

Matthew 28:16-20

"Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshiped him; but some doubted. 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 lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age." RSV

Last week we discussed what it meant when Jesus said, "***Follow Me.***" Along that same line, what must happen in order for anyone to follow Jesus? Don't know the answer? Let me help you. Two thirds of God is "G-O." So what must we do to follow Jesus? That's right, we must GO! But go where and do what? If there was just one word the church needs to hear today, it is a word you hear in churches all around this world, this state as well as this area. The word is mission. God is a God of motion, a God of movement, a God of mission.

Our problem in the church today is when we hear the word mission we think of heading off to Africa, India, Central and South America, but this line of thinking is wrong, it's dead wrong. Being in mission is not an activity of the church, mission is not something we do; mission is something we are; mission is an attribute of God. Mission is who God is. God is a missionary God, Jesus is a missionary Messiah, and the Holy Spirit is a missionary Spirit. Mission is the life of the church, at least it should be. Mission is a way of life, at least it should be. If we say we follow Jesus then we should all be in mission. God has a mission for me to live out; God has a mission for you to live out.

Following God's mission for your life is the only way you can accomplish who you were born to be. Every life is a missionary life. Every marriage is a missionary marriage. Every job is a missionary job. We all have a mission. Remember the old TV show Mission Impossible. Peter Graves would listen to some device and it always started with, "Good morning Jim, if you choose to accept this mission ..." As a Christian, as someone who claims to follow Jesus, your mission, our mission needs to be a way of life, do you choose to accept this mission?

Our life is a mission, and if we follow Jesus, then being in mission is not something we plan out and set a date to begin, it's a way of life. Being a Christian is not something we are; it's a way of life. Being Missional is who we are, because that's who God is. Disciples of Jesus Christ have one mission to make other disciples. Everything about our lives should be Missional; how we live, what we say, where we go, how we take vacations, how we talk to each other. Do you choose to accept this way of life? Do you choose to accept this mission?

God is up to something here. Did you hear me? God is up to something. Do you know Him well enough to know what God is up to? Do you feel it? Do you feel God is up to something? Something is up.

I'm part of it. You are part of it. We can no longer go on living in the world the way we are. God didn't just say "I love you." God loved! God loves! God does what God does. God lives in our midst and loves us and has invited us to "Do God" along with Him. James 1:22 says, "*Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.*" Our passage this morning is clear, "*Go and make disciples of all nations.*" Not just "*make disciples,*" but "*GO and make disciples.*"

Today's church is in a crisis, if you don't believe me just look around at churches in this area alone; in house fighting and/or dissention among themselves, selfish wants and desires among the members, including the ministers as well. Sinful beliefs they are right and others outside their group are wrong. This crisis stems from one thing and one thing only, it's serious and if left untreated can and will destroy the church. This disorder is known as: Jesus Deficit Disorder.

The church of today is too busy telling cute warm fuzzy stories, stories other than telling God's story; the church has been dreaming their own dreams other than dreaming God's dreams; they have been chasing their own personal visions other than chasing God's visions. And to top everything off they blame God when those dreams and/or visions fall short and/or fail.

The church today seems to be content talking about itself and applauding itself, and leaving Jesus out. I read about a church, a pretty large church, which felt they needed to be in mission to reach more people, so they put on a concert with free food to draw more people to their church. So what happens when word spreads out about free food? You know ... Hundreds of hungry and homeless people showed up at this church, to eat all of these nice church people's food. They ate all their food with their dirty grubby and maybe even disease-ridden hands. They left the place a mess.

Needless to say this was a disaster for this church. After all being in mission was one thing, but this was completely unacceptable. So to prevent any further occurrences such as this, the church made some changes. They liked the idea of church picnics and concerts for the community, so all future ones would be held at a local park. That way, no one not from the church would be inside their building. Another change was that only people from the church would know about upcoming picnics and they could control who they invited. They did put it on their website; after many poor and/or homeless people don't have internet access. These people suffered from Jesus Deficit Disorder.

