

The Mandate Behind Missions

Series: Mission Possible 2017

Matthew 28:18-20

July 9, 2017

Well, welcome again to worship. I've been out of the pulpit for 2 weeks. Now don't think I've been twiddling my toes and eating bonbons. I gave 12 talks and messages in the last 2 weeks, so I wasn't loafing.

But, it is good to be back and sharing with you today on missions. We decided last year that we need to spend time every year talking about missions for at least 3 reasons.

The first reason we focus on missions is to help us be exposed to various mission agencies and opportunities. This year, we have heard from our youth mission team and the powerful testimony of the presence and movement of God in their midst. In fact, I know of 3 students who are returning for a second week to volunteer and serve at Good Works. We heard from Keith Wasserman of Good Works last week and how they share the kingdom of God to the orphan, the widow, and the stranger.

Second, we focus on missions because of our Covenant Partnership with St. Paul United Methodist Church. Tuesday is our annual picnic lunch that we provide the people whom St. Paul ministers to, but our partnership is more than meals. We financially support their ministry, so we are asking you to prayerfully consider giving a special offering during the next 2 weeks to help us raise our \$2,400 commitment.

The third reason we focus on missions is that missions is a part of our strategy to fulfill our mission of Building a Christ Connection. We want to help people get connected to Christ, and we do that through our 4G strategy: Glorify, Grow, Give, and Go.

- We glorify God the Father in our daily worship, including Sunday morning.
- We grow into the likeness of His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.
- We give out of our love for God and love for people.
- And we go in the power of the Holy Spirit, sharing the Good News with everyone we can.

So going, or missions, is part of our strategy of Building a Christ Connection, and that's what we are going to focus on today.

Three weeks ago, we talked about the three fundamental truths of missions.

First, missions is the heart of Christ. Every beat of His heart throbbed to save souls. Every person He dealt with, He first caused him or her to grapple with their sin and pointed them to Himself as the answer. So missions is, first of all, the heart of Christ.

Second, missions is the hope of the lost. Without the Gospel, the lost are helpless, hopeless and hell-bound.

Finally, missions is the health of the Church. Only as a church fulfills her missionary obligation does it justify its existence. The church that does not evangelize will fossilize!

So those are the fundamental truths of missions. Today, we are only going to have time to focus on the first half of today's topic: the mandate of missions.

I want to invite you to turn in your bulletin to page 5 to take notes.

A missionary heard about a native chief who had 5 wives. He sought out the chief, and told him: “You are violating a Law of God. You must go and tell 4 of those women they can no longer live here or consider you their husband.”

The native chief thought for a moment, then he said: “Okay. But just one thing. Me wait here. YOU tell ‘em!”

There are some in churches who feel that telling the lost of the Gospel of Jesus is kind of like telling the chief to get rid of 4 of his wives – you don’t want to do there. But the Gospel is just what the word means: Good News. We have Good News, and we have a mandate to be engaged in missions. It comes from Matthew 28:18-20:

Jesus came and told his disciples, “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”¹

In this passage, Jesus gives us a mandate to be engaged in missions, and He says three things.

First, the Authority.

He says, “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth.”²

Jesus, the one that healed the sick, gave eyesight to the blind, strengthened the legs of the lame, cleansed the leper, raised people from the dead – this same Jesus has authority over all things. He is the boss, He is the main man, and He has all the power from God in heaven and earth.

Ephesians 1:22 reads,

God has put all things under the authority of Christ and has made him head over all things for the benefit of the church.³

On the basis of that authority, Jesus told His disciples to make more disciples as they preached, baptized, and taught. With this same authority, Jesus still commands us to tell others the Good News and make them disciples for the Kingdom.⁴

Besides authority, Jesus says a second thing.

The Assignment.

Matthew 28:19:

Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations...⁵

Because Vance is an African American living in a predominately Hispanic neighborhood, he stands out. But what really sets Vance apart is that he is a servant-hearted father who cares not only for his own kids, but also for the many other kids who play in the streets by his building.

One night at 9 p.m., there was a knock at Vance’s door. The 16-year-old boy who lives a few doors down needed help tying his tie. He had a big presentation at school the next day, and he had no father to help him get ready. After Vance had finished tying the tie, the boy sheepishly asked, “Do you have a pair of black dress shoes I could borrow?”

¹ Matthew 28:18-20 (NLT)

² Matthew 28:18 (NLT)

³ Ephesians 1:22 (NLT)

⁴ Life Application Study Bible, Matthew 28:18

⁵ Matthew 28:19a (NLT)

Immediately, God brought to Vance's mind the \$100 pair of shoes in his closet that he hadn't even taken out of the box yet. He was certain God was telling him to give the boy those shoes.

