

11.26.2023 Sermon

Spreading the Good News... God Math

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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SPEAKERS

Rev. Dr. Tracy Saletta
Rev. Dr. Joanna Beske

Rev. Dr. Tracy Saletta

We have the beauty of the gift of having, as I said earlier, the Reverend Dr. Joanna Beske. "What are you doing?" So, for those of you who don't know her, she hasn't been here for a while. She's actually been pastoring another church. "Since when did you come off the feet? Come on up here. Come on, give her a hand as she comes out."

I just have to say that Joanna has been a part of this church from even before I was a part of this church. She was part of the founding membership. She was here from the beginning, serving in so many ways in our community. It is so true. Their DNA is in this church. She heard God's call. We were her original founding church that sent her out, that supported her.

And, you know, she started out having this – listen to this for a moment. She had to learn French, so she lived in Paris, Paris, Attabad Ville, okay, whatever she said, Albertville, Albertville. She lived there to learn French, so that she could learn Wolof. So, imagine learning another language in order to learn the language because there was nothing that was directly translated from English into Wolof; it was French into Wolof. So, she had to go learn two languages in order to do this. She is amazing. She is such a blessing to our community. We love having her, love having her be a part. So, we have a treat today in welcoming Reverend Dr. Joanna Beske.

Rev. Dr. Joanna Beske

I've come back every three or four years, it seems. This time, I am just flooded with memories from the beginning times. It's like God's been reminding me of the whole process. Back when

we were meeting in the community center, the Sunday school was in my living room because I lived across the street. I'm not going to go through all the memories, but I'll just say something about the first time I preached and those who... No, no, I forget what that acronym is - IYKYK.

Why, you know, and black curtain, orange chairs, overhead projector - that just shows you how long ago that was. I had a cute little suit too. I had Joanie take me out; we bought a little blue suit. You don't remember? Yeah. She wanted to make sure I looked, you know, professional. And we didn't really... Cornerstone didn't, I think there was like one other person who would preach, you know, had preached as a woman in the church, and it was just interesting.

So, anyhow, thank you so much, Pastor Tracy and elders, for having me here in this season. It's a real joy to be here, again. And I just want to start, since this is kind of a small group Sunday, by asking you a question. And I expect you to answer back to me. If - why are we laughing? So, I want you to think back to a time in your life, whether it was the first time you heard about Jesus or a significant time. Who were the people or the communities that were significant in that process for you? And I'll go ahead and start with myself. For me, I grew up going to a Lutheran church. It was Sunday school and Sunday morning and Vacation Bible School. Then I went away to college and put a pause on my faith for a bit. And then God just brought InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, a campus group, and a roommate who was on fire for Jesus and people like that into my life so that I could get back on track in my relationship with the Lord.

So, I'm just wondering, who were the people or the communities that influenced you or shared about Jesus with you? Okay, college roommate. This college roommate... God just like matches us up. Co-worker. Principal, okay. In the school. Awesome. Cindy Outlaw... who has not heard about God from Cindy Outlaw, the mayor of West Chester?

Well, now, anyhow, who else? Grandparents? The Gideons, Mike, lots of friends, lots of friends. I got your name. Right, right. I went to the website, or the Facebook page, to like, remind myself of names and stuff. It's yeah. So, anyhow, um, where am I? I'm lost. My chat, I might add, is like worse than ever.

So, I want us to take a look at the world and how the world is now and where the gospel is around the world. So, who knows how many people are there in the world? An approximation? Yeah, it's closer to 8 billion, but very close. Like, I would have guessed, like a lot less. But yeah, there's about 8 billion. And I don't know if you can understand that number or not; I can't. So, it's like an eight and then nine zeros. It's like a lot of people. And I've been in a lot of airports and a lot of countries, and I have not yet seen them all. But there are a lot of people out there. I'm trying, you know.

So, what I want to do is I want to do an interactive thing. So, we can kind of find out who these people are without having to get on a plane and take, you know, get shots and everything. So, I need nine volunteers. Come on up, nine people. Don't worry, because I'm gonna need 10 more in just a little bit. But you don't have to say anything. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 on this side. Or divided or whatever. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 2 more. Tony, Kevin, get up. We got our nine now. Okay, yes, four, we got five over there. Okay, each person up here represents about 8 million people. So, we're going to start over here. And Kevin represents the 8 million people who are active Christians. And what I mean by that is they love the Lord their God with all their heart, mind, soul, and strength. They follow Him. They have a Bible, they read it, they pray. They are active Christians.

And then the two of you are going to hold this side we got about one and a half billion, billion, one and a half billion. That's a lot of people who the people who did these statistics call nominal Christians, which means that it's someone who has been exposed to Christianity. Maybe they come to church at Christmas and Easter. They know about Jesus on a box on a form, they would check that box, but they are not actively engaged in their faith.

