

HISPANIC OUTREACH IN SIOUXLAND

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In the past few weeks I was able to preach at two different congregations in Sioux City and will soon preach at a mission festival in Beemer, Nebraska. In each sermon I try to relate some part of the text to Hispanic ministry and show how all people have very similar needs and challenges. No one is immune to temptations and sin. All need to hear the message of God's love in Jesus Christ. All need their faith strengthened through God's Word and Sacrament. In the various Gospel readings we heard how God changed a woman who was known for her outward sinful life, a man who was possessed by thousands of demons, and people living among resistant Jews. Satan's power has been defeated. People can be liberated from sin and unbelief. Jesus came to have their names written in heaven. Can the illegal immigrant receive citizenship in heaven? Can the fanatic terrorist come to peace in Christ? Can the violent gang member become a part of God's family? Can the drug trafficker find true wealth in God's Word? They may say in their words or actions "Let me alone, Jesus, Son of the Most High God." (Luke 8:26, Beck translation) But Jesus wants to say, "Your sins are forgiven," and "Your faith saved you. Go in peace!" (Luke 7:48, 50) The kingdom has come near in Jesus Christ, and He wants it to come near through our preaching and teaching of His Word to all kinds of people. May He give us perseverance and strength to announce His kingdom in a world of sin and resistance.

I have been able to make more home visits to the ESL students since we have the summer free from evening classes. I have met other family members and learned of the backgrounds of several students. While attending a baptismal party for the daughter of one of the ESL students I met a young man. He has been reading the Bible for several years and has seen certain practices in his Hispanic religious culture which do not coincide with Biblical teaching. He has shared his concerns with his wife who wants to raise the children in the traditions and customs of their family. Since that party I was able to visit with them in their home and also talk with her father. Ultimately one must direct the debate to Christ and His teachings. They first need to know who He is and what He did for them. Then as the Lord enlightens them through His Word, they can more clearly see what traditions are helpful or harmful. I related that not all the traditions and beliefs in my own U.S. culture are good. Likewise the traditions and false beliefs of my German ancestors were changed when Christian missionaries from England led them from the darkness of tree worship to the tree of life in Jesus Christ. Each culture has sin and false teachings, but Christ can guide us to live as His people within a culture and be lights to others.

Please pray for the confirmation students that they be active members in our Lord's church. Pray that we can find new ways to share the Word and teach it to the many who follow the word of man. Pray that we have the resources and wisdom to boldly proclaim and make the most of the time that God gives to us. Pray for peace in Mexico, for families that are separated, and for the needy and poor.