

Matt. 28:18-20 The Mission of the Church (updated from “Creating a Mission Sending Culture in the Local Church” preached at Parkwood on 11/19/2023)

This morning, we come to a familiar passage. And it should be! These are the last words of our Lord after his resurrection and before He ascended into heaven. In these words, we find our mission as a church. We can do a lot of good things in this world, but if we miss these words from Jesus we miss our mission. We must Go into the world! We must make disciples! And we do this by telling people and sharing the good of the news of the gospel! And when they believe we baptize them! And then we continue to teach them to obey all the commands of Jesus! And we know that Jesus will be with us, to the end of the age! This is not rocket science! If we will send missionaries to the ends of the earth, we must back up for a moment ask ourselves if we are getting the mission of the church right here at home. With this in mind, I have 3 truths.

1. We must get the Gospel of Jesus Christ Right. Everyone is a disciple of someone or something. But, as Christians, we make disciples of who, of Jesus. We have a clear message to share, one we must guard and keep. I think of Paul who says to the Galatians: **“I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed”** (Gal. 1:6-9). In Heb. 4:14 we read: **“Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.”**

So, what is the gospel? The Gospel, literally means “good news.” And this good news, this gospel, from eternity (past) to eternity (future) is God’s plan to save his people. I will ask the obvious: *“Saved from what?”* Saved from sin! Our first Father, Adam, sinned against God. And, we are his children. And from Adam, we have inherited a sin nature. This is why we don’t have to teach our children to be bad. We teach them to be good. Because of sin, we are separated from our source of life. We are alienated from God. In this world we find hostility, not peace. We are separated from God because of sin. Instead of carrying out God’s mandate to be fruitful and multiply and take care of the earth by spreading his glory, instead, we spread what comes from our own hearts; we spread sin. And the wages of sin is death. And we have fallen short of God’s glory.

Brothers and sisters we must be saved from sin and its effects, if we will ever carry out this mandate . . . or see God and spend eternity with Him. Therefore, God, in his mercy and grace, before the foundations of the world, made an everlasting covenant to send the Son into this world. **“For God so loved the world . . .”** (John 3:16). Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit. He was born of the virgin Mary. God took on flesh. And he lived a perfect life in both his heart and his actions. He loved and obeyed God perfectly. And then, he laid down his life a substitute sacrifice for sinners. And God punished his perfect Son. He poured out his wrath upon Him, though he did not deserve it. And then 3 days later, he rose again conquering death. Soon after, He ascended to heaven where He now sits at the right hand of God. And those who trust in Him will have their sins covered. Those who trust in Him will have God’s wrath averted. And those

who trust in Him will have newness of life by the Spirit. And those who trust in Him will be raised to life and given a new body . . . This is the Gospel! This is the Good News! And this doctrine, we must hold on to. And we must get this right, if we will create a sending culture in the local church.

“So called” Christians who do not get this gospel, or water it down, or add to it, WILL NOT be effective in the mission of making disciples! Churches who do not get this message right, WILL NOT be effective in the mission of making disciples. Therefore, here at Grace, and at any local body calling themselves a church, must get this message right!

Application: Don’t assume the gospel. Set checks and balances to make sure you get it right. One place to start is a confession . . . The Baptist Faith and Message is a good place to start.

Application: Good church confessions are good to help us keep the Gospel.

2. We must teach All that Jesus commands. It is to say to a new Christian, “*Now that you have believed on the Lord Jesus, it simply follows that you now learn how to obey all the commands of Christ.*” This is really the application of the gospel, the ongoing “teaching” ministry of discipleship. As I look at many Baptist Churches, particularly over the past 50 years or so, there has been a great emphasis on preaching the gospel to the lost. This is one of our great strengths we bring to the overall church of Christ. Historically (at least in this country), Baptist churches have multiplied because we have been strong in this area. And this is good! If we do not tell people about Jesus, they will not be saved. For “**faith comes by hearing, and hearing the Word of Christ**” (Rom. 10:17). If you are here today as a baptized believer in Christ, it is because SOMEONE brought the words of the gospel to you.

As Southern Baptists we have been good at inviting sinners to come to Christ. We are good at walking aisles, raising hands, and baptizing those who do. But, as I look around (my opinion and a general statement), I don’t see the emphasis of going deep and teaching those who come in “**to obey all the commands of the Lord Jesus.**” And if we neglect this part of our Lord’s command, over time our churches will become, as some have said, “*a mile wide and an inch deep.*” And if this turns out to be the case, over time the church will become ineffective. And probably, such a church will not care that much about going to the ends of the earth. Why? Because that church is leaving out half of the great commission. We MUST teach disciples to obey ALL the commands of Christ, which are the commands of God.

