

Who here likes to go fishing? Who likes fishing stories? I know some of you just light up when you get to talk about fishing. You can tell us the when, the where, the how many and how big, the bait you used - and those lunkers ... they keep on growing, don't they?

Today, we have a fishing story. It's a good one, but as far as fish stories in the Bible go, it's not the biggest. Jonah getting swallowed, saved, and spit up on land by a giant fish - that beats this one. Jesus splitting 2 small fish and feeding 5000 ... the time Jesus gave Peter, James, and John - the professional fishermen - a lesson on fishing, and then told them - "You will be fishers of men" - those fish stories beat this one. Then there's the question - was this a miracle? A miracle sighting, a miracle catch, a miracle fish on a miracle fire? We're not told, but if it was a miracle or miracles, it's not the biggest or the best of Jesus' miracles. Any of those other fish miracles beat these. As far as fish stories go, as far as miracles go - this one doesn't seem to be the biggest or the best, does it? But there is something in this fish story that is so good to hear, too good not to share.

Remember, this isn't a "once upon a time" story. This is real Easter history. Put yourself in the place of the disciples. For three years your life has been following Jesus, watching Jesus, soaking in Jesus' words, his life, his love, his power. You've heard Jesus say big things - **"I am the Good Shepherd. I lay down my life for my sheep ... and I will take it back up again. ... My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand."** You've heard Jesus promise you big things - life, a purpose, a place in his kingdom, a place in the big things of God. You've been part of Jesus' big things; you've been there for Jesus' big miracles;

you've worked miracles yourself. And then what? Just when things were coming together, Jesus was arrested, and you ran. Jesus was nailed to a cross, crucified, and you cowered. Jesus was buried, and you hid in fear. Your Jesus, your life, your purpose, your place in the big things of God - all dead. Until you heard the impossible: **"Christ is risen!"** Until you saw, until you heard the unbelievable: Jesus standing right in front of you - **"Peace be with you."** Now what? Jesus says: **"Go to Galilee and wait for me there."** You go to Galilee. You wait. But now what?

The Peter in you says: "I can't just sit. I've got to do something. I've got to do something useful. I'm going out to fish." A half dozen of you join him. You do the hard work of a professional fisherman. You get up off your bottoms. You work the boat; you work the nets; you do the work. And what do you get? Nothing.

It's not supposed to work that way, is it? But so often it does, doesn't it? You step up, you step forward to do something useful with your life. You do the work. You cast the nets. You invite for Easter. You make phone calls for a work project, a ministry project. You step up, you step forward to do something useful with your life. And what do you get? No response. No response to your invitations. No response to your phone messages. No response to your encouragements. No response, just an empty net. Oh, that can be so discouraging - "Why bother?!"

Why bother? The empty net might not stay empty. There's more than just you doing the work. There's more than just the few of you. Watching off to the side is some guy. He wouldn't have to be there; he wouldn't have to be watching you. He's got a nice, cozy place where he could sit back and relax. But he's here; he's watching; he's interested in you and what you're doing. He sees the empty net,

but he doesn't give up. At just the right time, in just the right place, he nudges: "Try again, on the other side of the boat." I want to say: "I've already tried and tried and tried. And look what it's gotten me. I'm tired. I'm done. Just let me go home." But you don't. You don't get snarky. And you don't quit. You try again, on the other side of the boat. And what do you find? More fish than you can haul into your boat. Not just small ones, biggins. One-hundred-fifty-three big ones.

Why? Was it finally the right time, the right place, the right way? That's what I'd like to know. John, the disciple John, tells us something else: "**It is the Lord.**" And he doesn't just fill our nets. He has something cooking for us on shore. He has time for us. He has a place for us with him. He has a place for what we do, a place for us to bring our something to the table.

Have you ever been swallowed by a fish and spit up on shore? Me neither. Have you ever had you and 5000 of your neighbors fed by 2 small fish and 5 loaves of bread? Me neither. Have you ever caught so many fish that your boat almost sank? Me neither. Have you ever got up, stood up, stepped forward to do something useful, something useful with the time Jesus is giving you? And then hauled in an empty net? Me too. That's why I'm preaching on this fish story. There are times we might haul in an empty net like Peter and the others. But like Peter and the others, we have someone watching us, someone interested in what we're doing, someone nudging, encouraging - "try again." That someone nudging isn't a bother; he's your brother - he's Jesus Christ.

