

Tom's Pen

Mission Of Mercy

by Tom Wacaster

A few years ago one of the major television networks produced a made-for-television movie based on the true story of two pilots who attempted to fly two, single-engine crop dusters from the West Coast to Australia. As the story developed, one of the planes never got airborne from the lay over in Hawaii, and the second pilot, at the encouragement of the first, continued the journey alone. Due to the combination of unforeseen circumstances, malfunction in equipment, and pilot error, our lone pilot became lost over the Pacific somewhere northeast of Auckland, New Zealand, now without the necessary navigational equipment to get him safely to his destination. As he radioed for help, a commercial jetliner, enroute to New Zealand, heard of the pilot's predicament, and agreed to do what he could to locate the small plane that was, by best estimates, somewhere in the vicinity. It was like looking for the proverbial "needle in a haystack."

But with the consent of the proper authorities, the passengers on board, and the jetliner's crew, the search and rescue effort began. It called for descent in altitude, deviation from the scheduled flight pattern, and a certain amount of increased "risk" with every passing minute. In addition, it would delay the scheduled arrival of the flight, and present no little inconvenience to the passengers on board. Accordingly, the movie was entitled "Flight 511: Mission of Mercy." As I watched, I was touched by the concern that so many had for this lost pilot, and all that went into this most unusual search and rescue effort.

When our God created man, along with heaven's crowning achievement He began a mission of mercy that had been planned from before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4). Somewhere in the immense universe, the world and its two lonely inhabitants sped on toward eternity, both lost, without hope, separated from the Creator as a result of sin (Isa. 59:1-2). But God in His infinite and eternal wisdom, began the journey toward the cross (Eph. 3:10-11). God was not obligated to save man; but because of His longsuffering, "not wishing that any should perish" (2 Pet. 3:9), He "struck out for Pentecost." Even while we were yet sinners (Rom. 5:8), God in His immense love, began to enact His wonderful plan, that paradise might be restored and that all men might be reconciled to Him (2 Cor. 5:20). Was it a mission of mercy? Indeed! Only His eternal love made Him act in our behalf. For approximately 4,000 years that plan unfolded. In types and shadows of the good things to come (Heb. 10:1), through the prophets, "in divers portions and in divers manners" (Heb 1:1), God unfolded and enacted His wonderful mission. Then in the fulness of time (Gal. 4:4), stage two of heaven's mission of mercy began.

In His great love, our Lord surrendered the riches of heaven that were His to enjoy, and He took upon Himself "the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of man" (Phil 2:5-8). Nestled in the womb of Mary, our Lord's human body developed and grew, until that moment when heaven's angels announced to the shepherds that indeed "there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11). In time, "Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man" (Luke 2:52), until the moment when He fulfilled all righteousness in submitting to John's baptism, and the voice out of the heavens announced, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17). For three and one half years, Immanuel, "God with us" (Matt. 1:23), trod the face of His own creation, speaking with all authority, and manifesting the wonderful compassion of heaven's Godhead Three with miracles of healing, and the promise of life eternal. Aware of the ultimate price that would have to be paid, our Lord maintained steadfastness, and was "faithful to him that appointed him" (Heb 3:2). The crucial moment in heaven's mission of mercy came in the night when our Saviour entered the garden to seek strength that the mission might not be aborted. If there was any other way, He desired that the "cup" might pass from Him (Matt. 26:39). So earnest were His cries to the Father that "his sweat became as it were great drops of blood falling down upon the ground" (Luke 22:44). Were the mission to succeed, the Son of David would have to taste of death for every man (Heb. 2:9) But the Son of God would not simply die; He would not close His eyes in peaceful sleep, for the death which He would face would be the "death of the cross" (Phil. 2:8). Yes, the mission of mercy had a price. If lost humanity was to be redeemed, it would not be with "silver and gold...but with the precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, even the blood of Christ" (1 Pet. 1:18-19). And so, because of His great love for you and me, our Lord went to the cross. Nailed between two thieves, He suffered excruciating pain for six long hours. Look at the Savior, beloved, and whisper again those words: "mission of mercy." Now the price was paid! God's wrath could be satisfied. The mission was almost complete. With His dying breath, our Lord could truly say, so far as His part was concerned, "It is finished" (John 19:30). There was yet more to be accomplished before the mission could be complete. Yea, much more. To the consternation of Satan, and in answer to the angels who in wonder and amazement had desired to "look into" these things (1 Pet. 1:12), Jesus burst the bonds of death, and was "declared to be the Son of God with power...by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1:4). Enthroned at the right hand of God, our King reigns in righteousness. In fulfillment of His promise, step three of the mission of mercy could now be initiated.

The Holy Spirit, in faithful obedience to the eternal plan, could now be sent forth from heaven to "guide the apostles into all the truth" (John 16:13). This He did, and the words of the mystery were "written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name" (John 20:31). Floundering in the sea of sin, lost humanity now has a "lamp" and "light" to show the way (Psa. 119:105). How grateful we should be that God, in His wonderful wisdom, and in His eternal plan, saw fit to record these things that we might be able to read and come to understand the mystery of man's redemption (Eph 3:3-5).

For almost 2,000 years the lighthouse of the Gospel has cast its beam across the treacherous sea of life's perilous journey, pointing the way for lost humanity unto the

shores of safety. The torch has been passed to this generation, and we must not, we cannot let the flame be extinguished. Heaven's mission of mercy is depending on you and me to "Go...into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation" (Mark 16:15). Let us go forth with the life saving Gospel, and continue with zeal and determination, heaven's mission of mercy.