

Introduction

One of the great things about the American celebration of Christmas is it provides Christians a great opportunity to share the gospel. Just about everyone in our country celebrates this thing called Christmas even though they think very little about the real substance behind it all. The observance provides an open door to those of us who care very much about the substance to direct conversations and hearts to Jesus Christ and the reason for his coming.

Jesus himself commissioned his followers to this very purpose. The great commission spoken by Jesus is this: “Go 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.” The followers of Christ bear this commission together. And if this is the great enterprise we share, then it is critical that we know how to engage in it. It is imperative that we understand how to accomplish this commission. And to find that information, we need look no further than Matthew 9:35-38. You see, Jesus did not command us to do something without already having shown us what it is and how to do it. He left us an example through Matthew right here in our text for this morning.

[Read Text; Pray]

If you want to learn well, you will seek out someone who has mastered the field. It is true in every field of activity—music and cooking and medicine and painting and parenting and sewing and auto repair. And it is also true when it comes to making disciples. If you want to master an art, go to the master of the art. Jesus is the master of all things. He certainly is the master of how to make disciples. After all it is his idea to begin with. As we look at this text this morning, we see the master at work. So let us learn from the master himself the art of making disciples. What is the Master’s method?

Notice first,

I. The Master's Method Is Intentional.

A. Jesus' method of making disciples was purposeful. It was calculated. It was intentional. His was a method of going and finding. It was an endeavor to seek and locate. He was engaged in search and rescue. Not all the weak and sick and oppressed were going to come to him. So he went to them.

B. This aspect of his method jumps out at me when I read the first three words of the text, "and Jesus went." It is remarkable that people were seeking out Jesus. Great crowds were following him. Once he started healing and teaching, the people were streaming to him. A centurion came to Jesus. A sick woman reached out to touch the fringe of Jesus' garment. Blind men came to him and a mute man was brought. People were coming from the wood work to seek Jesus out. So it is really conspicuous here that Matthew says that Jesus went. His was not a ministry of "Y'all come." I mean, yes, he ministered to those who came, but he was not satisfied with only ministering to those who came. He also went. In fact the whole of Jesus' evangelistic method is one of seeking. In Luke 19:10 Jesus said of himself, "The Son of Man has come to seek and to save the lost." That is why he came to earth from heaven. That is why he was conceived of the Holy Spirit in the womb of a young virgin named Mary. That is why he was born in a stable and walked this earth. It was his mission to go to the people because otherwise the people would never get to him.

C. And so Jesus came to where we are; he went to where the people were. From the beginning of Jesus's earthly ministry, he told those who followed him he would make something special out of them. He was going to make them to be fishers of men. Now I am not an expert fisherman, but I do know this. You do not fish by standing at the edge of the water and waiting for fish to beach themselves at your feet. No. We have a few fishermen in this congregation and they will tell you how to catch some fish. They have fishing poles and lures and boats. And the key to catching fish is going where the fish are. You can be assured the fish are not going to be looking for you, so you must go after them.

And Jesus communicates this very point in his great commission. There is an underlying aspect to the entire endeavor of making disciples and that is going. The Greek in Matthew reads, "As you are going, make disciples." Mark records Jesus as commanding plainly that his disciples must "Go." Jesus' disciples are to be like Jesus. They are not to wait and see if they come. They are not to be passive. Rather they are to pursue. They are to seek. They are to venture out and go after folks in order to make them disciples.

D. The application of Jesus' example to us is unmistakable. We are commissioned to make efforts to reach outside of our bubble to make disciples. The method of the master is to go. Hopefully in your life there will be people who are going to come your way, just planted there by God in your life and in your every day routine. But disciples of Jesus cannot be satisfied with those who come. We need to follow the master, and the master went. What are you doing, what efforts are you making to seek after people, to go where they are? You are not waiting for them to ask you how they can have peace with God, you are seeking to tell them?

Second, I want you to see . . .

II. The Master's Method Is Comprehensive.

A. Matthew says that "Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages."

"Throughout all" is comprehensive. Jesus went everywhere in that region. He did not just keep to the part of the region that was most like him. He did not go only where the welcome was warm. He went throughout all the region. He didn't restrict himself to certain kinds of people such as the farmers or the fishermen. And he didn't only go to the cities. He also went to the villages. He went where the people were many and he went where the people were few. There was no partiality with Jesus.

B. The method exhibited by the master is also born out in the commission given to his disciples. Make disciples of all the nations. Go into all the world . . . to the whole creation. Jesus would not have us put any restrictions on the command. Are they different from me? Doesn't matter. Do they live in the city or the village? Doesn't matter. Are they a different color? Irrelevant. Near or far? Not a limitation.