When he nudges us, he's not looking to guilt us into doing this or that. He's not looking to guilt us into stepping up or returning that phone message. No, instead of piling on the guilt, Jesus took our

guilt. The guilt that says, “Too little, too late,” the guilt that says, “after what you’ve done, you think Jesus has a place for you and your stuff?” the guilt that says, “after what you haven’t done, you think you get to nudge others?” ... instead of guiltning us, Jesus took our guilt. He took your guilt and mine all the way to the cross where he paid the price to set you right with God - right for life with God, right for life in heaven, but not just that. Jesus set you right with God to live a useful life here on earth - a life doing the things of God, a life working the work of God, a life sharing the heart of God. Today, that Jesus - who gave his life for you - he lives! He’s here, and he’s watching us and what we do. Watching us and the way we step up to do something useful in his kingdom.

And what does he want you to know? Sometimes when we step up to do something useful, we might bring in an empty net. Sometimes when we step up to say something useful, we might get no response. But what does Jesus do? He nudges us to try again. And when we try again, what might we find? Jesus just might fill our nets in a way we’d never expect.

I almost didn’t preach on this text. But these past months, when I saw this lesson on the calendar, Jesus nudged me, nudged me with this lesson. And now this past week Jesus has been nudging me, nudging me through you - “Don’t let the empty net get you down; step up and try again. Don’t let the empty net get you down; who knows how or when Jesus might fill it.” Don’t let the empty net get you down; let’s step up, speak up, and give Jesus the opportunity to fill our nets. Amen.

May 4 & 5, 2024

DIVINE SERVICE II

IN OUR WORLD TODAY ... we have so many distractions, so many frustrations, that it can be tempting to give up, tempting to go and do something else ... than do what Jesus has given us to do - to work his work and to wait for his blessing.

IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY ... we see Jesus in control, watching and guiding our work, and in his time, providing his blessing. And we are nudged, we are encouraged, in our working with Jesus and in our waiting with Jesus. We heard it on Easter - our labor in the Lord is not in vain!

OPENING HYMN

"He's Risen, He's Risen"

Hymn 445

He's risen, he's risen, Christ Jesus, the Lord;
he opened death's prison, the incarnate Word.
Break forth, hosts of heaven, in jubilant song
and earth, sea, and mountain, the praises prolong.

The foe was triumphant when on Calvary
the Lord of creation was nailed to the tree.
In Satan's domain did the hosts shout and jeer,
for Jesus was slain, whom the evil ones fear.

But short was their triumph; the Savior arose,
and death, hell, and Satan he vanquished, his foes.
The conquering Lord lifts his banner on high;
he lives, yes, he lives, and will nevermore die.

O, where is your sting, death? We fear you no more;
Christ rose, and now open is fair Eden's door.
For all our transgressions his blood does atone;
redeemed and forgiven, we now are his own.

Then sing your hosannas and raise your glad voice;
proclaim the blest tidings that all may rejoice.
Laud, honor, and praise to the Lamb that was slain:
with Father and Spirit he ever shall reign.

INVOCATION

M: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

CONFESSION

M: Dear friends, let us approach God with a true heart and confess our sins,
asking him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to forgive us.

C: **Lord of life, I confess that I am by nature dead in sin.**

For faithless worrying and selfish pride,

For sins of habit and sins of choice,

For the evil I have done and the good I have failed to do,

I deserve to be cast away from your presence forever.

O Lord, I am sorry for my sins. Forgive me, for Jesus' sake.

ABSOLUTION

M: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again. In his great mercy,
God made us alive in Christ even when we were dead in our sins. Hear the
word of Christ through his called servant: I forgive you all your sins in the
name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

HYMN

"Like the Golden Sun Ascending"

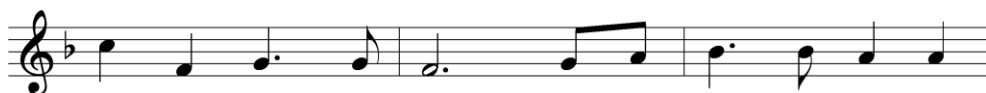
Hymn 470 vs. 2-4



2 Thanks to you, O Christ vic - to - rious! Thanks to you, O
 3 You have died for my trans - gres - sion, all my sins on
 4 For the joy your ad - vent gave me, for your gos - pel's