Okay, and then we have 1.7 We got two people here because you're all 8 million 800 million people who represent the Muslims around the world. Now a Muslim is someone who believes in Allah, that's the name of God. And in Mohammed, their prophet. Jesus was a prophet. He was a good man. He was not the savior. He was not Lord. And so, we have 1.7 billion Muslims.

We have 985 million Hindus, a Hindu. Hindus are predominantly in India and Nepal. They believe in millions of gods and they worship all of them just in case. God, Jesus are part of the Holy Spirit are three of the gods that they worship. They believe in reincarnation, and they're trying to live a good life. So, they come back as a God and not a rat or something else.

Then we have sorry. Yes, 800 million non-religious people. These are people who are atheists. Or don't just don't believe in anything in Eastern Europe, there are a lot of people who are post-Christian, which means that they walked away from Christianity and don't believe anything anymore. They don't believe in God, they think people who do are uneducated.

Then we have 500 million Buddhists. Buddhists follow an eightfold enlightenment that is taught by Buddha, they're trying to work their way to Nirvana, a state of blissful nothingness. And then we have 700 million Animus. So, when they gave you animus don't follow one of these other world religions. They believe that God is in everything, and God is everything. And so, they worship their ancestors, they worship trees, they worship, you name it, they see everything as a God to worship.

In Senegal, where I worked, there was a combination of Islam and animism kind of mixed together. And so, one of the very first things I learned the hard way was, you don't pour hot water out on the ground, because you might burn someone's ancestors. And I did that. But grace is sufficient. And we got through that. So, lots of superstitions there. But now I want to take a look at this differently, I'm going to take your signs away from you. Thank you. And I'm going to need 10 People shortly. But right now, I'm going to have the three of you stand together over here. Come on over here, Dave, three, and then we have another three there.

So, the world is kind of divided into these three sections. These first two parts are reached a Word reached, which means that they have access to the gospel. Now the three of you, I'm gonna have you put on some sunglasses. And the three of you, would you mind just covering your eyes? I was gonna bring blindfolds, but that felt funny. To blindfold people, I don't know, in the middle of a service.

So, these three represent people who are Christians, who know Jesus in one way or another, and have access to the Gospel. And they are reaching their neighbors, and they can see clearly spiritual things. Oh, gosh, you guys look really cool.

So, these three here are within reach, which means that they have access. There was a church somewhere that they can go to, there are Christians that they know or who know them, where they can hear. They could turn on a TV station, they can buy a book and have it brought to their home. They have access. They are not believers, but they have resources available to them. And the reason that they're wearing sunglasses is to represent the fact that they are in spiritual darkness, even though the gospel is around them.

Then we have these three guys doing a good job there. And these are the unreached, this group of the population of the world does not have access to the gospel. They might have to drive or get in a bus or hop on a donkey for days or hours to get to a believer to hear something of the gospel. There're no radio stations, there's no TV, there's may not be a Bible in their language. If there is, they don't know, they might not know how to read, and so they are spiritually blind. You can take your hands down, take your glasses off if you want. Now I need 10 missionaries. I need 10 people to come up, come on, just a night. Okay, we got 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 1 more. Go, all the missionaries over here. How many we have? Nine. Yep, come on Gretchen.

So, we have the people in the world, we have 10 missionaries, the rest of you are not off the hook. You don't have to get up, though. You are the senders, you are the prayers, you are the ones who are standing behind and with the gospel, getting out, whether it's next door for 20, whatever, east, west. Well then, like other Gay Street, anyhow, West Chester or beyond.

So, I want to ask you, remembering that these people down there are believers, have the gospel, these people have access to the Gospel, these people, there's lots of barriers and, sorry, my back, bridges to the gospel. You are now sent out, I commissioned you to go now, go, stay on by where you think you should be ministering.

So, we have 20%. Here, among believers, we have two of the three; you are the three. So, we have 30% here and 50% here. Do you want to know what the reality is in our world today? I need five of you, five more of you, to go down there.

Are there seven down there? We're missing a test. Restore one. Are you not sure what's going on? Let's pretend there are seven there. Okay. So, we have one person here. Come on. Yep. You, here. I know, we're going to pretend there are seven, six out now. There are supposed to be six there. Anyhow, here's how it works out: the majority. Yes, the majority of people who are trained for ministry and who are commissioned and go out, are working amongst those who are believers. That is not a bad thing. That is where great ministry is happening. What we're saying is that we are short. In the world, there has got to be something that changes. We've got another 20% here, 30%, whatever it is, another small percentage. And in 70% of the world, where people don't have access, or don't know a Christian and may never, there is one person, 10%. And actually, statistically, it's like just Cindy's arm that's out there. You guys can sit down, thank you. Let's give them a hand.