Just like Jesus, do not leave anyone out in your pursuit to make disciples. Show no partiality and no preference. Just go and keep going til you can't go any more.

Do you notice a hesitation or a resistance to talk to some people about the gospel? That is not from God. That is not the way of Jesus. The church should be about the business of going. And even as we assist those who are the ones who actually go we are going with them. We are fellow workers in the gospel.

Now , third, I want you to see

III. The Master's Method Is Strategic.

A. Jesus was methodical in his method. And it is not hard to detect the key elements of his strategy. It was not complicated. So it is pretty obvious what our strategy should be as we emulate the Master.

There were two basic elements to Jesus' strategy. There were words and there were works. Jesus was teaching and proclaiming and healing. Teaching and proclaiming were accomplished with words. Healing was the work he did. Let's look a little deeper at these two strategic elements.

B. There were words. Jesus taught in their synagogues and he proclaimed the gospel of the kingdom. The work of making disciples is in large part a ministry of words. It is teaching and preaching. Jesus did both.

1. He taught. To teach is to work at comprehension and understanding. When you teach you present facts and explain those facts and illustrate those facts so that they make sense. Teaching combats error and mistaken beliefs. Jesus did this masterfully in the sermon on the mount. There he brought up what the people had heard and explained to them what was wrong and what the truth really is. He applied the law of God to the hearts of the people to help them grasp the depths of their sin. He showed them the waste that self-made religion is. There is no pleasing God with what you do to please men. He explained these truths. He clarified that real righteousness, God-pleasing righteousness, is something far superior to the most religious people among them, that of the scribes and Pharisees. The standard is not man's righteousness but God's. He said, "you must be

perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect.” Oh, this instruction is clear but is very bad news. No one can be perfect as God is perfect.

2. But Jesus not only taught. He also proclaimed good news. He announced, he spoke forth the gospel of the kingdom. He taught in order to help people see their sinfulness and need of mercy. And he proclaimed that mercy. Think how the sermon on the mount begins. Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, the meek, the pure in heart for they shall see God. You see, his proclamation was that it is not people who are deserving who get in to the kingdom (as there is none), but it is those who are sorrowful and repentant over their sin. And he proclaimed the kingdom, urging folks to enter by the narrow gate and do the will of God. It is hard but this is the entrance to the kingdom. This is proclamation.

And just as the Master did it so we should do it. We must use words. The idea that you preach the kingdom and share the gospel by silently living is bogus. We must teach and we must preach. We must clarify truth and we must urge folks to enter, to come, to turn to Jesus and his kingdom. But there must be more than words.

C. Jesus used words, but he also performed works. Specifically, he healed. In all the places where he went, Jesus healed every disease and every affliction. This was supernatural. Jesus’ healing ministry brought relief to people in a physical way that powerfully and vividly portrayed what he came to do in an even more important spiritual way. The signs that he performed cried out that people should believe in him. That was his strategy.

D. The strategy Jesus modeled is the strategy we should follow as well. The church must teach and preach. Our confidence cannot be in man-made schemes but in the gospel which is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. And so we should preach and teach. But what about the healing? Well, the miraculous healing miracles are signs that confirm Jesus as Messiah. The more important healing of the work of Jesus is the healing of sin-ravaged souls. And this is a ministry that is on-going through the faithful teaching and preaching of God’s gospel. The lives of those who embrace Christ will be exhibiting glorious and miraculous

transformation from sin and selfishness to obedience and servanthood. From darkness to light. And this is precisely the instruction of the New Testament to the local church. Local churches are designed to promote and encourage and foster growth in godliness, putting off the old self with its practices and putting on the new self which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. And this we do as the word of Christ dwells in US richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

We are to be a healed community and a healing community, forsaking sin and pursuing holiness.

E. So I would exhort each of us in light of the master's strategy that we need to speak the gospel. We need to value the preaching of the kingdom. And we need to see that part of the strategy of the Lord is the transformation of the lives of the people he touches. Pursuing holiness and obedience is not just a personal matter. It is also a corporate matter and a gospel reinforcing matter. It bears witness to the world of the power of the gospel when those who claim to believe are not conformed to the word but transformed from it—when selfishness is turned to servanthood, when angry outbursts and hostility are changed to peace and sensitivity, when immorality is abandoned and faithfulness reigns in its place, when men and women go from loving the world to loving God supremely, and ministering to one another. That's when human lights shine and God receives the glory and people turn to him.