Lord of life! Death has now no pow - er o'er us, you have
 you were laid. You have won for me sal - va - tion, on the
 great re - ward, for your bap - tism which has saved me, for your



con - quered in the strife. Thanks be - cause you did a -
 cross my debt was paid. From the grave I shall a -
 sup - per and your Word; for your death, the bit - ter



rise and have o - pened par - a - dise! None can
 rise and shall meet you in the skies. Death it -
 scorn, for your res - ur - rec - tion morn: Lord, I



ful - ly sing the glo - ry of the res - ur - rec - tion sto - ry.
 self is tran - si - to - ry; I shall lift my head in glo - ry.
 thank you and ex - tol you, and in heav'n I shall be - hold you.

LORD, HAVE MERCY (Kyrie)

M: In peace, let us pray to the Lord.

For the well-being of all people everywhere, that they may receive from
 you all they need to sustain body and life, hear our prayer, O Lord.

C: **Lord, have mercy.**

M: For the spread of your life-giving gospel throughout the world, that all who are lost in sin may be brought to faith in you, hear our prayer, O Christ.

C: **Christ, have mercy.**

M: For patience and perseverance in this life, that we may not lose the hope of heaven as we await your return, hear our prayer, O Lord.

C: **Lord, have mercy.**

M: Lord of life, live in us that we may live for you. **Amen.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

O God, by the humiliation of your Son, you lifted up this fallen world from the despair of death. By his resurrection to life, grant your faithful people gladness of heart and the hope of eternal joys; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

FIRST READING

Revelation 5:11–14

Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. In a loud voice they were saying:

“Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain,
to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength
and honor and glory and praise!”

Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, saying:

“To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb
be praise and honor and glory and power,
for ever and ever!”

The four living creatures said, “Amen,” and the elders fell down and worshiped.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

PSALM OF THE DAY

Psalm 30B

Refrain

I will praise you, LORD; you have res - cued me.

Tone

I will exalt you, LORD, for you lifted me out / of the depths;
you spared me from going down / to the pit.
Sing the praises of the LORD, you his faithful / people;
praise his / holy name.

For his anger lasts only a / moment,
but his favor lasts a / lifetime;
weeping may stay / for the night,
but rejoicing comes in the / morning. *Refrain*

To you, / LORD, I called;
to the Lord I cried for / mercy:
“Hear, LORD, and be merci- / ful to me;
LORD, / be my help.”

You turned my wailing into / dancing;
you removed my sackcloth and clothed / me with joy,
that my heart may sing your praises and not be / silent.
LORD my God, I will praise you for- / ever.

**Glory be to the Father and / to the Son
and to the Holy / Spirit,
as it was in the be- / ginning,
is now, and will be forever. / Amen. *Refrain***

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

2 Timothy 1:10

Alleluia. Christ Jesus has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. Alleluia.

GOSPEL

John 21:1–14

Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Galilee. It happened this way: Simon Peter, Thomas (also known as Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. “I’m going out to fish,” Simon Peter told them, and they said, “We’ll go with you.” So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus.

He called out to them, “Friends, haven’t you any fish?”

“No,” they answered.

He said, “Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.” When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.

Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, “It is the Lord,” he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards. When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread.

Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish you have just caught.” So Simon Peter climbed back into the boat and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” None of the disciples dared ask him, “Who are you?” They knew it was the Lord. Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise be to you, O Christ!**

HYMN OF THE DAY

"Long before the World is Waking"

Hymn 983



1 Long be - fore the world is wak - ing, morn - ing mist on
2 So they cast, and all their heav - ing can - not haul their
3 Char - coal em - bers bright - ly burn - ing, bread and fish up -
4 Christ is ris - en! Grief and sigh - ing, sins and sor - rows,
5 Morn - ing breaks, and Je - sus meets us, feeds and com - forts,



Gal - i - lee, from the shore, as dawn is break - ing,
catch a - board; John in won - der turns, per - ceiv - ing,
on them laid; Je - sus stands at day's re - turn - ing,
fall be - hind; fear and fail - ure, doubt, de - ny - ing,
par - dons still; as his faith - ful friends he greets us,



Je - sus calls a - cross the sea, hails the boat of
cries a - loud, "It is the Lord!" Pe - ter waits for
in his ris - en life ar - rayed, as of old his
full and free for - give - ness find. All the soul's dark
part - ners of his work and will. All our days, on



wea - ry men, bids them cast their net a - gain.
noth - ing more, plung - es in to swim a - shore.
friends to greet, "Here is break-fast; come and eat."
night is past, morn - ing breaks in joy at last.
ev - 'ry shore, Christ is ours for - ev - er - more!