With this in mind, let me give an implication from this truth about practical godliness. What does it mean to “*obey all the commands of Christ?*” “*What does it look like?*” It is godliness! The assumption here is that the one who teaches disciples to “obey” actually knows what it means to obey. In other words, disciple makers practice he/she preaches. A disciple making church does the same. There is no such thing as a Christian that does not bear fruit.

In the local church, this starts in the home. You are what you are in your homes! Fathers, lead your families. Fathers and mothers, lead your children. And the context of what I’m saying this morning, get the Gospel right. Then, teach your family to obey all the commands of Christ. As a church, I would say to the leaders, stress family worship, which can be as simple as

gathering to read the Bible on a regular basis. I remember our years overseas when our kids were small. And more often than not, it was like “weeping and gnashing of teeth” than 4 obedient kids sitting with attentive minds and hearts. But, that’s ok. They won’t remember so much what they were taught. But, they will remember what you did and what was important.

So, as a church, we must hold one another accountable in godliness. For without it, no one will see the Lord! (Heb. 12:14). The Bible says that the will of God is “**your sanctification**” (1 Th. 4:3). Finally, this morning . . . we must love God (get the gospel right, teach them to obey, and . . .

3. We must love God. This truth underlies EVERYTHING we do! This reality is the heart of making disciples, both here and abroad. Now, the text doesn’t say in a command directly to “*love God.*” But, it does say to teach them to “obey all the commands of Christ.” And when one Jewish religious lawyer asks Jesus, “***What is the greatest commandment?***” what does he say. He says, “**You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment**” (Matt. 22:37–38). At the end of the day, we all do what we want to do! That’s a simple, but profound statement! Jesus says, “**Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks**” (Matt. 12:34). And, “**where your treasure is, there your heart will also be**” (Matt. 6:21).

If we want to create a disciple making culture, if we want to get the mission of the church right, here is where we must begin. Jesus says to Peter, “**If you love me you will feed my sheep**” (John 21:17). In the OT, what made a good king was the one who had a “heart for God.” This is not only the key to getting the mission of the church right, it is the key to life! The best preachers, the best elders, the best deacons, the best SS teachers, the best fathers and mothers and grandparents and children . . . the best churches . . . are those who love God. For those who love God want to please him from the heart. Those who love God know that “**God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son.**” And if we love God, we will love the world also, which is necessary for getting the mission of the church right.

The older I get, the more I see my affections as the key to my actions. I find myself asking God to help my affections more than anything else. So, I urge you also to pray to God that He would help your affections, help your heart to love Him. There is so much more I could say from this text on making disciples. But, these are the fundamentals of getting mission of the church correct: Get the Gospel right. Teach them to obey all the commands of Christ. And, love God with all your heart soul mind and strength.

With these truths in mind, let me finish with some closing comments on the mission of the church. There are a lot of things churches have done historically. We have built schools. We have established hospitals. We have formed great helping agencies like the Red Cross, etc. Christian churches are often involved with great works of benevolence like world hunger and disaster relief. Many Christians are involved with pressing moral issues such as eradicating abortion. And let me say, “**ALL THESE THINGS ARE GOOD.**”

We should be involved in such things! And as God allows in every political situation throughout the world, we must influence the culture in such ways. But, if we shift our emphasis from the making of disciples through the preaching and teaching of the Gospel of Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit, we will miss our mission! And if we miss our mission, we will eventually lose

the power of the gospel itself. Many, many, churches are on this path and many more have already arrived. I think of the words of Jesus to the church at Sardis in Rev. 3:1-3. He says **“I know your works. You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead. Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God. Remember, then, what you received and heard. Keep it, and repent. If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you.”** May this never be the case here at Grace!

Also, I think if we will get our mission right, we will keep things simple. The applications of this truth are many. I haven't really spoken on how we organize ourselves as churches. This is part of the “teaching them to obey all the commands of Christ.” The NT says quite a lot as to how we organize ourselves as a church. As a Baptist, I think a plurality of elders in a congregational setting is the most biblical and the most simple. We also call deacons to serve the body so the elders can preach and pray. I think we should also keep our main meeting time as simple as possible, not adding more than the NT prescribes. I hope we have done this through the years here at Grace.

Also, it is important that your elders lead in the mission of the church as we do our best to always be meeting with others within the body as we try to “teach them to obey all the commands of Jesus.” I think home groups are a good way to create an environment where making disciples is normal. I think also as God gives different folks in the church desires for ministry in the community, we should always come along side and enable, and not always make something into a program (Ex. abortion ministry, feeding the hungry, etc.).

There are so many things we can do. But, we must keep the mission the mission. We must keep the words of Jesus before us in all that we do. 1) Get the gospel right, 2) Teach them to obey all the commands (and this goes to the ends of the earth), and 3) Love God.