Now finally this morning I want you to see

IV. The Master's Method Is Driven

I am speaking here of underlying matters that propel and motivate the mission of the master. Jesus was driven in his going and Jesus was driven in his coming even to us by these underlying factors. Three of these matters appear in Matthew's account.

A. For one thing, Jesus was driven by compassion. Look at verse 36. "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd."

Jesus has a heart of compassion. God has a heart of compassion. He sympathizes with the weak and the burdened and the helpless. And as Jesus surveyed the crowds, that is what he saw. Think about it. Jesus SAW the crowds. He looked at them and what he saw was sheep. To begin with sheep are not the brightest animals in the yard. They are defenseless and easily find themselves in danger. They go astray and off the path. They are vulnerable to the bigger and stronger. They are vulnerable to predators. What did Jesus see? He saw wandering sheep, sinful sheep, stinking sheep. But he also saw people who were harassed. They were being duped by the scribes and Pharisees. The Pharisees loaded up spiritual burdens on their backs too great for them to carry. They were starving for truth. They were starving for hope. And they had no one to dispel the darkness under which they were dwelling. Their condition pierced his heart.

Brothers and sisters, this is you and it is me before Christ came to us. And it is the common person of today throughout the world. The world is indeed full of evil and spiritual rebellion. Sheep go astray and turn to their own way. But look again. The world in general is also miserable. It has pierced itself with many a pang. The sinful people of this world are desperately searching for meaning, for truth, for satisfaction and happiness. Yes, this world has bought big time into the biggest lies the devil has to tell (lies about homosexuality, abortion, transgender. Lies about false religions). It has wantonly embraced sin and loving self as the antidote to misery, but the result is only greater misery. This world is a sewer of misery. And as those who have experienced the mercy of God, we need to see the world as Jesus has seen us—with compassion. Do not approve of its unrighteousness but do not fail to have the heart of Jesus as he surveyed the crowds. His compassion moved his mission. Let it move yours.

B. Jesus was driven by compassion. And he was also driven by urgency. Jesus said to the disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few." Jesus was moved by the misery of the people. He was also moved by the number of people. Jesus paints us the picture of ripened fruit in abundance without many workers to pick it. Even so many were the ones who needed to hear the gospel, but few were the workers to take the gospel to them. The situation today is urgent. There are 7.7 billion people

in the world today. More than 5.5 billion of those are without Christ. And get this, more than 3 billion of these people have no realistic exposure to a personal gospel witness. It should break our hearts to hear numbers like that. The urgency should drive us. We have been saved in part to go tell and the time is urgent. The harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few.

C. Jesus was driven by compassion and urgency. But he was also buoyed by confidence. Filled with compassion and a sense of urgency, he urged his disciples to pray. He didn't say, so "go, and go now." Rather he said "pray." Pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. Jesus is teaching us a measure of confidence in regard to a mammoth situation. It is far bigger than us, but it is not bigger than God. When the time comes, Jesus is going to send these disciples out as laborers. But meanwhile they are to pray. It is the Lord's harvest after all. And he is Lord of the Harvest. The ripened fruit is his fruit. The harvest consists of the people God has chosen from eternity past. In the present HE quickens them to life and HE brings them to himself. In the end a preacher may preach, a teacher may teach, and a missionary may perform his mission, but it is God who harvests the soul.

If you are a believer in Christ today, it is not because you are smart. It is not because of the preacher you heard preach. It is not because of a great Sunday school teacher. Indeed these are fellow workers with God, but it is God who accomplishes the saving. Praise God. Paul puts it to the Corinthians this way, "I, Paul, and Apollos are God's servants through whom you believed. . . . I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth."

That's why you pray to the Lord of the Harvest. You see, he will send laborers. Those laborers must go. They must obey. They must share, witness, teach, and preach in obedience to the Lord. They water and they plant. But rest assured, the Lord of the Harvest will get his harvest.

This is not a reason to stay home when he calls. It actually is the reason to go. Your going, your speaking your sharing will not be in vain. The Lord of

the harvest will be using you to experience the joy of his labor and pluck some of the fruit he has carefully prepared and brought to readiness.

What should we do when we absorb the great missionary task set before us? First, we should pray. Pray that the Lord would send out laborers into his harvest. And then as he sends you, you should go. Water and plant. Preach, teach, share, and watch God do the work!

Conclusion

A master craftsman or master tradesman is a master. He has achieved a level of excellence and accomplishment that enables him to train apprentices to do work of a quality that resembles his own.

Having observed Jesus' going through the cities and the villages, we have seen the Master fisher of men at work. And what he has shown us reveals that there is a method and a motive both of which feed into doing this thing well. From the master's example we have a mandate. We need to pray. And we need to go.