SERMON

NICENE CREED

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation, he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became truly human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate. He suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who in unity with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

OFFERING

If you prefer to give online, the code at the right will take you to our Online Giving page. We invite our online givers to join in our offering with an "I Give Online" card in the pew racks.



OFFERING PRAYER

Lord Jesus, as you blessed the work of your fishing disciples to show your glory and to serve the needs of your people, bless our work to show your glory, and bless our work to serve the needs of your people and your ministry. Give us your disciples' willingness to listen and to follow, and bless us with a renewed and growing trust in your Word and your ways - for your glory and for the good of your people. **Amen.**

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

M: O Lord God, our strength, our song, and our salvation, you fulfilled your promises by the resurrection of your Son, Jesus Christ, from the dead.

C: Thanks be to God! You give us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

M: In your compassion you sent Christ, the Good Shepherd, who laid down his life to rescue the lost.

C: Drive out all doubt and gloom that we may delight in your glorious triumph.

M: Lift our eyes heavenward to see him who lives to make intercession for the saints, and grant us confidence in the greatness of his power. Keep before us the vision of your redeemed people standing before your throne and singing the song of victory.

C: Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive wisdom and power and honor and glory and praise.

M: Make us instruments of your peace as we bring the good news of hope and new life to those around us. Guide us in the use of all that you have entrusted to us: our time, our talents, and our treasures.

C: Risen Lord, live in us that we may live for you.

M: Merciful Lord Jesus, grant healing to the sick, and strengthen the faith of the suffering and the dying. Assure them of your abiding presence, and comfort them with the hope of eternal life.

Special prayers and intercessions may follow.

M: Hear us, Lord, as we bring you our private petitions.

Silent prayer.

M: Gracious Father, you have restored to us the joy of your salvation. With happy hearts, we come before you and say:

C: Alleluia! Thanks be to God! Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

THE SACRAMENT

(Guests, please see our communion practice on page 2.)

(Gluten-free wafers are available; ask Pastor.)

M: The Lord be with you.

C: **And also with you.**

M: Lift up your hearts.

C: **We lift them up unto the Lord.**

M: Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God.

C: **It is good and right so to do.**

M: It is truly good and right that we should at all times and in all places give you thanks, O Lord, holy Father, almighty and everlasting God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who rose from the dead in glorious triumph to bring forgiveness to the world and everlasting life to all who believe.

Therefore with all the saints on earth and hosts of heaven, we praise your holy name and join their glorious song:

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY *Sanctus*

O holy, holy, holy
Lord God of pow'r and might,
Your glory, earth and heaven
In countless ways recite.

Hosanna! Come and save us,
Lord God of hosts on high,
And in your grace and mercy
Receive our fervent cry.

Hosanna in the highest!
How truly blest is he
Who in God's name is coming
To set his people free!
He comes to bring salvation
And with his blood outpoured,
Deliver us from bondage—
Hosanna, mighty Lord!

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

M: Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my † body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; this is my † blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

M: The peace of the Lord be with you always.

C: Amen.

LAMB OF GOD *Agnus Dei*

Lamb of God, you take a - way the
sin of the world; have mer - cy on us.
Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the
world; have mer - cy on us. Lamb of God,
you take a - way the sin of the world;
grant us your peace. A - men.

DISTRIBUTION HYMN

“At the Lamb’s High Feast We Sing”

Hymn 675

At the Lamb’s high feast we sing praise to our victorious King,
who has washed us in the tide flowing from his pierced side. Alleluia!

Praise we him whose love divine gives his sacred blood for wine,
gives his body for the feast— Christ the victim, Christ the priest. Alleluia!

Where the paschal blood is poured,
death’s dread angel sheathes the sword;
Israel’s hosts triumphant go thro’ the wave that drowns the foe. Alleluia!

Praise we Christ, whose blood was shed, paschal victim, paschal bread;
with sincerity and love eat we manna from above. Alleluia!

Mighty Victim from the sky, hell’s fierce pow’rs beneath you lie.
You have conquered in the fight, you have brought us life and light.
Alleluia!

