



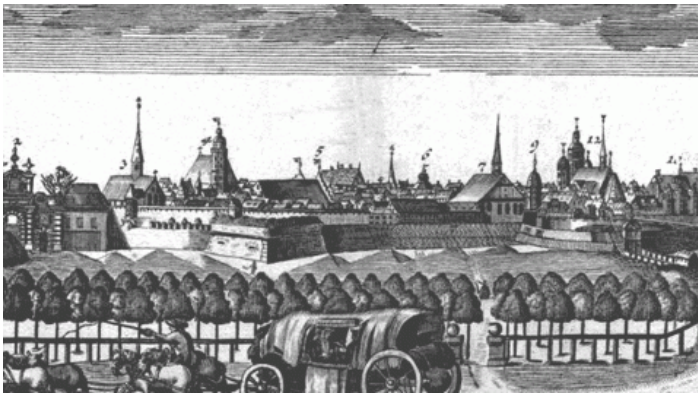
Tanzania

Lesson 5: Christian Missions in Tanzania

Christian Missions in Tanzania

(a short history provided by Missionary David Koenig)

The CLC has been gifted by God with the privilege to work in Tanzania on the east coast of Africa where missionaries have also given their lives that the people might hear the truth of God. The history of Lutheran mission work there goes back over 150 years when the mission societies sent out the missionaries. The nineteenth century was the century of the many Lutheran mission societies at work the world over. It was not the work of Lutheran princes or states sending in the 1900's, but of believers gathering together and sending. It is like today when a group of people support a CLC Mission Helper. One such society back then was the Leipzig Mission Society, founded in 1836. This would be a time when your great great grandparents were born.



The city of Leipzig in the 1800's

It is a fact that Leipzig sent men literally to their death in the cause of the kingdom. This reminds us of when Stephen died for proclaiming his faith. The first five missionaries from the Leipzig Mission Society were: Emil Mueller, Gerhard Althaus, Robert Fassman, Albin Boehme and Theodore Passler. These names mean nothing to us today, but they were brave and trusting in the Lord to go to Africa at a time when dangers were all around from wild animals, diseases and unbelieving natives.

Arriving at Mombasa on July 12, 1893 the Lord used them to reach the natives in what was at that time German East Africa, present day Tanzania. The native people worshiped spirits and gods of the villages. They listened to what we would call witch doctors. In August the missionaries arrived at Moshi, where we have a church today.

One of the villages where they went to work was Machame where we also have members. Back in the 1890's the opposition was from the natives who did not want to change from the old gods to the Living God. A Machame language grammar and dictionary were developed so that the Gospel could be in the language of the people. And a Machame hymnal of 30 hymns was developed for that tribal people. The people lived together in their tribes and fought each other as well as foreigners.

Two new Leipzig missionaries, Ewald Ovir and Karl Segebrock arrived in 1895 and proceeded westwards from Machame to see about work among the Wameru. On Oct. 20, 1896 these two servants of God were killed by the natives. One has to wonder why God took them after so short a stay in the field. In the city of Arusha (where we have a church) today there is the restored old Boma (fort) of the Germans from that time when the Germans ruled. It has been turned into a museum. In one room of the old fort is the history of the German rule pictured on the walls.

At one point one can read the report from the natives of what happened that night long ago. As Ewald is dying from eighteen spears, he is saying, 'why are you killing us...we came to bring you the Gospel...to tell you how you can go to heaven through Christ.' The Lord had Ewald die as our Lord did with love on his lips. As Stephen had mirrored his Lord with "Lord do not hold this sin against them..." so Ewald mirrored his Lord's words. And there is more to the story of how God was, is and will be in triumphant. One of the youths who attacked and killed the two missionaries on that dreadful/triumphant night was baptized in 1965. Though an aged man at the time, he was sought out by the Lord, who is at work always His wonder of conversion to perform.

Ewald and Karl are praising the Lord in heaven with some later comers that they had met on earth, at least one of whom was one of their killers, baptized seventy years later. The Word of God bears fruit, accomplishing what God wills. To Him belongs all glory.

Today in Tanzania there is a great struggle going on between our Christian religion and the false religion of Islam. The old native religions are not practiced much anymore. The devil tries another approach then of bringing in a religion that tries to rival our Christian faith. When Paul preached on the island of Cyprus there was a Jewish false prophet, a certain magician who was trying to win the Roman proconsul, Sergius Paulus, to his wicked ways. Paul was trying to win Sergius to the Christian faith. The result finally was "the proconsul believed." Acts 13:12



Symbol of Islam

So today our brothers and sister in the faith in Tanzania are seeking to win the people from any influence of the false prophet Mohammed. Pray that soul by soul believes just as Sergius Paulus did "astonished at the teaching of the Lord." Acts 13:12

The love of God in Christ for wicked men continues and is proclaimed and is astonishing. It is that Word of God that will grow and multiply in hearts and souls. Pray for this where once Ewald and Karl spoke.