***The Mission Central Meyer Minute***

For whom did Jesus die? “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—everyone—to his own way” (Isaiah 53:6). It’s not just “those people out there,” outside the Church, people who don’t know Jesus, people who might even be actively against Jesus and His Church. It’s not just them for whom He died. Here’s a temptation that will kill us eternally: We start to believe that our zeal for missions is what saves us. “All we like sheep have gone astray” includes me sitting in the pew, you in the pew, me supporting missionaries, you supporting missionaries.

Forgiveness hasn’t removed our sinfulness. “I’m not the chief of sinners” is the essence of sin against the First Commandment, pride in myself, pride in my churchiness, pride in my mission-mindedness. Instead of joining the tax collector in the back of the temple, religious self-righteousness puffs up our pride in ourselves (Luke 18:9-14). Totally forgiven, yes, but still, “Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it; / Prone to leave the God I love” (Lutheran Service Book 686:3).

“**All we** like sheep have gone astray,” but verse 6 ends, “and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of **us all.”** Focus not on your sins but on the Suffering Servant. Wherever individual Israelites were when the venomous snakes bit them, looking to the bronze serpent saved them (Numbers 21:6-9). The centurion overseeing the crucifixion, “stood facing him (Jesus),” and looking led him to confess, “Truly this man was the Son of God” (Mark 15:39). “Ye who think of sin but lightly / Nor suppose the evil great / Here may view its nature rightly, / Here its guilt may estimate” (LSB, 451:3).

Philip Yancey: “Having spent time around ‘sinners’ and also around purported saints, I have a hunch why Jesus spent so much time with the former group: I think he preferred their company. Because the sinners were honest about themselves and had no pretense, Jesus could deal with them. In contrast, the saints put on airs, judged him, and sought to catch him in a moral trap. In the end it was the saints, not the sinners, who arrested Jesus” (*What’s So Amazing about Grace?* In *unChristian*, David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons, 60).

Missions doesn’t save you and me. Jesus does. That’s the only reason we’re zealous to tell others about the Savior. May your Holy Week be filled with the self-reflection of repentance that alone sincerely will welcome Easter.