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BOLBC
Nov. 5th, 2021

Matt. 28:16-20

The Mission Christ Has Given Us

“Our mission is to entertain the world.”¹ No, that’s not *our mission*, at this church - that’s the mission statement for Netflix, the popular streaming service. It might seem kind of odd to talk about a business having a *mission* or a *mission statement*, yet most businesses today have one, from mom-and-pop coffee shops to businesses like McDonalds, Google, and Walmart. These mission statements are supposed to succinctly capture *who* the business is, *what* they do, and *why* they do it; to capture the business’s identity and purpose, and then communicate that to their employees and customers.

Mission statements aren’t unique to businesses - churches have them as well. A church’s mission statement is supposed to capture what the church is all about, what they do, and why. Well, just as it has become very popular for many businesses to have creative, clever mission statements, so it has among churches; it is not uncommon these days to see different churches have very different church mission statements. Some say their mission is to make disciples. Some say their mission is to love people and serve the community. Some say it is to promote social justice. Some say their mission is racial reconciliation.

And so we’re left with the question: What is the mission of the church? What exactly should be the mission statement of a local church? Do we get to pick one, and be as unique, clever, or creative with it as we’d like? Or are we all supposed to have the *same* mission statement? To ask the question a bit differently: do *we* get to decide our mission statement, as a local church, or has God already given us one that He commands us to follow?

I believe our passage this morning, Matthew 28:16-20, answers that question for us. This passage is famously known to us today as the “Great Commission” - and for good reason. This is where Jesus gives us our *mission statement*; this is where he gives the Church, all of His followers, all believers, our *marching orders*. In this passage, Jesus lays out His mission for His Church very clearly; He tells us what mission every Christian is called to participate in; He tells us what should be the defining mission statement for every church: we’re called to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing those who believe and teaching them all that Christ

¹ See their full mission statement at about.netflix.com.

commanded. The mission Christ gives us here in this passage is the mission for *every Christian*, every disciple, and for *every local church*. This mission must shape and define us. One of my previous pastors, back at Cornerstone Community Church, is named Tom Fox; many of you got to meet him when he visited over the Summer; he often talks about the mission of the church by putting it this way: if the church didn't exist, people would still care for the sick, feed the hungry, help the poor, work toward racial reconciliation, adopt orphaned children, and on and on, but no one would be making disciples, baptizing them and teaching them to obey all that Christ commands, for this is the unique and central task that Christ has given us as his church to do.

That's our mission. Christ gave us this mission - we must carry it out as He tells us to. And that means we must know this mission well and guard against *mission drift* - we must stay on target; we can't just change the mission as we see fit. In this passage, Jesus gives us our mission, our marching orders. It is absolutely essential that we carry them out. And that means, it is absolutely essential that we *understand the mission correctly*, so that we might *carry out the mission correctly*. So let's walk through this passage and unpack our mission carefully.

First, Jesus reminds us who He is - namely, that He has *all authority* to define our mission and identity.

I. Jesus's Authority: He is Worthy of Faith, Worship, and Complete Obedience (28:16-18)

Last week, we read about Jesus's resurrection, in 28:1-15; and in those verses, we saw that the women who were there were told twice, first by the angel, then by the risen Jesus Himself, to tell the disciples to go back home to Galilee, where Jesus would meet with them once again. Verse 16 picks up back in Galilee; the disciples have obeyed, and returned back home, to where they first heard, met, and began to follow Jesus during the majority of His earthly ministry. But the last time they saw Jesus, they abandoned Him, as they witnessed his betrayal, suffering, and death. Verse 17 tells us of how they react when they see Him again, now that He has risen from the grave: "And when they saw him they worshipped him, but some doubted."

Once again, we see that the right response to Christ is to believe that He really is who He said He is - He really is the Messiah, the Savior, the Promised King - and even God Himself, the God-Man! His resurrection proved this; and just as the women responded rightly by worshipping

Him, that's exactly what we see the disciples here do as well. Faith in Christ as Lord and Savior compels us to *worship Him* - He is our Lord, the true God over all!

