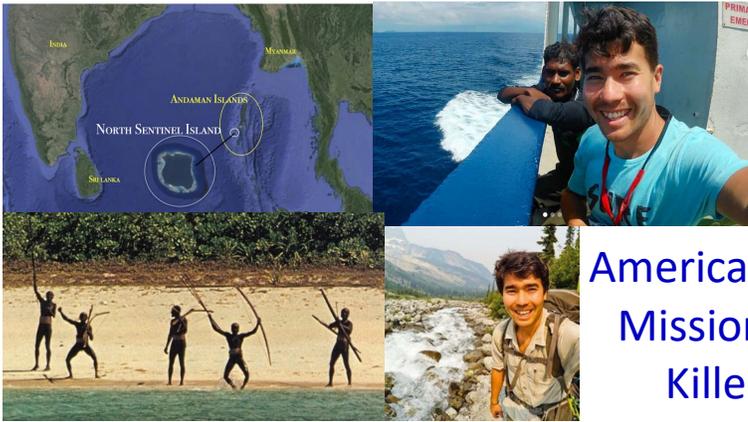


December 5, 2018  
6:30pm  
St. Mary's Episcopal Church



## American Missionary Killed



### About this news story....

An American missionary, who was passionate about bringing the gospel to "unreached people groups," was killed by members of what is considered the most isolated tribe in the world.

Read the opposite side for a brief summary.

John Chau, 26, was typically careful and meticulous when preparing for his trips abroad, a friend said. He would take calculated risks, but he was always aware of what he was doing.

### Let's ask some questions about this incident...

1. Why not leave people to their own religious beliefs and practices, whatever they may be?
2. What is the difference between "proclaiming the kingdom of God" and imposing your culture and/or belief system on other people?
3. How can Christians ensure that the message they convey to people is *good news (a.k.a. gospel)* that brings life, hope and joy, and not bad news that brings death, despair and destruction?
4. What safeguards should be established to ensure that we minister to and with people in a spirit of humility rather than arrogance?

### What motivated this man?

One reader of this article, Valerie, said: "Every time I read about this guy, I think about the missionaries who ring my doorbell. I tell them I'm not interested, they go away, and they don't come back the next day. Why didn't Mr. Chau treat the Sentinelese with the same respect? And what systemic forces back home encouraged him in this regard?"

In the Book of Matthew, the resurrected Jesus says: "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."

This passage is known as the Great Commission, and several of Mr. Chau's friends said that more than anything else, it explained why Mr. Chau did what he did.

*New York Times*, Saturday, December 1, 2018

Dependra Pathak, Director of Police governing India's Andaman and Nicobar islands, stated that John Allen Chau, 26, paid five local fishermen about \$350 to ferry him under cover of night to a restricted island in the Bay of Bengal about 700 miles off the east coast of India on November 14.

Indian law has a "no contact" policy regarding the tribes in the remote area, to protect them from accidental exposure to potentially deadly diseases for which they have no immunity, and to protect others from the tribes' hostility. Travelers are prohibited from going within three miles of North Sentinel Island where Chau expected to contact the Sentinelese.

Chau flaunted the government regulations, writing in his diary that "God Himself was hiding us ... God sheltered me and camouflaged me against the coast guard and the navy."

The morning of November 15, Chau paddled his kayak from the fishing vessel toward shore, crying: "My name is John. I love you and Jesus loves you. Here is some fish!"

Ryu Spaeth, Features Editor of *The New Republic*, wrote: "Another attempt to offer gifts resulted in a tribesman shooting an arrow straight through Chau's waterproof Bible, the symbolism so on the nose that another person might have taken it for a sign from above."

But Chau would not be deterred. He returned to the fishermen's boat that night, writing in his diary that he didn't want to die, wondering who would take his place if that happened, but he would give God glory "whatever happened" and wanted God to forgive them if they killed him.

Upon his return to the island, an arrow from one of the Sentinelese found its mark. The following day, the fishermen who had taken Chau to the protected area witnessed members of the tribe burying his body on the beach.

The Sentinelese, who are believed to number in the dozens, are one of the last pre-Neolithic tribes left on Earth. The tribe is consistently hostile to outsiders, having killed two fishermen who got too close to the island in 2006, and thrown spears at a disaster response helicopter team checking for damage after the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami.