6 billion people around the world still don't know Jesus. And that may be hard for you to get your head around. It's hard for me. And you may think, well, a lot of those people, they've heard; they just have decided, you know, have chosen not to follow him. I have met people personally, you know, when they say, "Oh, there are people around the world who don't even know the name of Jesus yet." They don't know. I have met those people. I've had people this demo script. I've had people come to me and say, "I had a dream the other night, I had a dream. And in the dream, I saw a man dressed in white with long hair and flowing robes, and he came down from the heavens. And he said to me, 'My name is Isa. My name is Jesus. Follow me.'" Joanna, do you know who this Jesus man is? Because I feel like I'm supposed to follow him. There are people around the world like that. And they need those who can say, "I know who he is. I follow him. You want to come alongside me, and let's go together." When you think about it, for, let's say, 2 billion Christians and 6 billion who don't yet know, we all just need to, you know, reach out to three people. Right? Except most of us are here, or in places where the others are not. I wonder what God's plan is for all of that. And I've been praying about it these last couple of years because I felt like in this season of my life, I turned 60 next year, and I'm like, "God, I want my last few years to be my best years. I want to know what is the best thing I can do?" There are lots of things I can do, but what is the best thing?

And so, I was asking God about this: How do we reach these people that don't have access to the gospel? Yes, there's satellite radio and TV and all that kind of stuff. But Lord, what do you want to do? It seems overwhelming. And God took me to Genesis, and His strategy of multiplication, where He wants to not just add one by one. I feel like that was my ministry in Senegal, adding one woman at a time to the kingdom. And God wants to do multiplication, because Matthew 24:14 says, in this gospel of the kingdom of Jesus Christ, must be preached in all the nations. And then the end will come. Are you ready for Jesus to come back and take us home? I know I am. The world is crazy. But the gospel needs to be preached to the ends of the earth.

So, I'm going to just take us through a quick journey from Genesis to Revelation, you know, just two or three minutes. I'm gonna just skip over the what do we have here, Faberge organic shampoo, does anyone remember those commercials for Faberge organic shampoo, yes, those of us who are older, right? So, this woman is absolutely in love with her shampoo. And she told two friends, and they told two friends, and so on, and so on, right. And it was like the screen kind of multiplied with like the Zoom calls that were on these days.

So, here's where we go: it begins with Adam and Eve in Genesis one. God blessed them and said, be fruitful, and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it. The world started with one individual, God saw that he needed someone and brought someone to share life. And then there were two, and He told them to be fruitful and multiply. And He wasn't just talking about procreation. He was talking about creating disciples, worshipers who one day would be around the throne of grace together.

Then sin enters the world, things go topsy-turvy, to the point that God calls out Noah. Noah and his family build the ark and basically start out all over again. He then tells Noah, be fruitful and multiply, increase greatly on the earth and multiply in it, meaning those who are our God followers. A few generations later, God speaks to Abraham. And He says to Abraham, after his obedience, of being willing to give up his son, God says, because you have done this, and you have not withheld your son, I will bless you. And I will multiply your offspring as many as the stars in the heaven and the sands on the seashore.

Years later, God gives the same promise to Isaac saying, I will multiply your offspring, as many as the stars of the heaven. Big math, God math, which I think would make a great book title, God math. Well, it doesn't stop there. To Jacob, God says, I am the Lord your God, the God of Abraham, your father, and the God of Isaac. The land on which you live, I will give to you and your offspring. And He goes on to say that he will be blessed and multiply in every nation, every people everywhere.

And then to the church in Mark 4, speaking of the parable of the soils, He said, but those that were sown on the good soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it, and bear fruit 30-fold, 60-fold, 100-fold. That sounds like some crazy multiplication to me. When we get to the end of the Gospel of Matthew, we hear these words, which echo what was said to Adam and Eve in many ways. Go therefore, and make worshipers of every nation, tribe, and tongue, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

And then, a little bit later on, right before Jesus ascends into heaven, He expands on the command when He promises His Holy Spirit. And it gives them a little bit more direction than just the general command to go. He says, in essence, people, this is going to be a really, really big job. I want to multiply worshipers from all over the world. So, it's going to take every person going everywhere, until all have heard. It's because Jesus, multiplied and made disciples and taught them to make disciples that any of us are here, worshipping Jesus this morning.

God's strategy to tell the world of salvation through His son is through the multiplication that happens through ordinary people like you. And like me. If Jesus made disciples who make disciples, who make disciples who made disciples, how can we do anything less? So, what does that look like? It looks like people getting their hands dirty.

It looks like people showing up in places and doing things that others say they shouldn't. "You shouldn't be doing that; you shouldn't be going there," they say. Then God shows up. There's a story I'll shorten. Jim Sambala, working in some of the hardest places in New York City, shared a story. One Sunday, a woman on the worship team shared her testimony. She talked about how God had delivered her from a lifestyle of living on the streets, alcoholism, and selling herself to survive.