But the verse also tells us that, in the midst of their worship, in the midst of their seeing and believing, "some doubted." This probably means that, even among those who believed in Him as disciples, those who were worshipping him, were also struggling with doubts in their hearts. They were probably struggling with doubts and questions, like: "Is this really Jesus? We saw Him die." Or maybe they were even doubting whether or not it was right and appropriate for them to worship Jesus. "After all," they might have said to themselves, "We're monotheistic Jews; we know that there is only one GOD, and He alone is worthy of worship; is it right for us to worship Jesus?"

Jesus answers and puts away all doubts, in verse 18, by saying, "*All authority in heaven and on earth* has been given to me." Jesus is affirming that yes, they should indeed respond in faith, believing that He really is Jesus, the Messiah who died on the cross and rose from the grave, being vindicated as the promised Savior of God. He is affirming here, yes, it is indeed right to respond by *worshipping Him*, for He is *God!* "All authority... in heaven" has been given to Him! Christ was raised in power by God, showing that He has authority over all things - in Heaven or in Earth, over all of creation, even in the heavenly places! There is only One who has authority over all things - and that is God!

And this Jesus the Lord is both God *and Man*. He is God's promised Davidic King, given authority over *all the earth*. Jesus is our savior, our King, and our GOD. Jesus has this authority not just over us, but over *everyone, in all the world!* **All** authority in on earth has been given to Him! Therefore, Jesus Has all authority over us - we are not our own; we belong to Him. We must believe in Him, love Him, follow Him, worship Him, and obey Him, in everything, in all that we do!

ANd this means that Jesus Christ has the authority to give us, His people, a binding *mission* - which brings us to point number two...

II. Jesus's Commission: The Mission of the Church is to Make Disciples of All Nations (28:17-20a)

Jesus authoritatively gives a mission to His disciples - and therefore, to us who believe and follow Him today - in verses 18-20. This Great Commision statement is organized around

four English verbs: 1. *Go*; 2. *Make Disciples*; 3. *Baptize*; and 4. *Teach*. The main verb here, of course, is “make disciples.” The other three unpack what Jesus means by that. I’ve already made the point, but I’ll say it again: we can’t overestimate how important this mission is for us; Jesus is giving us our mission statement that is meant to define us, as individual Christians and as a local church. For that reason, I just want us to walk slowly through these verses, unpacking what this mission is and what it means for us today.

First, our mission statement means we must...

A. *Go make disciples of all nations*

The opening words are “Go, therefore...” Our mission commands us to actively pursue it, to strive to carry it out. And we do so by *going*. Where do we go? To “all nations.” Christ has commissioned us to “go to” everyone, everywhere, until the “end of the age,” when Christ comes back. So this is the scope of our mission: all people, of all nations, everyone everywhere, without discrimination.

But what are we commissioned to *do* when we go? What are we to “go and do” among all people in all places? We are to “go... and *make disciples* of all nations.” That’s the goal: discipleship, seeing every person in every place, of every nation and people group in all the world, become *disciples of Jesus Christ*. So how do we do that?

B. *Share the gospel*

First and foremost, this begins with *sharing the gospel*, with anyone and everyone that we can, wherever we are, towards the end goal of the whole church spreading out and proclaiming the gospel to *everyone* in *every place* in *all of the world*; without distinction! So when we go, we must, first and foremost, *proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ*, our Lord, King, and Savior who has sent us out on this mission. We go in His name, as heralds of the King. We go proclaiming what we have learned from this book of Matthew, and from the entire Bible: that there is one true God who created all things, including us; He is perfectly good, righteous, holy, loving, and just; He has authority over us, He is the standard of right and wrong, and one day everyone will stand before Him to give an account; those who are righteous will go to heaven and live with Him in eternal life! But those who are found guilty of sin, of rebellion against God and living in sin, unbelief, and idolatry, will be condemned to eternity in Hell, the place of judgment and God’s Holy, just wrath against sin. And here’s the bad news we have to proclaim as part of this gospel: *every single one of us is a sinner*. All have sinned; no one truly does good; no one, left to their

