big accident the people who get attention first are those with the greatest need. In the missions world we can ask where is the greatest need?

Another reason was because of past connections, points of contact. Where has God connected First CRC in the past?

Let me address both of those questions, where is the greatest need and where has God connected us.

### **Where is the greatest need.**

When the Protestant Missionary movement began in the 1700's it focused on the coastlines of the continents and islands. That was strategic, that was where boats could reach.

When the coastlines were saturated then the Gospel began to spread into the interior of the continents by the late 1800s. Missions organizations like China Inland Mission, Sudan Interior Mission (SIM, now Sudan International Mission) and African Inland Mission started.

Before long there was a Christian presence in nearly every nation in the world and some were thinking we were getting close to finishing the task of world evangelism.

Then in the 1974 a man by the name of Ralph Winter rocked the missions world in a speech before 4,000 missions people at the International Congress on World Evangelization in Lausanne, Switzerland. He exposed that that focus on reaching the 200 countries of the world was way off mark. He showed how within those 200 countries there were thousands of people groups, ethne, with their own languages and cultures and heritage. He coined the term unreached people groups.

When Jesus commanded His followers to make disciples of all nations (Matt, 28:18–20), He used the word ethne, which refers to people groups and not to geopolitical countries.

That was a watershed moment in the modern missions movement. Since 1974 the focus of the missions was moved toward unreached people groups, the greatest number of which are in the 10-40 window, between 10 degrees north and 40 degrees north latitude from western Africa to Asia. Unreached was defined as any people group with less than 2 percent evangelical Christian.

Now Ralph Winter's daughter, Becky, married to Tim Lewis of the Telos Camp in Ferndale has taken up her father's work and has been doing research on the least reached of the unreached, calling them Frontier people groups (FPGs), where there are less than 0.1% believers.

Becky's research has found one fourth of the world's population have almost no chance of hearing about Jesus. A person in one of those groups could talk to every person they know and none of them would know the name of Jesus. Of these 4,700 least reached

people groups or frontier peoples, the 31 largest groups, numbering 10 million people or more, make up half of all the least reached.

<https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2019/may/redefining-unreached-people-groups-frontier-unengaged-missi.html>

“Identifying the frontier peoples subset within unreached peoples is sort of like triage ... an attempt to identify the most needy, perhaps overlooked by sending efforts, and set priorities,” said Dan Scribner, director of the Joshua Project, a popular online database tracking evangelism efforts among 17,000 people groups worldwide. “Those in [frontier people groups] have little, if any, opportunity of hearing about Jesus unless someone goes cross-culturally.”

Triage. That’s what power companies do are a huge storm with lots of power outages. They start with the biggest areas. That’s what identifying the largest Frontier people groups does. The Hausa are the largest people group in Africa scattered over several countries and the 30 million Hausa in Nigeria are the largest people group there.

How can First CRC make a difference in the eternal future of one of the least reached people groups in the world? Where could we start?

### **God has already connected First CRC with Nigeria.**

In God’s gracious providence First CRC has been blessed and used of God in a long and fruitful ministry in Nigeria.

In 1956 a daughter of our church, Betty Van Dyken, left for Nigeria to serve with Sudan Interior Mission in and around Jos, Nigeria as a nurse in a variety of roles. She was the oldest of eight children born to Paul and Marie Van Dyken. She retired in 1997 after 42 years of faithful service among the Nigerian people.

On a side note, my mother’s older sister and brother-in-law served in Nigeria 31 years. Betty was a nurse for a while at Kent Academy and took care of my cousin when she broke her arm in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade.

In 1970 another daughter of our church, Chris Roos, went to Nigeria under CRC World Missions and served in the Jos area until she retired in 2012 after 42 years of faithful service. She has since returned for three short term assignments.

In addition to these two long connections with Nigeria our church also supported the work of Jim and Kathy (Vander Griend) Broesma. He was a pilot with CRC World Missions for five years in 1980s. Lamar and Eleanor spent a month there.

Much more recently the family of Bryan and Sara Korthuis have joined our church. Sara was born and raised in Nigeria to missionary parents, Andy and Linda Horlings, who are now retired in Abbotsford.

## **About Nigeria and how we will pray.**

Our Missions Ministry Team has talked at some length for many months about what kind of impact or influence our little church could have on getting the Gospel to one of these groups.

All of this is background that leads us to introduce to you this morning the call to for us to become a prayer advocate church for Nigeria and specifically for one of the largest least reached people groups in the world, the Hausa people of northern Nigeria.

Let me give you just a little detail about Nigeria and the Hausa.

Out of the 57 nations of Africa, Nigeria is the most populous and seventh largest nation in world. There are about 200 million people in a country the size of Texas. Nigeria is one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the world with over 500 separate, distinct people groups. Nigeria as a nation is about 50% Christian mostly in the southern half of the country. The northern half is predominately Muslim and the largest group are the 30 million Hausa people.

One other important thing to know that will influence our prayers. Nigeria is one of the most violent country in the world where there is no war. Tens of thousands of people have been killed in the past ten years, over 2 million are displaced from their homes and land. The conflict is intense and wide spread, not just against Christians.

This kind of human suffering always opens the door for the Gospel. The first step is prayer. In Colossians 4:3–4, Paul asks the church, “Pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ” (ESV).

We are asking First CRC to pray for Nigeria and the Hausa, for God to open the door for the Gospel of Jesus to spread.

We are going to begin encouraging prayer in every opportunity and knock on the doors of heaven on behalf of this lost people, that God may be glorified, that His Kingdom may be come, that heaven may be filled with people from every tribe, tongue, language and people.

Some of you have this Prayer booklet for praying for the 31 least reach people groups. This is the second edition and there are a bunch on the information table.

Next week there will be a sheet in your box with some links and some suggestions on how to pray. We encourage you to add the Hausa people to your prayer list, to pray for

them in family devotions. We will begin to learn more about them so we can pray for effectively.

Include your children the way some of you do when you sponsor a child in an orphanage. Go on the internet and learn more about Nigeria and the Hausa.

And we have a promise to encourage us.

**Psalm 2:8** Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.

Can you even imagine what heaven will be like, when someone comes up to you, someone with different skin color, with a different accent, from a completely different part of the world, comes up to you in heaven and says thank you for praying for me? “I am here as an answer to your prayer. Thank you.”

### **Prayer for Nigeria:**

Holy Father, thank you that you are the God of all nations and Lord over all the peoples of the earth. We ask you to give us your heart for the nations. As you have blessed us, make us a blessing to others.

Lord, we ask you to send your Spirit to the Hausa people and awaken them to hear your voice. Send laborers into this great harvest, that the Gospel of Jesus will be preached and everyone be able to hear what we hear so freely and frequently.

Father, bring about a great conviction of sin causing them to repent and turn from their idols. Let their hearts be changed and deliver them from the bondage of deception.

Father, disarm the enemy who holds them captive to a great darkness. Open the eyes of their hearts to see your salvation. Send the Spirit of truth to them and bring them before your throne in worship. Cause them to be among those bow the knee and confess Jesus as Lord. Do this for the sake of your glory and the glory of the Gospel of your Son Jesus Christ and for their eternal joy. Amen.