



"And now I am no more in the world,
but these are in the world..." (John 17:11).

Use this recent news story to help your students see the relevance
of this week's lesson from the Standard Lesson Commentary®
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A CONTROVERSIAL RULING

In a 5-to-4 decision, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled Monday that town council meetings in Greece, New York, can continue to be opened with "sectarian" prayer. Many Christians are rejoicing at the decision, but others doubt that the ruling is beneficial to Christianity. Those in the latter group note that the Greece council meetings have included prayers to Athena and Apollo by a Wiccan priestess in addition to prayers in the name of Christ by Christian ministers. Other Christians say the more important issue is that praying in Jesus' name in civic meetings is not an appropriate way to promote the gospel message since this can result in resentment against Christianity.

A SAVING MISSION

Last week's lesson noted how and why Jesus refused to use certain means to advance his mission. In this week's lesson, Isaiah's prophecy tells of how the Messiah would carry out that work, while Luke's Gospel shows him beginning to do so. He came to preach the gospel (the good news) of deliverance from sin. The 2,000-year history of the church reveals that Christians have long struggled with the question of how best to continue the divine mission that Jesus has called us to share in.

1. What good and bad effects of the court's ruling do you foresee?
2. Does a Christian compromise his or her witness by being present where a non-Christian prayer is being voiced? Why, or why not?
3. Since Jesus avoided mixing the gospel message with the politics of his day, to what extent should we do likewise?
4. What does Luke 4:18, 19 (quoting Isaiah 61:1, 2) have to say, if anything, about the church's social responsibilities that may accompany her task of proclaiming the good news of eternal life in Jesus?
5. In what specific ways do you follow Jesus' example in fulfilling the Christian mission?

—Charles R. Boatman

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