own devices, rightly loves God, worships, or obeys Him. We're not born good or even neutral - we're born into this world as twisted sinners. And we have all rebelled against God - we all deserve His wrath and eternal judgment. That's true of *everyone, in all the world!* Every single person in this world is without excuse; we are all morally responsible for our own thoughts, beliefs, and actions - and every one of us has fallen short of GOD's glory, fallen short of the moral standard, GOD Himself, the perfect judge. That means, everyone is the bad guy, and GOD is the good guy; that means everyone is heading towards a day of judgment and wrath.

And yet, there is *good news* - the good news that we call the *gospel of Jesus Christ*. The good news that Jesus Christ, the Son of GOD, came down to earth, was born into a real, genuine human life, like ours, only he lived out a *perfectly righteous human life*, never sinning, perfectly obeying and fulfilling all that God requires; then, he went to the cross and died *in our place*, bearing our sins and the wrath of God that we deserve; then, as we saw last week, He *rose again from the grave* on the third day, defeating Sin, Satan, and even Death! He offered Himself up as a sacrifice for the sins of *anyone in all the world who repents and believes in this good news, trusting in Christ alone for salvation!* THAT's the message that makes us believers, Christians, in the first place; that's the hope we're trusting in! THE reason we gather and worship the Lord week after week, day after day! THE reason we have assurance that we are forgiven our sins, declared righteous, and will surely be raised to eternal life in Christ - all because of God's wondrous mercy and grace, that we have received simply by trusting in Him! And *that* is the message you and I have been charged with bringing and proclaiming to *anyone and everyone* that we can!

In fact, this understanding of the world, this understanding of the gospel, shows why this *mission* CHRIST gave us makes perfect sense, doesn't it? It shows us why it is absolutely necessary and even *urgent* for us to carry it out! Billions of people, all around the world, are living in sin, not believing in God, not trusting in Christ alone, and will die and go to Hell. Many of them haven't even heard the true gospel! There are even those who've never heard the name Jesus, who've never even met a Christian! But there are also many who *do not believe, who do not genuinely trust in Christ as their Lord and Savior*, here, in Plattsburgh, in the Adirondacks; people we go to school or work with, people in our friend groups, our neighborhoods, our sports teams and hunting clubs, maybe even in our own families and homes. With eyes wide open to the urgency of this mission - we're called to go forth and lovingly, truthfully, boldly proclaim the

gospel message to them - the bad news, the good news, and the urgent need for them to personally repent and believe, trusting in Christ alone and following Him.

So first off, our mission requires *evangelism* - for each of us to share the gospel and promote gospel proclamation. But it doesn't end there - that's just the *beginning* of our mission.

What happens when they believe? We *baptize* them.

C. *Baptize those who believe*

As we go and make disciples of all nations, Jesus commands us to "baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." We don't baptize people before they believe - we baptize them *when* they believe. Baptism is the way we are told to profess faith in this gospel, proclaiming that we are trusting in Christ alone for salvation. But baptism isn't just a personal thing that someone does publicly - it requires someone to *do the baptizing*. And that's because baptism is also the way that we have our profession of faith in the gospel *affirmed* by the church as being considered fellow believers. So when we share the gospel, and someone truly believes, we gather together and baptize them - they profess faith, we affirm their profession as credible, we mark them out as disciples, followers of Christ, by putting our stamp of approval on them and bringing them into church membership, and they begin their walk of Christian discipleship alongside of us.

And that's because our end goal isn't just to see people believe and be baptized - that's just the beginning. Our mission isn't just to evangelize, or even to make converts - it's to *make disciples*. Therefore, we must...

D. *Continue to teach them to follow Christ in the context of the local church*

We're told the last part of Jesus's command, in verse 20: we go make disciples, baptizing them, and "teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." The Great Commission demands that we *make disciples* - not just that we share the gospel, not just that we baptize those who believe and convert, but that we seek to teach them to understand and obey Christ in all things.

