

## **The Mission Central Minute**

Many of us preachers not only prepare sermons; we also read sermons from other preachers so that we might improve in our pulpit skills. I offer you here the final paragraphs of a sermon by the late Stephen F. Olford. This sermon was based on Ezekiel 37, the vision of God bringing life to dead, dry bones. Though not a Lutheran, Rev. Olford's words convey energy for church and mission.

"I want to tell you something. When the last soul is saved, according to my understanding of prophecy, whether it's in Dallas or Afghanistan, I want to tell you, we'll hear the shout of the voice of the archangel of God. We'll be called up to meet the Lord in the air. It's all over down here except for judgment and a cleaning up game.

"That's why Jesus died. He loved the church and gave himself for it. And in that church should be people who are not only vitalized and energized and mobilized, but I want to tell you something, the time is coming when they're going to be totally changed. Operation liftoff will take place. And they'll become just like the Lord Jesus himself.

"Not only is that the primacy of the church, but it's the mission of the church. It's the victory of the church! I want to tell you something. Even though we're divided, even though there are factions, even though there are splinters in the church, Jesus said, 'I will build my church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.'

"One of these days, when that shout comes, and we have been judged at the judgment seat of Christ, and all is said, we are going to be a body—listen carefully—'without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.' A perfect church. That's his interest. Until that moment, here's my last word to you. All slumbering saints should wake up. All lukewarm saints should fire up. All dishonest saints should own up. All disgruntled saints should sweeten up. All discouraged saints should cheer up. All depressed saints should look up. All gossiping saints should shut up. All dry-bones saints should stand up. Jesus is coming again." ("Let the Legends Preach," 69)