A little closer to home, I was at a church lunch a while ago and someone told me how they use to have a large turnout every time they had their monthly lunch, and following the meal someone would have a short devotion. The devotions were stopped because the people, the church people didn't want to hear about God every time they came to church. They wanted the food and fellowship, they just excluded God. It's about time the church accepts what it is, and acts the way it should; as the body of Christ, and the body of Christ is Missional.

Christianity minus Christ equals Religion.¹ The Kingdom of God breaks itself free from religion with Jesus, but people seem very committed and creative at finding a variety of ways to remove Jesus from the equation. Once Jesus is removed from the equation we have nothing left but religion. And regardless of what people think and/or believe religion cannot and does not save us.

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations," Jesus called His disciples and three years later He sent them out. He sent them out to make disciples of all nations. That means they went every where, not just to the nice places.

When you go for God, He may send you to a place you would not normally go. Did you know God can enter a bar just as easily as He can enter a Methodist church? Did you know God can enter the projects just as quickly as He can enter a Baptist church?

The church does not go into the world to take the church there. The church must go into the world to discover itself. The church isn't sent into the world to bless the world, or to even be a blessing. The church is sent into the world to be Jesus to the world. Christian faith does not ask us to just believe something; it asks us to do something with our faith. So when we say we love our neighbor, how do we express that love? If we say we care about the poor, how do we show we really care?ⁱⁱ It's time the mission of the church shapes the theology of the church, not the theology shaping the church. God can no longer be kept private. We as followers of Jesus Christ are being sent into the world to be Jesus to the world.

Community involvement by the world is very often simply seen as dumping our faith on others in the streets with no regard to understanding where people are and what issues they are facing.

We huddle in our little Christian circles praying for the lost but never taking the time to engage with them in any meaningful way. When we do engage in conversation, we directly or indirectly communicate the need for them to make a huge cultural leap and somehow join us.ⁱⁱⁱ

By ministering to the needs of the people; their emotional needs, be it acceptance, comfort, or encouragement, Christ gained their trust; thus, they could respond positively to a spiritual solution for their present needs. We are currently very much so ministering to physical needs be it with bread, meals, soaps, shampoos, and toothpastes and this is great don't get me wrong, but what about their emotional needs, and spiritual needs? What about taking the time to engage with them in any meaningful way? Not just 'hey how are you,' but actually sitting and talking with the people?

"Go and make disciples of all nations," is what Jesus tells us, we read in John 20:21 where Jesus is again talking to His disciples when He said, *"As the Father has sent me, even so I send you."* Jesus was and is the sent one, and in turn we are sent ones. This reminds me of the children's game we all use to play, "Tag, You're It." Remember playing "Tag?" One person is IT waits for those playing to come near ... No! The IT runs after everyone else trying to tag them.

Being IT meant you had to run everywhere, go everywhere the other people were to tag them. Well, God tagged Jesus and in turn Jesus has tagged us. I'm It! You're It! So now we are to run out, go out and tag the world, or as our passage this morning read, "*Go and make disciples of all nations,*"

In the later part of May the church celebrated Pentecost Sunday, which is the birthday of the church. Pentecost was when Jesus sent the comforter, the Holy Spirit, to us the church. Pentecost was the coming of the Holy Spirit for the going of God's people. The Spirit comes upon us that we might go as Jesus went and sent us after Him.

The Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit is given to the church, not to make it stronger for strengths sake, but so that the church would have the strength to give itself away in mission and ministry to the entire world. Again we have it wrong; the Holy Spirit is not an instrument or tool of the church, it's just the opposite. The church is an instrument or tool of the Holy Spirit.

As true believers, as followers of Jesus Christ, we are being sent. The church can never be "on a mission," because that gives the impression of not being on a mission, and you can't be a follower of the church of Jesus Christ and be "off mission."^{iv} The church is mission! God tagged Jesus and said,

"You're It!" Now Jesus is tagging us and saying, "You're It!" Do you choose to accept this way of life? Do you choose to accept this mission? If so, "You're It!" Now, let's GO and make disciples for Jesus Christ.

ⁱ Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2006)

ⁱⁱ *Ministry, International Journal for Pastors*, Vol. 85 Number 9 © 2013, pp.10-13

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid.

^{iv} Leonard Sweet, *So Beautiful*, (Colorado Springs: David Cook, 2009) pp. 64.