This has three direct applications for each believer today:

1. First, each one of us must *be disciplined*. Even if you've believed for 40 years, you're still a disciple and called to grow. We are each called to *continue to follow Christ, to know His word, and obey His commandments*. So first off, we participate in the mission by *being*

disciples and growing as disciples. But each disciple is called to be a *disciple-maker*.
Therefore...

2. Secondly, each of us must participate in making disciples of others. We're all called to make disciples, to work towards making disciples of everyone, everywhere. But where does this take place? Where do we grow as disciples and take part in making disciples of others?
3. This is our third application: Discipleship primarily takes place *in the life of the local church*.

If we ask the question, "Where is discipleship most naturally and normally supposed to take place?" the answer is: *in the context of the local church*. The Christian life of discipleship occurs in the context of being part of a local church family. In the book of Acts, when we see these very first disciples carry out the mission Christ gives them here, they do so by *gathering into local churches*, even going forth to share the gospel, make disciples, and then *plant new churches* - all the way from Jerusalem, to Antioch, even to Rome, with an eye towards the ends of the earth! The local church is GOD's discipleship program for each of us. The Great Commission is carried out by the local church *gathered and scattered*; we *gather together*, like we're doing right now, for formal teaching and training, being disciplined to understand Christ's Word, the Bible; then we *scatter*, going forth throughout the week to obey Christ, keep growing, pour into one another and aid each others' discipleship, and seek to make new disciples throughout the week in our ordinary lives. So the local church is GOD's plan of discipleship for individuals; and *we are all able to participate in this mission*, for there are many roles to play.

We are the church, and throughout the week, we scatter into the world, where we can share the gospel and water seeds planted with our friends, family, coworkers and neighbors. Throughout the week, we can also continue to pour into fellow believers and church members, at home, or over coffee or while fishing, talking about the Bible, encouraging each other, lovingly teaching, challenging, holding one another accountable, praying for one another;

Then, we draw together around the Word as the church *gathered*, where we formally make disciples by example in our corporate worship, prayer, and fellowship; and most explicitly, through the sermon, through Sunday school teaching, and Bible studies, where it enables us to make disciples of nonbelievers, new believers, and mature believers all at once. And so, it equips

each of us for ministry, to go back into the world, or to go and keep pouring into one another throughout the week.

This must be our primary focus and goal in fulfilling the Great Commission - to fulfill it *here*, where God has planted us, as individual Christians living around Plattsburgh, NY, and as members of Bread of Life Baptist Church. Each of us must participate in the mission by, first and foremost, *being good disciples*. We need to show up regularly at church, come to learn from God's Word in teaching times and from the examples and words of one another in times of prayer and fellowship. Then, we must go out and practice what we've been taught - striving to repent, believe, and obey Christ in all things, continuing to grow in our own Bible study and prayer throughout the week. But part of being good disciples means being disciple makers. So each of us must also participate in the mission by going and making disciples of others, sharing what we have been taught. This can start with you talking about the sermon with your family on the car ride home from church, or with your family and other friends from church over lunch. This can mean having family devotions at night with the kids, where you read the Bible, pray, and just talk about what God's been teaching you. This can mean sharing the gospel with unbelieving friends, neighbors, and coworkers. This can mean plugging into a ministry in the community, or meeting needs that open up opportunities to share the gospel and lead others to Christ. This can look like inviting people to church, and then talking to them about what they've heard afterwards. We carry out our mission when we show up for church and Sunday school, for prayer meetings and Bible studies. We carry it out when we pour into one another and engage in fellowships and the life of the church. We carry it out by praying for the church, and even by giving financially, so that we give cheerfully of our resources to the Lord's work, so that we can all play a part in supporting and carrying out the mission of discipleship here, at our own local church.

There are *so many ways* to participate in carrying out the mission Christ has given us in making disciples of all nations! It starts with us focusing on the little slice of the nations He has placed us in - here in Plattsburgh, NY, at Bread of Life Baptist Church.

