

**END OF THE SPEAR**  
**Third in a Series: "Mission-minded Church"**  
**February 5, 2017 –2 Corinthians 5: 16-21**  
**The Church of the Covenant**

"End of the Spear" is the title of this sermon and also of a movie and book ("End of the Spear", by Nate Saint). I saw the movie, about 5 missionaries killed in the Eastern Ecuadoran jungle, by Auca tribesmen in the 1950s. It intrigued me, so I also read the book and then also another book, "Through the Gates of Splendor", by Elizabeth Elliot. I was so intrigued by the entire story that I then preached a sermon on it at old historic First Presbyterian Church in downtown Pittsburgh. That church had a great deal of conflict and I had come in as the interim, the new "Sheriff" in town, to help them and to clean up the lack of reconciliation. So I told them the story of the 5 missionaries, all young men, who flew into the remote jungles of Eastern Ecuador in order to convert the Waudani and Auca tribes to the Lord Jesus Christ. These tribes are decimating one another through their strict "eye for an eye; tooth for a tooth" type of vengeance and retribution. If you spear a member of my family, then I am obligated to spear a member of yours. If you spear a member of my tribe, then I am honor-bound to spear and kill a member of your tribe. It is a "spear for a spear" and a "death for a death". The missionaries through Christ seek an END TO THE SPEAR. Unfortunately, their plane crash lands, the tribesmen surround them, and they are brutally murdered by the very people they had come to save. As the story unfolds, their grieving family members feel led by God to go and to minister to the very people who had killed their loved ones. The tribesmen are perplexed; they cannot comprehend why these people do not seek to kill them, for they had speared and were expecting to be speared in return. The family members of the dead missionaries continue to help and minister, seeking a way to explain to them why they are doing what seems to be this entirely irrational thing. Then at one point, one of the women family members is trying to speak to them about Jesus and how Jesus died for them and with a flash of insight, clearly from the Holy Spirit, she says: "Jesus is the man who when He was speared on the cross, did not seek to spear in return." This is the spiritual breakthrough they need; the tribes are converted to Christianity. The spearing ceases. Jesus, who would not spear in return, has taken hold of the Aucas' hearts and His cross has converted them to His love. Now mind you, I am preaching this sermon to a church that was deeply divided; there had been much controversy there; a lot of "spearing" was transpiring at good old First Presbyterian. So I simply concluded my sermon by saying to them –"You know, beloved, if some simple tribesmen could set aside their spearing in the name of the Man who when speared did not spear in return, why is it I suspect that First Presbyterian Church could do the same?" I sat down. And Christ's reconciling presence did the rest. It was the END OF THE SPEAR.

But the story continued and got better. By the way, why I love mission trips is because one always sees and experiences the inbreaking of the Kingdom of God when you're on one. To be mission-minded and Kingdom-minded always places us in the presence of the Lord Jesus, the man who when speared did not spear in return. The story gets better and better...

For sitting out in that congregation on the day of that sermon was a couple whose son had read the same books, End of the Spear and Through the Gates of Splendor, and inspired by the stories of faithfulness had become a missionary pilot himself through Mission Aviation Fellowship, in, where else?, the jungles of Eastern Ecuador, Shell, Ecuador to be precise. Oh, and by the way, could we put together a church mission trip? Yes, we could. So miraculously I find myself on a mission trip with a group of folks from that church, flying through the gates of splendor and into the deep darkness of the canopied dense and lush jungles of the Amazon rainforest. Had to be a "God-thing"; you couldn't make this stuff up if you had to! At one point we are flying into a remote jungle village, the one closest to where the 5

missionaries were killed back in the 1950s, piloted by the missionary who himself was inspired by their story. From the plane all you could see were the “Broccoli” of the tops of high trees extending as far as the eye could see. I have never been a place where you could not see even one road, or house, or person. No sign of civilization at all. We landed on a bumpy dirt runway. We were greeted by a group from the local church. Their chief elder was a man named Euwi. And Euwi prayed for us in Waudani, that was then translated into Spanish, that was then translated into English. He was a little short man, with a red plastic construction helmet on, on which was transcribed in magic marker the sign of the cross. It was then we were introduced. To my shock, I was meeting one of the men, Euwi, who had killed the five missionaries back in the 1950s. I was meeting the Apostle Paul of the Auaca—a man who had once persecuted Christians had now been saved, forgiven and redeemed and raised up by God into the Apostle to the Aucas. Even as I retell this, I am overtaken by God’s grace once again. The man who had speared was now forgiven by the One who was speared. The persecutor of the church had become its chief elder and apostle. Truly, truly, it was THE END OF THE SPEAR. Wow—how awesome is God?

We as Presbyterians are all good Reformed theologians and Bible scholars so we know the Bible verses from 2 Corinthians I read to you and almost by heart. *“God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them...”* (2 Corinthians 5: 19) Though speared He did not spear in return. Through what Christ has done for us on the cross, through His life and His death and His resurrection, *“All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself and gave us a ministry of reconciliation...”* (v. 18) He has entrusted to us the message and the ministry of reconciliation. The Apostle Paul concludes the section by imploring the church—*“We beseech you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”* (v. 20) The man who was responsible for the killing and martyrdom of Stephen, through the forgiveness of the Lord Jesus Christ, had become the apostle to the Gentiles and deep down in his soul, experientially, understood this message of reconciliation. We also know that if somehow we cannot be reconciled to one another that then we are also somehow not reconciled to Jesus either. We cannot say we love God who we do not see if we do not love (and are not reconciled) to our brother or sister who we do see. If we cannot forgive, then we are not forgiven. If we cannot put away the spears in the name of the man, who when speared would not spear in return, then all this Bible stuff is just empty head knowledge and we really do not believe it.

We come now to this table of reconciliation, the communion table symbolizing to us all that Jesus has done for us at Calvary. You know the story, He died on a cross, and toward the end one of the soldiers took a spear and pierced Him in His side, and out poured blood and water. He was speared for us and our salvation. Our sin pierced His heart. But He did not count our trespasses against us. He forgave us and reconciled us to His Father in heaven. Though speared, He did not spear in return. At Calvary, on the cross, in that very moment, the “eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth” was replaced by the END OF THE SPEAR. Have you noticed how much “spearing” is going on in our culture right now? Have you noticed how little reconciliation there is anywhere? As I was preaching did you even notice how the Lord was placing in your head and heart the names and faces of people with whom you are NOT reconciled? Good people get sucked into this also. You know, beloved, if simple Auca tribesmen in the Eastern jungles of Ecuador can cease their spearing in the name of the MAN who when speared did not spear in return, why can’t we??? In the powerful name of Jesus, and in the power of His blood, and in the powerful love poured out upon the cross, I beseech you—ON BEHALF OF CHRIST, BE RECONCILED TO GOD! Then the new, bright day shall come, the day of the END OF THE SPEAR. Amen and Amen.

*By: The Reverend Dr. Stuart D. Broberg, The Church of the Covenant, Washington, PA  
IF THIS HAS BLESSED YOU, PLEASE PASS IT ALONG TO A FRIEND!*