

***"Working together with him, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain. For he says, "In a favorable time I listened to you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation."*** II Cor. 6:2

**Introduction:** Show the students a cell phone. Ask, "When is a good time to use this?" Take any reasonable answers. Ask, "If I'm cutting down a tree with a chainsaw and my phone buzzes, is it a good time to respond? Of course not" (Feel free to use a few more examples about poor timing.)

About 125 years ago, our synod made a decision that seemed like it was made at the wrong time. The US government was in the middle of some of the most intense fighting during the longest war in American history—the almost 300 year struggle between the government and various Native American nations. The year was 1892 and the decision was to begin the synod's first world mission by sending two missionaries to the newly formed Apache Reservations in Arizona Territory. Many people thought it was dangerous. Many people thought it was foolish. Many thought it was dangerous and foolish! There was not a lot of money to support the missionaries, they did not know the Apache language, and the Apaches did not know the English language; how would they even talk to each other? What other things about starting this mission would be challenging? (Climate, completely different culture, finding a place to live, talking with people back home, Arizona critters, threats of war, etc.)

In spite of all of these dangers and threats, the missionaries stayed and more followed. The number of Christians on the reservation went from the 2 missionaries to over 3,600 confirmed members today! The missionaries knew there is never a "good time" to start spreading God's Word, because it is ALWAYS a good time to spread God's Word. There will always be tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes, forest fires, people who will go against you, and other dangers. Satan surely doesn't want anyone leaving him behind and learning the one true faith, so he will work extra hard to make sure people stay in the dark. As Christians, we have the awesome and, yes, sometimes scary, responsibility of being flashlights for Jesus! We get to let our lights shine and tell others about Jesus! The Holy Spirit changes peoples' lives and God promises his Word will not return to him empty!

2 Cor. 6: 2 tells us, ***"Working together with him, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain. For he says, "In a favorable time I listened to you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you."***

***Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.*** The brave missionaries were confident God would be with them because God promised He would be. The missionaries serving today know the same truth. Yes, it will be challenging at times, but nothing is impossible with God. Who is supposed to share God's Word? Just pastors, teachers, and staff ministers? I would hope not, it's every Christian's job! It's YOUR job! Some people have the gifts and desire to be a public minister, and we should support and encourage them. But we all have that amazing opportunity to reach as many people as we can. It doesn't have to be in a faraway foreign place; it can be at Wal-Mart, in your backyard, or at the baseball diamond. Now is the time! Salvation is here!

It WAS the time to send missionaries to AZ to the Apache 125 years ago. IT IS the time for Apache Lutherans to share Jesus with other Native Americans in the other 500+ tribes throughout America. God WILL bless all our prayers, financial gifts and efforts to reach other Native American tribes. God WILL bless all our prayers, financial gifts and efforts to reach the lost living in our own communities.

**Prayer:** Heavenly Father, Thank you for the rich blessings you give us each and every day. We thank you for blessing the Apache Mission for 125 years and we boldly ask for you to continue to bless our missionaries and Apache brothers and sisters who have a desire to know you better and tell others about you. We ask that you bless our Christian Education system throughout this blessed country that you continue to grow leaders that may serve you and your Church faithfully and passionately.

*In your name we pray, Amen.*