But we must also strive to make disciples of all the people and nations *beyond* our church and geographical area. This is why we partner with other like-minded churches; in fact, this is the main reason that the Southern Baptist Convention exists, and why we are a part of it. We

partner together through prayer, resources, and even in sending people to work together towards reaching the nations.

This is why we partner other like-minded Baptist churches in our association, throughout the Adirondack region. We're partnering together to make disciples of a much broader region than it's around Plattsburgh. We pray for each other, share resources, help meet needs in each other's churches, and work together towards planting and revitalizing more churches, so that there can be more healthy, solid churches that are stable bases for making disciples in more communities around our region. We also partner together to do this at the State Level (BCNY) and national level (SBC, NAMB).

And we even do this throughout the world, by partnering together to support the International Missions Board - our Southern Baptist missionary sending agency. Not many of us are able to pack up and love our families half-way around the world to China, or live in the Amazon jungle or dangerous lands of the Middle East. Yet we still have our marching orders from Christ - we're still called to take the gospel there, make disciples, and plant churches! So, we partner together, as churches to train pastors and missionaries, pray for them, send them out, and continue to support them while they are on the field. There are many ways we can do this - but one of the main ways we do this, here, is through the International Mission Board; as thousands of SBC churches, who shared biblical convictions, all share our resources, we're able to send missionaries (currently over 3,000 missionaries) all around the world to share the gospel, make disciples, and plant churches.

So there are many ways we can work towards this goal, of making disciples of all nations, of fulfilling the Great Commission! But we always want to make sure we are prioritizing ministries and mission methods that are ***focused on the gospel of Christ, discipleship driven, and centered around the local church - either in existing, healthy local churches, working towards revitalizing churches, or planting new ones.*** This is our mission goal: to share the gospel, make disciples, and see healthy, biblical churches planted and thriving throughout all the world - especially where there aren't any currently! This is our mission. This is what we must work towards. This is what each of us should *pray for* regularly.

And thankfully, as we do, we can rest in Jesus's *promise*...

III. Jesus's Promise: He Will Be With Us As We Carry Out this Mission Until He Returns (Matt. 28:20b)

We've just unpacked the mission statement - the Great Commission - Christ has given to each of us, to every Christian and local church. And it can feel pretty overwhelming as we look at it all, can't it? Sharing the gospel and making disciples is hard enough to do *here*, in our own backyard, let alone amongst *all the nations!* And the closing words of the book are, "to the end of the age." IN other words, our mission isn't over until Christ returns and this age of he world ends! Yet Jesus doesn't tell us to go alone; he doesn't tell us that He expects us to pull it off with our own strength or power. No, right after giving us this comprehensive common, this mission encompassing all of our lives, He comforts and reassures us with a *promise*: "And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (v.20b).

Jesus has all authority - and He has given us the authority to boldly go forth carrying out this mission, confident not in ourselves, but in the power and comfort of His presence with us as we do so. And we've seen him talk this way before, haven't we? Back in Matthew 18, when Jesus talked about wield the keys of the Kingdom and carrying out the work of the church - even the painful work of church discipline - He promises that "where two or more are gathered in my name, there am I among them" (Matt. 18:20). And in fact, before that, in Matt. 16, where Jesus spoke of building His church and the authority He gives us, He promised that the "gates of hell shall not prevail against" the Church. Therefore, brothers and sisters, let us go forth *boldly*, striving to make disciples of all nations in the gospel of Christ, teaching and obeying all He has commanded! Why? *Because He is with us! THis is His Church; He will build it!* Christ is the one who sends us and preserves us; Christ has the power to save all who believe in this glorious gospel!

So let us trust in Christ this morning. Let us, once again, believe, worship Him, and follow and obey Him in all things! And let us strive together to *teach others to do likewise*, making disciples here in Plattsburgh, all the way to the ends of the earth!

And if you're not a believer this morning, that is our plea to you: that you, too, would believe and follow Christ, trusting Him as your only hope for salvation! And then, make your faith public by being baptized, joining the church, and following Christ in all things. If you have any questions about this, about the gospel, baptism, or church membership, I would love to speak with you.

Let us pray.