

2 Corinthians 5:14-21    5th Sunday after Pentecost    June 23, 1991

*14For the love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. 15And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them.*

*16From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. 17So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!*

*18All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; 19that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. 20So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. 21For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

Once, long ago my world was very small. Christians were the people who gathered with me to hear Pastor Lucht preach each week. We all heard the same word, sang the same hymns, had about the same opportunity to believe and to obey. God was fair.

But slowly I came to the realization that not everyone in the world heard a Pastor Lucht from the time they could first remember. In fact, some had never even heard of Jesus Christ. Probably most of the people who have lived on this earth have never heard the gospel. Would they all go to hell? I wondered.

Then one day I realized that if I had been born in India, I would probably be a Hindu - in Vietnam, probably a Buddhist - in Saudi Arabia probably a man of Islam. Yet in the book of Acts we read, "There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved." Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life, no one comes to the Father but by me."

It is very popular today for people to say there are many roads to one destination, or to say all the world's great religions teach the same thing. I hope none of you will accept those answers. For then Christ lived his life and gave his life for nothing. If Jesus is not the only way of salvation, then when he prayed that there might be some other way for him but the cross, then the Father should have answered, "Yes, there is another way."

But Jesus, the only Son of God, did what no one else could do, through his dying he won salvation for us. But not just for us.

