

Mission, Values and Vision

*⁸To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, ⁹and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things, ¹⁰so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.
(Ephesians 3:8-10. ESV)*

Message 1

The Mission Of The Church

January 19th, 2014

Matthew 28:18-20

Luke 24:44-49

Acts 1:8

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Introduction:

Good morning! Open your Bibles to Matthew 28:18-20. We are starting a new series this morning on the mission, the values and the vision of the church and so we begin as you would expect with the Great Commission passages in the New Testament. Before we begin to read those, however, I want to spend a few minutes establishing the greater context. Our mission is given in the context of God's mission and God's mission is a much bigger category than our mission and we need to know what God is doing if we are to understand and properly relate our mission to His mission. Does that make sense? What then is the mission of God? What is God doing in the pages of the Bible that prepares us to receive the great commission passages that we will be looking at this morning?

Preamble: The Mission Of God In The Bible

Very simply and very briefly, in the pages of the Bible we meet a God who is creating and redeeming a people for himself. In Genesis 1-2 we meet God as Creator. He creates a good world and he puts good people in it who have the capacity to obey him and the capacity and possibility to disobey him and to act autonomously without reference to his Word and Will. As the story goes, the man and the woman choose autonomy – they desire to live without reference to the Word of God. The world falls into darkness, curse and chaos but into the darkness God

speaks a Word of promise. The promise of God is the hope of the world – amen? He says that a seed of the woman will come and crush the devil who tempted the man and woman into autonomy and he will break the hold of sin and curse and restore men and women to God, to each other and to the world. That then, is what God is doing in the Bible. The story of the Bible runs from creation to new creation and it is held together by the promise of Almighty God to redeem, renew and restore.

Initially the focus of the promise is on a people and a place. Israel and the temple. Israel is the people and the temple is the place. There is a promise to Abraham that his people will be the locus of blessing in the world:

¹Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. ²And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and **in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.**” (Genesis 12:1-3. ESV)

The people of Abraham are going to be raised up as the locus of blessing for the entire world. Abraham is not told to go to them, he’s told to go to a very small parcel of land at the centre of the world and people are going to come to him and to his descendents. They will be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation because all of the peoples of the world belong to God – Exodus 19 says.

Abraham is the people and the temple is the place. The House of God is going to be the focus of blessing that restores and refreshes and renews the people of the earth. Isaiah the prophet saw that day coming:

² It shall come to pass **in the latter days**
that the mountain of the house of the LORD
shall be established as the highest of the mountains,
and shall be lifted up above the hills;
and all the nations shall flow to it,
³ and many peoples shall come, and say:
“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,
to the house of the God of Jacob,
that he may teach us his ways
and that we may walk in his paths.”
For out of Zion shall go the law,
and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

⁴ He shall judge between the nations,
and shall decide disputes for many peoples;
and they shall beat their swords into plowshares,

and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war anymore.

⁵ **O house of Jacob,
come, let us walk
in the light of the LORD.** (Isaiah 2:1-5. ESV)

A couple of things to notice real quick. First of all, the Jewish people did not expect the nations to come to them and to the temple en mass until the latter days. They expected a trickle in the meantime – there was the Queen of Sheba coming to Solomon, there were the many God fearers in the New Testament and people like the Ethiopian eunuch, but they did not expect a flood of Gentiles to come to them and to the House of the Lord until the latter days. In the latter days God would send out and God would bring the nations like a flood to the mountain of the Lord’s House. In the meantime, the Jews understood their job as described in verse 5: Come let us walk in the light of the Lord. Holiness was supposed to be the main witness of the Jewish people in the meantime. And then, sometime in the future, God would send out for the Gentiles.

Ok now fast forward to the New Covenant. The story of the Old Covenant is how the Jewish people failed to do what they were supposed to do. They did not walk in the light of the Lord. They constantly went after the gods of their neighbours and walked in the ways of the nations. So God said that he would send his Servant to restore Israel and to gather the nations. Listen to Isaiah 49; this is a dialogue between God and “His Servant” that he is going to send, with the Servant speaking first in verse 3.

³ And he said to me, “You are my servant,
Israel, in whom I will be glorified.” ...

