

Chapel Distinctives: Making Disciples at Home

November 6, 2022, Sunday AM

Matthew 28: 18-20

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Introduction

Pie. One dictionary definition goes like this: "A pie is a baked dish which is usually made of a pastry dough casing that contains a filling of various sweet or savory ingredients." You can think of apple pie, peach pie, cherry pie, key lime pie, peanut butter pie, chocolate creme pie, banana creme pie, pecan pie, pumpkin pie, sweet potato pie, chicken pot pie, a cheese pie or quiche. We could name nearly and endless variety of something called "pie." My youngest niece at a family gathering one year, when being told what the plans were for dessert, spoke for me as well, when she simply stated, "I like pie!" You may prefer one on the list I just stated or a decided dislike for another. But we can all agree you cannot make a true apple pie without apples. I have had a thing referred to as a "mock apple pie" made from Ritz crackers. But you cannot substitute the juice from the key lime for the juice of an orange and make a key lime pie. I won't be a pecan pie if you substitute peanuts. You follow your memory or your recipe and use the proper ingredients to pull out of the oven a heavenly scented and gloriously tasting...pie.

As we look at the Bible, we see a lot of discussion about how people are to think, act and generally live. One of the organizing ideas about life in this era of "redemptive history" is the relationship with one another and activity that flows out of what is referred to in the Scriptures as "church." What should the church "look like", "think like" and "act like?" We look to the Bible to see how God has described and prescribed such things. Some things are simple and clear, others seem to be lost in the mire of history and culture. But, despite that, we look at the Bible and set out to be as "obedient" to God in our Christlikeness in our lives together as we can. That often requires making decisions about these ideas. We are trying to make a good "spiritual" pie that comes out with a heavenly scent and a glorious taste. Some things are easy (remember you can't make an apple pie without apples) but others "depend." To go back to pie, exactly how much sugar or cinnamon do you use? Top crust, lattice crust or open top? Meringue or whipped cream? You get the idea.

This series has examined Bible ideas for living and working together as "church", as Clearcreek Chapel. It has highlighted areas where decisions are made. We have referred to them as "distinctives", things that set us apart but not necessarily make us unique. Sin has complicated the straightforward teaching of Jesus, there are numerous options and divisions. We are called to make true/false choices when necessary. But often, we make choices in wisdom, deciding "this not that." The themes that have been presented are some of the areas that we, the elders, think are choices that have significant potential implications even if they are not in the realm of "right vs wrong". This includes a commitment to expository preaching, Elder-leadership, every-member ministry, the focus on wisdom to make decisions, gospel centered thinking and evangelism, Whole bible/New Covenant interpretation, equipping missionary work.

There are many choices among "Christian" groups we did not highlight. These include our understanding and teaching of the sovereignty and foreknowledge of God, the priority of God's work in salvation, the use of Bible in life's problem solving, finding our satisfaction and happiness in God and his provision/plan. There are many areas that churches make choices to "believe" or not. Where, as Clearcreek Chapel we disagree with another congregation, there are some areas we should be firm such as the nature of the Trinity especially that of Jesus as God (as opposed to our neighbors to the west of the driveway). But other areas we should be humble, even kind in our disagreement but we still should understand why we believe differently and how we think it matters.

Let's remind ourselves of Pastor Russ's introductory statement that he wrote as the thesis for this series: "Each gathered church must do God's will. It must obey God in its corporate, community life. Most of the ministry that is done by a gathered church is in the realm of wisdom. It is tethered to the precepts, principles, patterns, and practices of the New Testament church. Therefore, we affirm what we believe in these core areas as well as what how we workout God's will and wisdom in each area."

Exposition

Last week we looked at a text that contained an imperative given by Jesus to his disciples. Pastor Tim Rech explained how that text impacts how we work to "make disciples" in parts of the world not known as Springboro, Greater Dayton or "the Miami Valley." This morning we will use the same text to examine how Clearcreek Chapel "makes disciples" right here on Pennyroyal Road. Pastor Tim Nixon presented to us The Chapel's approach to the introduction of the Gospel in this "making of disciples" idea the week of the Fall Festival. We will build upon and extend that idea this morning. Turn with me to the end of Matthew's gospel and we will read verses 18-20 of chapter 28. There we find what is commonly referred to as "The Great Commission." Last week Pastor Tim set the context, that of Jesus' final meeting with his disciples as he prepared to ascend into the presence of the Father. Matthew records this version of Jesus' final words to this somewhat bewildered band of followers. Let us turn to this passage now and read it together in its entirety as it appears on the screens.

18 And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 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, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Inspiration of the Great Commission (vs 18, 20b)

Authority (vs 18)

I first want to point out two thoughts that undergird the inspiration or motivation behind this commissioning command. Jesus bookended this statement, first by highlighting that "all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to [him]." Matthew has shown

repeatedly that Jesus is God's son and agent to rule the world. He is the promised king and sovereign over the earth. And before Jesus sends his disciples (us) out on mission, he reminds and highlights his authority in which we go. We can be confident and assured that the gospel message and its implications have Jesus' stamp of approval. We don't however possess Jesus' authority. We must be humble as we interpret and put in practice what the Bible says. Confidence and arrogance often are close friends, one is healthy and desirable, the other is detrimental and destructive.

