

## “Mission of the Church”

Matthew 28:18-20

I was born into an air force family which earned me the title “air force brat”. I had the joy of moving every two or three years from one air force base to another. I started my tour in Panama, then a couple different **bases** in Florida, then Texas, and my dad retired at Nellis air force base in Las Vegas, NV. Growing up on bases, I was astounded by how much was on the base. There were sometimes schools, swimming pools, racquet ball courts, **movie** theatres, and fast food. They always had a grocery store, a hospital, and lots of airplanes. Incredible fighter planes, bombers and attack helicopters. Super cool looking pilots in jump suits would be walking around. The **picture** I want to paint is there were all aspects of normal life present as well as the fighter planes. There were pilots, doctors, logistical specialists, police officers, fire fighters, ambulances, instructors, teachers, and even cooks. So **many** different skills from every walk of life. Yet, they were all there to serve this particular military branch. There to serve the mission of the US air force. While some jobs may have been boring compared to being a fighter pilot, they all play an important part in supporting the mission statement of the Air Force; straight from their website: *The mission of the United States Air Force is to fly, fight and win - airpower anytime, anywhere. Whether full-time, part-time, in or out of uniform, everyone who serves plays a critical role in helping us achieve mission success.*

What about the civilian world? What mission do unbelievers support? There are a variety of mission statements you can discover out there, but I will submit to you that typically you will find this global mission: To be happy and to do what feels good.

The question I will answer today is, “What is the Mission of the Church”? What is the mission of the body of Christ? The **ONLY** place to find instructions for the Christian is the Holy Bible. The **only** place to establish a mission mindset for the Lord is His word. I am sorry to report that the mission of the church is always under attack. The worldly mission of being happy and doing what **feels** good, has subtly corrupted the church with its value system. Happiness and feeling good as **PRIMARY** goals can easily override the mission of the church in your heart. I hope to clarify and simplify the mission of the church which is: **MAKING THE GOSPEL OF JESUS KNOWN TO THE WORLD**. Let me read today’s main passage to you as I believe this passage reveals the mission of the church.

“And Jesus came and said to them, ‘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, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’”

To do this passage justice, we **must** consider the context. Jesus had risen from dead and met His disciples at an appointed mountain in Galilee. He spoke this instruction right before He ascended up in a cloud into heaven where He is now seated at the right hand of the Father. This was His **final** parting instruction to His followers. The resurrected savior leaving them so that He could send the Holy Spirit. These disciples didn’t understand it yet, but they desperately needed the Holy Spirit to come so they could have the power and wisdom to do what Jesus asked.

### **Authority**

Jesus stated that **all** authority had been given to Him. This glorified Jesus, now with all authority in both heaven and on earth has total **supremacy** in all of His creation. This truth has amazing implications. He has all power, He has the right to all things, He has liberty to do anything, and everything and everyone falls under His jurisdiction. By **this** authority we get to say we are serving God in the name of Jesus. While Jesus was performing miracle after miracle in the gospels, the chief priests and elders kept asking Him, “by what authority do you do these things, **who** gave you this authority.”

They saw themselves as the top authority and rejected anyone who did not receive authority from **them**. They knew godly authority was not taken but given. Jesus, the son of man, was under His heavenly Father's authority. Authority was a **big** deal back then and it still is now. Jesus wanted His disciples to be **encouraged** by His authority and to testify by stating His name as the final authority. After Pentecost, Peter heals the crippled man at the temple gate. He does this in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. A crowd gathers marveling at Him. He states that it was not His power or godliness that healed the man but **faith** in the name of Jesus. The name of Jesus has authority by faith. Acts 4:12 tells us "For there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." Remember the centurion who asked Jesus to heal his servant? He was praised by Jesus as having faith like no other in Israel. This soldier understood authority and submission. By faith he believed Jesus had authority over all things. It is one thing to be like the centurion and believe sickness or demons would have to submit to Jesus, but it is another thing to **humbly** submit to Him personally. We must not lose sight that Jesus is expecting us to submit to His authority and to enjoy the spiritual security it provides.

His Authority is a covering for us. As we submit to Him, we act on His behalf doing His will with His power. His authority and His supremacy are **incredibly** good news for us. In light of this we are no longer ruled by fear but ruled by the loving King of kings. As we go places for Him, we can do it knowing it is He that has the final say in all things.

### **Go**

Because of His supremacy, He then authorized us to step out in faith, to go where He tells us to go with purpose. He tells us to go out in His name, in His authority. For all you Western movie lovers, He just deputized His disciples to go out to accomplish His will. His statement to "go" **also** implies a departure from normal life and personal pursuits. It implies you are to leave behind your comfort and routines so you can make Him known. As our great high priest, as our King, He is instructing us to look beyond our home, **beyond** our tight circle of family and friends. He says go. As the disciples were listening to this instruction, I can imagine they were feeling afraid, maybe even timid and powerless to go. I suspect this because they had not yet received the Holy Spirit and they knew what they were capable of in their **own** strength, abandoning Jesus being one example. In the first chapter of Acts, we can see a little more of this same pre-ascension conversation.

Acts 1:8 "*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*" Jesus comforts them with the news that they will receive power from an **external** source, the Holy Spirit. He lets them know that with that power they **will** proclaim, they will be a witness of the resurrected Jesus at home, at the capitol, throughout their country and **ultimately** throughout the world. This must have blown their minds! Does it blow your minds? It should. This promise of Jesus is for **all** born-again believers. Not that you will be called to foreign missions in Israel or the other side of the planet, but you **WILL** be His witness. You will tell others of the name of Jesus, and it could very well make a global impact. Let's look what we should be doing with this authority and this call to go.