Now no more can death appall, now no more the grave enthrall;
you have opened paradise, and your saints in you shall rise. Alleluia!

Easter triumph, Easter joy! This alone can sin destroy;
from sin’s pow’r, Lord, set us free, newborn souls in you to be. Alleluia!

Father, who the crown shall give, Savior, by whose death we live,
Spirit, guide through all our days, Three in One, your name we praise.
Alleluia!

CLOSING PRAYER

M: We give you thanks, O Lord, for the foretaste of the heavenly banquet that you have given us to eat and to drink in this sacrament. Through this gift you have fed our faith, nourished our hope, and strengthened our love. By your Spirit help us to live as your holy people until that day when you will receive us as your guests at the wedding supper of the Lamb, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

BLESSING

M: The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.
The Lord look on you with favor and give you peace. **Amen.**

CLOSING HYMN

“Welcome, Happy Morning”

Hymn 469 vs. 1, 4

“Welcome, happy morning!” age to age shall say;
“Hell today is vanquished; heav’n is won today!”
Lo, the dead is living, God forevermore!
Him, their true Creator, all his works adore.

Refrain

“Welcome, happy morning!” age to age shall say;
“Hell today is vanquished; heav’n is won today!”

Free the souls long prisoned, bound with Satan’s chain;
all that now is fallen raise to life again.
Show your face in brightness; shine in ev’ry land
as in Eden’s garden when the world began. *Refrain*

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Home Missions Approves New Mission Starts and Enhancements

On April 3 and 4, WELS Board for Home Missions approved 11 new missions and enhancements for the synodwide 100 Missions in 10 Years initiative.

“Each of the five new starts is backed by a mature, mission-minded core group that has been actively sharing the gospel in their communities—even before seeking formal support,” says Rev. Mark Gabb, Home Missions administrator. “That kind of groundwork helps lay a strong foundation for long-term gospel ministry.”

Thanks to the generous gifts received over the past year, WELS Home Missions is also in a financial position to approve up to five additional new missions this fall. Gabb notes, “Giving core groups additional time to prepare their requests will strengthen their proposals for fall.”

In the end, Home Missions approved five new starts and six enhancements. The five new mission starts include:

Arlington, Tenn.: Arlington is on the brink of rapid growth with Ford Motor Company set to build a new plant for electric truck production. Since 2022, the South Atlantic District Mission Board has been working with a dedicated group of 60 members and Pastor Jim Turriff from Gloria Dei, Memphis, who plan to relocate and establish a fresh start in Arlington under a new name.

Erie, Colo.: Erie has experienced a 55 percent population increase from 2010 to 2020, with continued growth expected. A core group of ten adults has been gathering for fellowship and Bible study while attending local festivals to share its plans for a new church.

Jarrell, Texas: Jarrell is a rapidly growing town north of Austin. For the past three years, Pastor Don Patterson has been working with a core group of 11, which began holding weekly worship in October 2024. The group has identified 90 prospects, many of whom they connected with by volunteering at the local food pantry.

Madison, Wis.: A core group of 14 adults, familiar with the area, has been working together since 2022—meeting regularly for Bible study and ministry planning—and has also secured a rental space for worship and community activities. A new mission plant in the center of rapidly growing urban Madison would allow WELS to reach an entirely new demographic.

San Tan Valley, Ariz.: Since 2022, the Arizona-California District Mission Board has been working with Heritage in Gilbert, Ariz., to plant a new mission in rapidly growing San Tan Valley. A core group of 26 adults has been gathering regularly for Bible study and community events. In October 2024, they began holding regular worship services and have already identified 127 prospects interested in learning more about the new church.

The Board for Home Missions is also financially supporting ministry enhancements for Christ, Clarksville, Md. (restart); Living Word, Petaluma, Calif. (restart); Living Word, Waukesha, Wis.; Redeemer, Edna, Texas; Risen Savior, Lakewood Ranch, Fla.; and Saint Mark Mankato, Mankato, Minn.

Looking ahead, Gabb shares, "We have limitless opportunities with a limited amount of resources. The Board for Home Missions is actively looking at ways to reduce costs, even in the current economic climate, so that more people can be reached with the gospel." Gabb continues, "It's all about being faithful stewards of the resources God has given us. We will continue working diligently to aggressively reach the lost with the gospel while also being faithful stewards. We trust God will bless our efforts."

Learn more about these new mission starts and mission enhancements at **wels100in10.net**.