Chau's family released a statement expressing their grief as well as forgiveness for "those reportedly responsible for his death," and requested that charges be dropped against the seven men who assisted Chau.

Authorities are unsure whether they will be able to retrieve the American's body.

## Connecting this news story with some Scripture...

*And Jesus came and said to [the eleven disciples], "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."* (Matthew 28:18-20)



Many Christians believe this commission Jesus gave to the eleven disciples, known as the Great Commission, pertains to all Christians. Some Christians believe this is a mandate to go into all human places to preach the Gospel. And yet other missionaries and indigenous people have written about how God has already spoken and continues to speak to people in other faiths and cultures in dreams and visions, without intervention from people from other countries.

### Questions:

- How can we obey the Great Commission while also respecting the cultures and beliefs of the people to whom we feel called to preach the gospel?
- What is it that Jesus commanded his disciples to teach disciples of all nations?

*The prophet Agabus came to us and took Paul's belt, bound his own feet and hands with it, and said, "Thus says the Holy Spirit, 'This is the way the Jews in Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles.'" When we heard this, we and the people there urged him not to go up to Jerusalem. Then Paul answered, "What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." Since he would not be persuaded, we remained silent except to say, "The Lord's will be done." After these days we got ready and started to go up to Jerusalem.* (Acts 21:11-15)



On his final journey to visit the believers, Paul was warned by the disciples in Tyre not to go to Jerusalem. Then in Caesarea, the prophet Agabus repeated the warning, complete with a vivid visual aid about the danger that awaited Paul in Jerusalem. But this time, Paul did not change course. He accepted the risk associated with the course of action to which he was committed, even if it meant he would die "for the name of Jesus."

### Questions:

- How can we know when we should avoid risk and when we should embrace risk associated with following Jesus?
- How can we determine whether we should move forward or change course as we seek to follow our Lord?

His friends mourn the loss of someone they describe as a real character: good looking but perennially single, always exploring, even landing a beef jerky sponsorship that gave him all the free jerky he could eat for his travels.

But many fellow Christians, including some of his friends, are uncomfortable with what he did.

"He was caught up in a dangerous set of ideologies that helped drive him to do something so unwise," said Kaleb Graves, a student pastor in Arkansas who befriended Mr. Chau at a linguistics institute last year.

"He should have known better." multiple authors, *New York Times*, December 1, 2018 p.A6

And finally, a couple of concluding questions....

One Christian group called "Unfundamentalists" posted the view that Chau's actions served as "a good example of how the arrogance and selfishness of Patriarchal religion and people cause them to force themselves on others without consent."

"It was not God's will that he thought he was following; it was his own," the post continued. "He didn't die because of his faith. He died because of his pride and arrogance and foolishness. He made a bad decision. Natural consequences are not martyrdom."

**Questions:**

- Do you agree or disagree with this view of Chau's actions?
- Is it possible to know what motivated him to pursue his course of action?
- Should he be seen as a martyr, or not?

Is the Episcopal Church "Missional"?

"Through much of its history, ours has been known as the church of empire, the church of slaveholders, the church of the owning class, the protector of English-American tradition, the home of the privileged cultural elite. While every congregation and diocese has its own story, we remain statistically a niche church that is wealthier and more educated than any church in America, and among the oldest. We are nearly all white, and we lose our cradle members faster than nearly any church in the country. Can a church like ours wake up? Will we foster Christian communities anchored in the dream of Cod and in the urgent, missional needs of our day? Will we bridge culture, race, generation, and class to build mutually transforming relationships with neighbors and mission partners? Will we wake for pity's sake? Or will we continue to sleep?"

*Anglican Theological Review*  
Stephanie Spellers  
January 1, 2010

It was a *tribe* that killed the missionary.

**Question:** Are we living in *tribal* times?



Date	Meeting & Place
<b>December 12</b>	<b>SWEEP in chapel</b>
<b>December 19</b>	<b>conTEXTS in parish hall</b>
<b>December 26</b>	<b>No meeting Enjoy Christmas!</b>

December 2018						
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