### **Make Disciples**

The whole reason for going anywhere for the Lord is to make disciples, to make followers, people who listen to biblical teaching and live it out in daily life. This is an interesting request - Make disciples. In the Greek, this is one word. It basically means - to enroll students, to instruct them in the way. Only God can make believers but in His wisdom, He tells us to go make disciples. He wants us to **partner** with Him. This is something we are capable of doing because God wants to use us to teach His people. He will always equip and strengthen us to accomplish His mission.

Disciples are people who follow Jesus and who teach others to follow Jesus. An example of this is found in 2 Timothy 2 where Paul instructs His student Timothy to be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ and to teach faithful men and women who will be able to teach others also.

If you are currently involved in discipleship or desire to be, please know that you are basically building people up in such a way so that they also will build up others. Discipleship always has its roots in being **others** minded.

So with the authority we have in Christ we go or help others go to the nations to expand His kingdom, to expand the Church. We don't use His authority to take control or command other nations, **forcing** them to be Christian. But we use His authority to gently make followers in the love of God. We do not enter nations like Jonah the prophet did against Nineveh, pronouncing only judgement and total destruction for their sins, but we enter proclaiming the good news of Jesus with the intent of making disciples. Being an example of not just repentance but also of walking with God. Instead of only speaking judgement we tell of salvation by faith and how to **continue** in faith.

At the risk of alarming you, I want to point out that sometimes, God providentially pushes us into action. Acts 8 shows how the newly birthed church in Jerusalem came under intense persecution by Saul. The believers were scattered as they fled for their lives. They were driven from their homes but everywhere they went they preached the word. They made known the name of Jesus the Messiah. The apostle Paul was taken on a very rough journey to Rome so he could make Jesus known to many including the emperor. Our trials and suffering that God allows into our lives should always be seen as a possible moment to proclaim Jesus as Lord to a specific audience.

Considering what is included in discipleship we will now look at baptism.

### **Baptize**

Baptism is part of our mission to make Jesus known. It is part of being enrolled as His student. Let's look at why. William Macdonald does a **masterful** job teaching about Baptism in his book *Christ loved the Church*. He points out the following. There are three baptisms described in the NT. The first being John's baptism which was that of repentance from sin. John the Baptist instructed Israel to come with fruits worthy of repentance. The second baptism is the baptism of the Holy Spirit spoken of in Acts 1:5 "For John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

The third baptism is the believer's baptism. In obedience to the Lord's request for us to be baptized, we perform this ceremony, as **MacDonald** calls it, a dramatic illustration of what has already taken place. In baptism we make the gospel of Jesus publically known. Jesus dying in our place and going into the grave for our sins, --we go down into the water to show that our old man, or old self has died with Christ. As Jesus rose from the grave, we **too** rise out of the water showing we have determined to walk with Him in newness of life. In line with Phil. 3:10 That we might **know** Him and the power of His resurrection. Additionally, we make known the **triune** God. In water baptism, we acknowledge the authority is from heaven in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. In this authoritative baptism we confess we have been adopted by God the Father into His family. This adoption was approved by the propitiation, the atoning sacrifice of His only Son. And through the Spirit we are sanctified, we are taught, He guides us, and comforts us. We make our God known in baptism by revealing the Trinity. We also reveal Him by telling the world how He has blessed us.

### **Teach**

Another way to make Jesus known is to observe His commands. John 14:15 states, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." This is a **humbling** reality for Christians. If Christ has authority over your life, if you love Him, you will observe His commands. The word observe means to keep, guard, hold fast or follow. This makes more sense to me than the word obey. In making disciples, we should be cautious to **not** teach religious obedience, or surface morality. Our goal is to **introduce** people to Jesus, and for them to enter a loving relationship with Him. In that relationship of love, we are motivated to know His will and to follow Him joyfully.

This is contrasted with the scribes and Pharisees like Saul who was blameless toward the Law of Moses but was **persecuting** Jesus by violently persecuting the church. In contrast, we join the psalmist in Psalm **119** who said, *I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.* We don't teach people to obey with their minds only but keep His commands with their hearts.

### **Behold**

The last verse of the Gospel of Matthew begins with "Behold". This is such a cool word. In the KJV it is Lo. Other versions use "see" or "remember". Jesus wanted His followers, who were most likely already looking right at Him when He said this, to really look,

Behold. To pause their thoughts and to really listen to this mission critical promise. I am with you always to the end of the age. Jesus was just about to supernaturally ascend in a cloud to heaven and He states, "I **am** with you continually". After burdening them with the most important mission of all time, He leaves them with this **glorious** promise. At the very peak of inadequacy and Him leaving them behind, He comforts them by promising they will not go forward without Him. No matter what they faced, or what their circumstances were, they had this promise that He **is** with them. Jesus told His followers in Jn. 16:7 that it was to their advantage that He go away. That He must go away so that the comforter, the advocate, would be sent to them. He would no longer be **physically** present with them in body but moving forward He would be with them in Spirit. And with them, He means the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Saints, we must not miss this important reference to the end of the age. Matthew 13:39 explains the harvest is the end of the age. The end of this world. A **truly** critical part of making Him known is that He is coming back and it very well may be in this lifetime. As the church, we **are** on a mission to make Him known **which includes** the anticipation of His promised return. The apostle Paul addressing the elders in Ephesus in Acts 20:24 says this, *But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.*

Paul wanted to finish **his** course and the ministry Jesus gave him. This was Paul's personal mission for God, to testify over and over again of God's grace in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

So, what about me, what about you? What about our kids? Honestly, preparing for this sermon was incredibly convicting. I have been confronted in the subtle ways I have lost focus and vision to make Him known. This message is not a guilt trip for you to do more or sacrifice more or to go preach to some third world country. This message is for you to be reminded of the simple joy of knowing the Lord and making Him known to others.