Presence (vs 20b)

Jesus ends the commission by reminding his disciples (and again "us") that we are not alone. He tells us that "behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." He is ever-present. He is actually with us. The beginning of the gospel promised that the baby born would be "Emmanuel", that is "God with us." We often go through life, thinking we are alone, yet Jesus is present with us because of the power of the Holy Spirit whom he sent to us after his ascension. He is working in and through us. We can get caught up in fretting over our inabilities or relying on our own strengths that we fail to live in a gospel-oriented faith for ministry. These two thoughts, that we live in and with his authority and presence, are comforting and motivating.

Injunction of the Great Commission (vs 19b)

But the actual commission itself is a singular command: "make disciples." Jesus charged his disciples (again hear "us") to be engaged in calling and making additional followers of Him. You see, a disciple is a follower, one who is dedicated to learning from and living like one's master. And yet, someone must introduce them to "this master." In this instance, one must share the message and power of the good news, the gospel, that Jesus brings. A message that one's guilt and guiltiness have been satisfied in the coming, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ. To believe and bow to this Jesus is to become his disciple. We are commissioned to share in this great work from Jesus himself, the one who has authority and promises his presence.

Implementation of the Great Commission (vs 19a, 19c, 20a)

The passage goes on to flesh this out with three modifying phrases. These are three ideas that describe the implementation of this commission.

Going (vs 19a)

The first is "go". It is the idea of "while going" or "as you go". It implies that the "making of disciples" should be an intentional way of life in all we do, not merely a "church program." Keep in mind the "go" is not the imperative but a modifier of the imperative. And yet it supplies the context for the imperative, it is not "sit, be idle or avoid." Other passages use movement metaphors for life (to walk, run or wrestle) and continue that same idea into the making of disciples shows that it should be incorporated into how we live. And it sets it as intention and purposeful, not purely accidental, or serendipitous.

We have heard from Pastor Tim Nixon about how we apply this to sharing the gospel locally and from Pastor Tim Rech about how we look globally to apply this "while going" idea.

Baptizing (vs 19c)

The second modifier is "baptizing." The text states "baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Baptizing here is used as a single word summary of sharing the gospel and incorporating others into the community of faith. The physical act of baptism is thought of as the evidence of the faith commitment. It demonstrates the gospel and one's identification and allegiance to it. It pictures what we say we believe when we embrace the gospel. As Pastor Jason spoke of a couple of weeks ago, baptism is a picture that demonstrates our solidarity with the work of Jesus in his death, burial and resurrection that removes our sin and guilt and imparts a new life and orientation.

Teaching (vs 20a)

The third of these then is "teaching." We are told to "[teach] them to observe all that I have commanded you." The entire act of making a disciple is to demonstrate God's way for life and living. The new believer, by definition, participates in "discipleship", the following of all that Jesus wants us to do. Making a disciple involves gospel belief and gospel living. Teaching is a multifaceted operation throughout the Scriptures. It involves proclamation of truth, explanation of Scriptural texts, elaboration on meaning and implications. It includes living as examples, providing comfort and grace, sharing in mercy and assistance. This implies that disciples both are learners and teachers from many angles. We must learn in order to teach and teach in order to learn. But the Scriptures are clear, and the way Jesus puts it here, that it is not merely to teach them to "know" but to "observe". Observe implies understanding and wisely applying what Jesus has "said" as we go. You obviously cannot apply what you do not know, so we must continue to grow in knowledge as we then grow in love, patience and hope.

Reflect and Respond

So how does this look at Clearcreek Chapel? As we said before in our philosophy of ministry discussion, our ministry and life together should be thought of as a "we" event. As disciples ourselves, making disciples should be thought of as part of what we do. We are each imperfect, inadequate, and yet, growing followers of Jesus who have been challenged to incorporate into all we think and do to be "commissional." We trust God to work through us, often despite us, because the gospel is centered in our plans and purposes. Being gospel centered should cause us to reflect on highlighting God's glory, our inability, God/Christ's provision, and our response of faith to this good news.

This growing together and working together focuses on the Bible, and the gospel in particular, in several ways. One we engage in coming together to listen to and be impacted by preaching. We have already heard that this is best expressed when it is loaded with explanation and interpretive instruction from the Scriptural text itself. This

preaching should allow us to see the intent of the Bible's message and give general (although at times very specific) application .

Because of the nature of our culture, we recognize the weaknesses of a "purely preaching" approach to learning and observing "all that he has commanded." There are other means to supplement the centrality of preaching and we have focused "class" activities that we refer to as "adult Bible education" (ABE) and children's ministries to provide age and topic focus. This extends also to our ministry to both our women in our church which focuses on small group and individual mentoring, as well as large and small "classes", and events and outings to build relationships. The men have a similar yet less comprehensive "program." And, in a real sense, that is what the counseling ministry involves. It ideally is a focused instruction to assist with the interpretation and application of the Scripture to a pressing life situation. These are the areas of intentional disciple making and maturing.

Remember, it is part of following Jesus for all of us to grow and mature to "observe/apply" what Jesus expects of us. The goal of growth is to be settled, full of hope. We need to be readers and appliers of the Bible, its content, and even more importantly, its principle, to be applied in God-given wisdom for the complications of life. I think I speak for all the elders here at Clearcreek Chapel when I say we do not wish to be viewed as the source of the answers for all your needs. We desire to point you to Jesus and the gospel in the Scriptures and to help you assimilate the Bible into your thinking and living. That is why we "teach." We as humans are frail, faulty and inconsistent, however our God is great, glorious and has promised he has given to us all we need for life and worshipful godliness.