

Basics

¹ *Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, ² and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you —unless you believed in vain. (1 Corinthians 15:1–2 ESV)*

¹⁶ *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16 ESV)*

Now I want to remind you, although you once fully knew it, that Jesus, who saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe. (Jude 1:5 ESV)

What Is The Mission Of The Church?

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Matthew 28:18-20

Luke 24:44-49

Rev. Paul Carter

Introduction:

Good morning! This morning we are going to continue with our Basics series in which we have been asking and answering some of the foundational questions about the Christian faith. This morning we are asking the question: “What Is The Mission Of The Church?” You might wonder how this week’s message is different from last week’s message. Last week we asked “What Is The Church?” and we talked about what the church is, what the church does and why it is important for us all to play our part. I wanted to do that message first because too often we think we are answering too much when we answer the question “What is the mission of the church?” Here’s what I mean by that. Suppose that before going away on a week long mission trip I said to my son: “Son, I want you to cut the grass while I am gone.” What have I done? I’ve given my son a mission. I have commissioned him to cut the grass. However, that mission does not exhaust what it means for Max to be my son. There is more to being a good son than simply providing free landscaping services. Sonship is a big category and grass cutting is just a small piece of that and so it is with church. What the church is and what the church does goes beyond the Great Commission. We would want to talk about what it means to be a holy people, a kingdom of priests and the temple of Almighty God and we did talk about that last week. So this week we are moving from the general to the very specific. The church is many things – she is the

Bride of Christ, she is the Body of Christ, she is the Pillar and Bulwark of the truth – and the church DOES many things – she does UPWARD things, she does INWARD things and she does OUTWARD things – but the church has been given a specific commission. Before Jesus went away he told us to do something before he returned. He gave us a commission. And we are going to talk about that this morning.

Open your Bibles to Matthew 28:18-20. There are 3 Great Commission Passages in your Bibles – the one in Mark is very similar to the one in Matthew so we won't look at it, but we will look at this one in Matthew and then we will look at the one in Luke and then we will ask some very basic questions by way of application. Hear now the Word of the Lord.

¹⁸And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:18-20. ESV)

I think you've probably heard me or some other pastor before tell you that in this passage there is only one imperative verb. There is only ONE COMMAND in this passage and it is the command to make disciples. The Greek word is *matheteusate* and it is an aorist active imperative 2nd person plural meaning that it is a command verb given to the disciples collectively. As a group you must do this thing while I am away, Jesus says. As a group you must make disciples.

That command to make disciples is modified by a variety of participles. In Greek most sentences have a main verb and that verb is often modified by participles. Participles tell us more about the main action. So the main action of the disciples collectively – that is of the church – is making disciples and Jesus tells us a little more about how we will do that. The first thing he says is that we will do that by GOING. If we are going to make disciples of all nations, obviously we will have to go into all the nations. We're going to have to go from Jerusalem where this command was given, to Syria and Asia Minor and Europe and across the sea to North America even unto the far icy reaches of Orillia. We're going to have to Go!

Secondly he tells them that baptize folks. To baptize is to convert and to introduce. That's what baptism was in the early church it was the public announcement of your conversion to faith in Jesus Christ – the God man who died and rose again. That's what baptism says and Jesus says

that we are going to have to make converts – PUBLIC CONVERTS and that we’re going to do that by baptizing.

Thirdly he says we will need to teach folks ALL that Jesus has commanded us. We need to pass on his authoritative interpretation of the Word of God. In a sense, we need to teach people how to read the Bible backwards, through the lens of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus said that all of the Old Testament was about him and of course, all of the New Testament is about him, so we need to teach people how the whole Bible ultimately points to who God is and how God has saved us in the person and work of Jesus Christ. That’s what we must do, while Jesus is away. We must make disciples by going into all nations, baptizing them and teaching them all that Jesus commanded us. That’s the Great Commission as recorded in Matthew’s Gospel.

Turn now to Luke 24:44-49. Jesus probably spoke to his disciples that day for a couple of hours – of course you can read Matthew 28:18-20 in about 8 seconds and so we are not surprised that Luke recorded his summary of that special day and that special commission using slightly different words. He records it this way:

⁴⁴Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” ⁴⁵Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, ⁴⁶and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, ⁴⁷and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.” (Luke 24:44-49. ESV)

Once again we have one main verb in this paragraph. The main verb in this passage is the Greek word *keruxthevai* which means “should or must be preached”. The Gospel of repentance and forgiveness must BE PREACHED!! That’s the main thing Jesus says we are to do while he is away.

The Mission Of The Church:

Now, since this series is called BASICS, let me see if I can put all of what we’ve seen in those two passages into one simple sentence:

The mission of the church is to preach the Gospel and make disciples by going into all nations and calling people into a public relationship with God through obedient faith in Jesus Christ.