So the Servant is going to be the new Israel. He is going to embody and assume the role given to Israel. He is a child of Abraham – he is a Jew and he is going to stand as Israel before God and take to himself the roles given to Israel. He will be the people and he will be the place of blessing. Go to verse 6 where God says:

⁶ he says:
“It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; **I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.**” (Isaiah 49:6. ESV)

The Servant, will do more than restore Israel, he will also be a light to the nations and take the salvation of God to the ends of the earth. This is where the mission of God and the mission of Jesus intersect. Jesus is sent to be Israel. That is why Matthew's Gospel shows him going into Egypt and then coming out and he records God saying:

“Out of Egypt I called my son.” (Matthew 2:15. ESV)

Words originally spoken about Israel now applied to Christ. This is why Jesus said:

“Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” (John 2:19. ESV)

Jesus is the new Israel, Jesus is the new temple – he is the source and locus of blessing that will finally defeat the devil, break the curse, cancel sin and take us all back to God and to each other. Isaiah said that in the latter days the Mountain of the Lord's House would be raised up and all the nations would come, Jesus takes that to himself and says:

³²And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” (John 12:32. ESV)

Do you see that? Jesus is the long awaited Mountain of the Lord! He is the people, he is the place, he is the promise of God that ends the curse and releases times of refreshing upon all the peoples of the earth! These then, MUST BE the latter days and in the latter days God will send out and gather the nations in. This has been known from of old and this is where we find ourselves today as we open our Bibles now to Matthew 28:18-20. We'll read Matthew 28 and also Luke 24:44-49 and we'll end with Acts 1:8 as we study the mission and commission of the church. Hear now the Word of the Lord:

The Great Commission Passages:

¹⁸And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:18-20. ESV)

My plan is to very quickly exegete each of these passages so that you can see the main commands and then to arrange our findings at the end in a collated and collective fashion. With

respect to this passage then there is only one imperative verb. There is ONE COMMAND in this passage and it is the command to make disciples. The Greek word is *matheteusate* and it is an aorist active imperative 2nd person plural meaning that it is a command verb given to the disciples collectively. This is what you should do – make disciples. It is modified firstly by the participle translated as “going”. Participles in Greek modify the main verb. We might say it this way: “Going into all the nations – MAKE DISCIPLES OF THEM”. That doesn’t sound good in English but that would be the most literal way to translate it. Going into Orillia, going into Sao Paulo, going into Kakanada – make disciples. The other two participles modify that further by explaining that making disciples has two component parts, there is a baptizing piece – meaning that we need to make converts; converts are baptized, and then we need to be teaching them ALL that Jesus has commanded us. It is the Jesus teaching that we need to pass on. His authoritative interpretation of the Word of God is the content of our teaching to the nations. You have heard it said, but I tell you – the deeper into the holiness, true heart understanding of the Word of God is our authorized content to the world. That’s what we do, we make disciples by baptizing converts and teaching them the Jesus school of Bible doctrine.

Lastly there is a promise here – lo I am with you always, even to the end of the age. The disciples would know that the very fact that they are being sent out to gather the Gentiles means it is the latter days but they did not know how long the latter days would end. No worries, Jesus says, as long as they last, I will be with you. My presence goes with you into mission.

Turn now to Luke 24:44-49.

⁴⁴Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” ⁴⁵Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, ⁴⁶and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, ⁴⁷and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.” (Luke 24:44-49. ESV)

The main verb in this passage is the Greek *keruxthevai* which means “be preached”. It is an aorist passive infinitive. There are three ways of giving a command in Greek, the imperative, the hortatory optative, as in “Let us go to the house of the Lord” and the infinitive as here. The Gospel of repentance and forgiveness must BE PREACHED!! That’s the main thing Jesus is saying here. In verse 48 we have some very useful new content when we see that the disciples on

mission are referred to as “witnesses”. This is given in the nominative meaning that this is their identity. They are witnesses as they do preaching.

Let’s look lastly at Acts 1:8.

⁸But 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.” (Acts 1:8. ESV)

Here we have a repetition of the nominative – you will be my witnesses – and an expansion of the promise – you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. The objective is the same – to take the message of salvation in Jesus Christ to the ends of the earth. Let’s collate all of that now into some sensible statement of mission. Based on these three texts, what can we say about the mission of the church?