Vance cringed inside. He told the boy to wait at the door as he headed into the apartment to look for any pair of shoes but the expensive pair. Before he went to the closet, though, he told his wife what he sensed the Spirit was saying to him. She agreed that it sounded like God had given him a great idea. So Vance got out his new shoes and brought them to the boy. His last hope was that they wouldn't fit. After all, how many 16-year-olds have size 12 feet?

They fit perfectly.

Just a few weeks after Vance gave away his new shoes, he and his wife sensed God telling them to start a Bible study for the kids in their building. After much prayer, they decided to invite the kids to their apartment for a Sunday evening study. They ordered 4 Bibles in case any kids came. That Sunday, 7 kids showed up at Vance's apartment – led by the 16-year-old owner of a new pair of shoes. The following week they ordered more Bibles, and 14 kids showed up!

Who would have thought the kingdom of God would come to the kids of that apartment complex just because one man chose to give away a new pair of shoes?⁶

You don't have to go to Africa to engage in missions. You do not have to go to a place foreign to you, but you and I are mandated to go.

Someday, each and every one of us will face God on Judgment Day, and the days of our lives will be opened up, and the sins we have committed will be revealed. And if that isn't frightening enough, I think of the sins of omission, when we failed to do what the Lord told us to do, and the people who will not be in heaven because we failed in our mandate, will be told, and I do not want a single person to miss out on the glory of heaven because I did not go and make disciples. Do you?

Perhaps you've heard of the comedy team of Penn and Teller. Penn Jillette – he's the big, tall one that talks – is an atheist, but he recorded a video a few years ago telling the story about a man who waited to speak to him after one of their shows. Penn said the man was a successful businessman and was "very sane and sincere" and looked him right in his eyes. The man was very complimentary of the show, and then he did a strange thing. He gave Penn a Gideon's New Testament and inside the cover wrote a personal note and left phone numbers and an email if Penn wanted to talk to him about the message of the New Testament. Penn said nobody had ever done that to him before. On the video he says, "If you believe that there's a heaven and a hell; and people could be going to hell; or not getting eternal life or whatever, and you think it's not really worth telling them this because it would make it socially awkward... How much do you have to hate someone to believe that everlasting life is possible, and not tell him or her that? I mean if I believed, without a shadow of a doubt, that a truck was coming at you and you didn't believe it? And that truck was bearing down on you? There's a certain point where I tackle you. And this is MORE important than that."

Wow. Penn, an atheist, is really challenging we Christians to get at our assignment. No more procrastination like in school. No more saying the dog ate it or I

⁶ Bill White, Paramount, California. From a sermon by Terry Blankenship, Living for Those Divine Moments, 2/5/2010

didn't know the assignment; that excuse will no way work with God. We need to get to the assignment to go and make disciples.

Ok, Jesus gives us a mandate, and in it, we have Authority and Assignment.

Lastly, Jesus gives us the Affirmation.

Matthew 28:30 reads:

*... And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*⁷

We count on the promises of Jesus being with us, especially when things are tough. But let's not forget the context. He says He will be with as we are going and making disciples. It's like when the teacher gives you a math assignment... and then helps you with it.

It must have been a staggering thing for 11 humble disciples to be sent forth to the conquest of the world. Even as they heard it, their hearts must have failed them. But, no sooner was the assignment given, than the promise followed. They were sent out – as we are – on the greatest task in history, but with them – and us – there was the greatest presence in the world.⁸

A postman once told a pastor about the sense of security he felt in his work of delivering the mail. "Why," he said, "all the resources of the Government are pledged to support me in carrying on my work. If I have only one small postcard in my bag, no man dares to molest me in its delivery. All the Federal police powers of the United States would be thrown into action if necessary to secure the safe delivery of that postcard."⁹

And that leads me to think how confidently you and I may set forth with our life, our personality, our equipment, such as it is, to deliver the flaming truth of the Gospel. The Word of our Lord is just as much for us today as it was for the disciples, when He said:

*I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples... And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*¹⁰

My friends, we have been given a mandate to engage in missions. We have the Authority. We have the Assignment. And we have the Affirmation.

At 11:42 PM on April 14, 1912, on its maiden voyage, the RMS Titanic struck an iceberg and began to sink. Of the 2,000 passengers on the ship, 1517 were lost. At the time the Titanic went down, another ship, the California was only 30 miles away. Titanic's radio operator frantically sent out an SOS repeatedly; but the wireless set on the California was off because there was only one operator aboard and he had gone to bed. Help was available, but the California sailed on its way totally unaware of the tragedy.

All the power to save the passengers of the Titanic was only 30 miles away, but it never came.

Who do we know might be on their own personal Titanic and will die unless we do something about it?

⁷ Matthew 28:20 (NLT)

⁸ Barclay's Daily Study Bible, Matthew 28:20

⁹ Sunday School Times, Encyclopedia of 15,000 Illustrations: Signs of the Times.

¹⁰ Matthew 28:18-20 (NLT)