At the end of the service, a man who had been standing at the back the whole time came forward. Jim saw this man approaching and thought, "I am tired. I can't do this. I don't know what this man wants." Jim was judging him based on his appearance. As the man got closer, Jim could tell he lived on the streets from the smell. Thinking to just give him some money, Jim reached for his pocket. But the man said, "I don't want your money. I want what that woman has." Immediately, Jim felt convicted that he was called to bring the gospel, no matter what. That's what it looks like. It means getting dirty, going where the Lord sends you, getting into the trenches among those who need Jesus the most.

Paul says to Timothy, "And the things you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful individuals who will be able to teach others." There's no greater call and joy than to invest in someone and see that light bulb go on when they recognize something in Scripture, or realize for the first time that Jesus loves them. That He died for them. That there's forgiveness and grace. I've been blessed to see this among the women I worked with in Senegal. In six days, next Saturday, I'm getting on a plane to go back

for two weeks. I look forward to being with those people whom I disciplined and led to the Lord. Now, they're leading Bible studies, teaching, starting churches in their homes.

Where I had gotten my little guitar out, Joni taught me well in the worship forum way back. Dana was in that group, I think. I knew my three chords: C, D, G, a couple of A minors, and loved my E minor. I did some worship with the youth, the young kids. Now, there's a full worship team of 20 people who are believers, second generation, which is a first among the Will of people. They will be leading me in worship. They went on YouTube and learned more than I could teach them. YouTube.

Earlier we said that there are 8 billion people in the world, yet only 2.4 billion know Jesus personally. This is where God's multiplication strategy kicks in. Like I said, every believer is engaged in the Great Commission. Every believer is sharing. Every person has been given a sphere of influence.

You are in contact with people who need what Jesus is offering. You're in contact with people that I would never meet, people Pastor Tracy or the elders of the church may never meet. But He's put you there for such a time as this. God has a plan. Now, another part of the plan is that around the world, God is doing something really cool. People are coming to Christ in those places that are least reached. And you know what? They want to learn how to make disciples. They want to learn how to create worshipping communities where they are. These individuals are culturally near, meaning they don't have to get on a plane or learn two languages. They don't have to adapt to a new culture or change. They're right there. This is what God is calling me to in this season.

I'm looking in Romans, can't find the verse right now. I believe it's in chapter 10, around verse 9, where it says, "How will they hear unless someone preaches, and how will the preaching happen unless someone is sent?" God's given me this opportunity to gather that one or two here and there, people living in third world countries who say, "I want to be a missionary to my own people." I aim to bring them through an intensive cohort and spiritual training. So, they can go back and be, most likely, the Billy Grahams of their country and people groups.

I ask you to pray with me that God would do this work. There's not enough time to talk about the power of prayer. But I can tell you story upon story of something happening when I've been overseas. A breakthrough, a victory, or protection. Then I find out, oh, there were three people who didn't even know each other who happened to get up in the middle of the night and pray for me. Prayer is powerful. I know you guys have experienced some of that here. Prayer and encouragement are powerful. Knowing you're not alone, that you're not the only one. Yes, the Lord promises to never leave us or forsake us. He promises to go with us. Words of encouragement mean so much. At one point, I think it was you, Kevin, who sent me comic

strips from the Sunday paper. I remember getting those in the mail and being able to laugh and have a moment of rest. We all need that, right? We all need prayer and encouragement.

Finally, I desire to have people who support me financially as well. Most missionaries, like myself, are funded through regular financial gifts from individuals and churches. In the same way that you give to this church, as Kevin was talking, this church can exist. The ministry of this church and the people in this church can happen in this community in a very unique and God-ordained way. It's another way to see disciples multiplied around the world. God is doing something, I think. He is bringing people from places like Papua New Guinea, Brazil, North Africa. People who are saying, "I want to change my nation. I want to change my people group." And He is saying to you, "I have a people group, a community, a family, a neighborhood, a workplace." He's asking you to be that light in the darkness.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we give you thanks. We give you thanks, even though we don't understand why you would use ordinary people like us for such a sacred task of bringing the Gospel. But Lord, here we are. Each one of us could stand and say, "Here am I, send me." Lord, fill our mouths with your word. Give us these divine appointments. Show us, Lord, those people you would have us come alongside. And Lord, I pray for revival. I pray for revival around the world and in Chester County. Lord, come quickly. We need you, Lord. We need your strength, your power, your grace, your love. And one day, Lord, as it's promised in Revelation, we will all stand hand in hand. Every people, tongue, tribe, and nation worshipping you. We bless you in Jesus' name. Amen.