The Mission Of The Church:

The mission of the church is actually very simple and very narrow. We are commanded:

1a. To preach the Gospel

1b. To make disciples

I put those as 1a and 1b because they are not two things, they are one thing. We make disciples by preaching the Gospel. The Word does the work. The word converts us – we know that from Romans 10:

¹⁷So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. (Romans 10:17. ESV)

When we preach the Bible with a Christocentric hermeneutic – that is we preach the whole Bible with Christ at the centre and with Christ as our authoritative guide and interpreter – people get saved! They are converted and baptized as Christian converts. Simultaneously, other people over here, listening to the same Christ centred, Bible based, Gospel saturated sermon are being sanctified – that is they are growing up in the Lord. Jesus says that in John 17:

¹⁷Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. (John 17:17. ESV)

The same word that is saving people over here, is sanctifying people over here. Preaching the Gospel – MAKES DISCIPLES! It converts people and it grows people. That’s why those things are really 1a and 1b. The mission of the church is to make disciples by preaching the Word of Christ.

By taking note of the modifiers in the text we would further say firstly that we make disciples by preaching the Christ centered Word of truth – as we go into all the nations. As we go into Orillia, as we go into Brazil, as we go into India the goal should be to make disciples by preaching the Word of Christ. There is no methodological shift when we move from domestic mission to foreign mission. Orillia is foreign mission from the perspective of the Great Commission. I doubt that any of the disciples hearing this sermon from Jesus could have thought as far or as foreign as Orillia, Ontario, Canada. This is foreign mission. This church exists because someone did foreign missions! This church was founded I am told by an English Baptist missionary pastor. He came here from somewhere and what did he do? He preached the Bible and he made disciples and they cracked the ice on Lake Couchiching to baptize those converts and then he just kept right on preaching and we’re still doing the same! We have a tank now with heated water, praise the Lord, but nothing else has changed and neither will it ever change as long as there is breath in my lungs. We’re going to make disciples by preaching the Bible according to the person and pattern of Christ. That’s our mission, here in Orillia and in Brazil and in India and wherever else the Lord leads us to go.

The second modifier there – baptizing – reminds us that we need to be constantly reaching out, constantly seeking out those who do not yet know of the glories of God in Christ. We need to make converts in here. We need to baptize those who have died to the world and want to live for Christ. That’s your mission church – mine too – ours collectively. MAKE CONVERTS!! Go get them! There are lost people in this city! There are 30 000 people going to hell within 10 km of this building and we need to go get them! We need to reach them with reCOVER and Family Circle and youth events and seniors’ events and whatever other good ideas you can think of because it really does matter. It matters to Jesus and I want it to matter to us.

The third modifier reminds us that we need to know everything Jesus has to teach us. We can’t stop at the basics. We need to keep going deeper. We will be a seeking church but we will not

do seeker church. We cannot! We cannot stop at 101 we need to go to 201 and 301 and 401 and whatever else 01 because we need to know EVERYTHING that Jesus has for us. All Scripture is God breathed and PROFITABLE – amen? Amen. We need to teach it all because we need to know it all – everything Jesus has for us.

That’s the mission. Now alongside of the mission there is an identity and a promise. Let’s look at those really quick.

The Identity Of The Church:

According to Luke 24 and Acts 1 as we make disciples, preaching to all nations we are witnesses. Witnesses. Just hear that, be humbled by that and rest in that. We are witnesses. We are not the story, we are not the message, we are not the Messiah, we are witnesses. We point to Jesus. We tell people what we have seen and heard. That’s important. That’s restraining. We are not “kingdom builders” or “wonder workers”, we are not “the hands and feet of Jesus”, we are witnesses. You might come to me and say but when Jesus sent out the disciples in Luke 9 he tells them to preach AND TO HEAL. They were witnesses and wonder workers; are we not under the same charge as in Luke 9? Well, in a word; NO. Things are different in Luke 24 then they were in Luke 9. In Luke 9 the mission was exclusively to Israel. Jesus said I have come to seek the lost sheep of Israel. He had not yet died on the cross, he had not yet been raised from the dead, he had not yet poured out the Spirit. The wonders of Luke 9 were a testimony to the Jews. When Jesus sends out the disciples in Luke 24, when the latter days have begun and the mission to the Gentiles launched he does not say go and work wonders. He says, preach, make disciples and be a witness. Now, don’t over read that. I’m not saying there won’t be healings – of course there will be and there are because James 5 is in your Bible. The church is going to pray and people are going to get healed but that is not the focus and it is not the mission. If you are obsessed with healing and you think that is the focus then you are majoring in the minors and you are off mission. We are not sent out as wonder workers or kingdom makers – we are witnesses who speak of what Jesus has done and said.

There is also a promise given:

The Promise To The Church:

Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And the Spirit did come and has come and does come. And Jesus is with us as we preach and as we make disciples and as we go and baptize and teach. He is with us and he empowers us through His Spirit. We are not alone and we are not weak. He is with us and if he is with us then nothing can stand against us. He will build his church and the Gates of Hell will not stand against it.

Implications:

Now in the very few minutes we have left I want to run through a list of fairly obvious and very practical implications for us as a church, here in Orillia in the 21st century. If all that is true, if that is the mission and that is our identity and that is our help and promise then.... what? Let me leave you with four implications.

1. We need to think of ourselves as a sent and sending church

We mustn't think that there is some great gap between what it means to be a good local church and what it means to do good global missions. This church is a mission outpost. We are here in Orillia to do mission. We are here to make disciples by preaching the Gospel; that's mission and we are sent to Orillia to do it. Simultaneously we should think of ourselves as a sending church. We have been blessed. We are a church of 600 people IN ORILLIA. That is alarmingly rare. Why has God blessed us? Is it not to BE A BLESSING, as ever it was even back to beginning of this ride of promise in Genesis 12? Is it, perhaps, too small a thing, to reach just Orillia, could it be that Christ through us means to shine a light to the nations and to extend the Gospel to all the nations of the earth? That would be just like God!

“The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali,
the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—
¹⁶ the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light,
and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death,
on them a light has dawned.” (Luke 4:15-16. ESV)

Can anything good come out of Orillia? We'll see. Here is a dream I have. This is not church policy, this is not Board approved, this is just me dreaming in the pulpit. Presently we give about

15% of our budget to “missions”. That’s good, relatively speaking. Evangelical average is around 3% I’m told, so we’re way ahead of the curve, but here is my dream. What if we increased that by about 1% a year for 35 years so that, our goal would be 50/50 by 2050? 50% of our money spent here in Orillia on our staff, our building, our ministry, our MISSION to make disciples of all nations by preaching the Word of truth and 50% to do the same thing in Brazil and India and wherever else the Lord leads us to be. Why do we have so much? Why does God continue to fill our coffers; individually and collectively as a church? Is it to raise our standard of living or, as Randy Alcorn says, is it to raise our standard of giving? I ask that of us as individual members and I ask it of us as a church. Let us think of ourselves both as SENT and as SENDING. Let us pursue our mission HERE and let us pursue it THERE.

Second implication:

2. We need to prioritize preaching and Word based ministry

I’m not going to say anything about that right now because we are going to hit that hard when we get to the core values section of this series.

Thirdly:

3. We need to balance outreach and development ministries

That’s important. The mission involves baptizing – that’s making converts AND teaching them EVERYTHING that Jesus has to say – EVERYTHING in the inspired and PROFITABLE Word of God. Both of those are important and it is so easy to emphasize one at the expense of the other. Let’s never do that. Let’s always give ourselves with equal vigour to both.

Fourthly and we end here:

4. We need to be humble and we need to abide

Our mission is probably a little smaller and more dependent than you thought before you came in here. Its pretty simple and even a little narrow isn’t? Preach the Gospel, make disciples.

Baptize. Teach. Out of that flows a WORLD OF CHANGE and transformation, don't get me wrong, KINGDOMS RISE AND FALL ON THIS and SOULS HANG IN THE BALANCE but, in and of itself the mission given to us is pretty small. You could write our mission on a napkin and have a fair bit of room left over. Our mission is smaller than God's mission. God is doing a bunch of things that we aren't told to do. God will do some of those things THROUGH what we are told to do, but we are just told to do this. Preach the Gospel and make disciples. Here and there and everywhere. Be humble about that. Seek not great things for yourself the Bible warns. Do what God told you to do and let God do what he has said he will do.

Be humble and abide. Our power comes from the Spirit and Presence of Jesus. Jesus said:

⁴Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. (John 15:4. ESV)

Don't be so focused on MISSION that you neglect your power and your promise. You can't do this on your own. You have to be a disciple before you can make a disciple. You have to sit at the master's feet before you seek and save the lost. You have to learn in order to teach. That's why Paul said to his son in the faith Timothy:

¹⁶Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; continue in these things, for in doing this you will save both yourself and your hearers. (1 Timothy 4:16. NRSV)

This is the Word of the Lord, thanks be to God. Let's pray together.