I think we've managed to stitch all of those main verbs and supporting participles into one workable English sentence. Now, I want to ask 3 BASIC questions by way of application. First of all I want to ask:

1. How Will We Do This?

If I told my son to cut the grass while I was gone he might reasonably ask me how he would do that. I would say to him: "Here is the lawn mower, here is the weed wacker, here is the gas can – GET AT IT!" I would show him the tools, the movement and the methods that he would need to get the job done. Let's talk about that. How does the church preach the Gospel and make disciples? More specifically, how does THIS church preach the Gospel and make disciples? Let me talk about 6 things.

i. We meet together to remember and respond to the Gospel

We do this because the Bible tells us this and shows us this. If you want your son to cut the grass you have to tell him and show him and the Bible does both. Look at Hebrews 10:

²⁴ And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. (Hebrews 10:24–25 ESV)

So the Bible says: GO TO CHURCH and then it also SHOWS US what that looks like. It says in Acts 2:

⁴² And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. ⁴³ And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. ⁴⁴ And all who believed were together and had all things in common. ⁴⁵ And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶ And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. (Acts 2:42–47 ESV)

That looks like good church doesn't it? They met together regularly as a group – day by day it says – and they listened to the Apostles preaching the Gospel. There was learning and there was

fellowship and God blessed it. That's a picture of good church. We do this because WE NEED TO LEARN THE GOSPEL and we need to be served by the church if we are to be of any use in taking the Gospel to others. Let me put it this way – if you are not learning the Gospel then you are likely not going to be very helpful when it comes to sharing the Gospel with other people. Let me say that another way: you have to BE A DISCIPLE to MAKE A DISCIPLE - Amen? Amen. So we do this – we address this mission given to us by Jesus, first of all, by gathering together to remember and respond to the Gospel.

Secondly:

ii. We meet in smaller groups to discuss the Word and to build bonds of fellowship

Once again we see this in the Bible. The Apostle Paul says that he did Word ministry in large group gatherings and in smaller groups. In Acts 20 he says:

I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public **and from house to house**, (Acts 20:20 ESV)

Making disciples is going to require large group meetings – you're sitting in one – and smaller group meetings – you need to join one. You need to be in a group – we call it “micro-community” here – with other people where the teaching is more particularly tailored to your learning stage and life situation and you need to have the chance to ask questions and to build friendship and fellowship with other believers. We have all kinds of groups where that can happen. We have age specific groups like youth groups and seniors groups and we have study groups like the “Praying With Paul” group led by Pastor Jody because this is a necessary step in becoming and making disciples. Jesus taught big groups but he shaped people in smaller groups didn't he? Well, so do we.

Thirdly:

iii. We have outreach activities where we hope to engage with lost people

Last week we said that the church parks itself on the edge of darkness and invites people into God's marvellous light. We call that outreach. The Apostle Paul did that. He'd go into a city and he go find a place where he was likely to meet lost people. In Ephesus he hung out in the gymnasium and in Philippi he went down to the river. In Acts 16 it says that he went down to the river where he knew some people would be gathered and he spoke to those that were there. This isn't rocket science is it? You have to position yourself in some places where you can have Gospel contact with lost folks. We do that here. We put ourselves in some places. We have gathering programs. Things like Family Circle, things like reCOVER, things like Family Foundations, things like VBS and things like Redeemer City Church. We put a whole campus down by the river so to speak, where we knew some folks were and we plopped ourselves down there and started to speak about Jesus. That's how we do it.

Fourthly,

iv. We facilitate and celebrate public professions of faith

Whenever someone comes to saving faith through the ministries of our church whether gathered or scattered we fly a balloon. We celebrate each new spiritual life. We don't stop there however, we go on and we call on that person to profess their faith publicly through baptism. Let me say this carefully. Real, saving, authentic Christian faith is always born privately. It happens in your heart. It happens maybe in your room, on your knees as you wrestle with the Holy Spirit and you engage the Word of God and then all of the sudden FAITH SPRINGS TO LIFE IN YOUR HEART as a gracious gift of God – we've all been there, if we are truly saved, we've all been there. So faith is born privately. But if its real faith it always flowers publically. How do I know that? Jesus said that. He said:

³² So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven (Matthew 10:32–33 ESV)

That's why the Apostle Paul said:

¹⁰ For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. (Romans 10:10 ESV)

To be saved you need to believe in your heart and you need to confess with your mouth. We facilitate that. We call on people to stand in the waters and give voice to the conviction of their heart. We had over 30 people get baptized this past summer – many of them came forward under conviction during the service and got baptized in borrowed clothes – they believed in their hearts and they confessed with their mouths right then and there – PRAISE THE LORD! That’s what we do – that’s how we make disciples in Jesus’ Name.

Fifthly,

v. We connect new converts to mentors and ministry

When people come up out of the water we don’t simply pat them on the back and wish them well – no we immediately begin to connect them to mentors and to ministry that can help them grow. We see the Apostle Paul doing that in the New Testament. Paul was mostly an evangelist and church planter – he went into a city, found people, preached the Gospel, made converts and then left. However he was always careful to provide mentors to the converts that he left behind. He wrote to his converts in Corinth saying:

That is why I sent you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church. (1 Corinthians 4:17 ESV)

Timothy became a faith mentor to the converts in Corinth. This is so important! Young faith is fragile faith and it needs to be fed, it needs to be nurtured and it needs to be protected. We take this very seriously here. Part of Pastor Evan’s job description is to get every new convert into a mentoring relationship or a nurturing ministry. The book Mile 1 was the product of several years of successes and mistakes in the mentoring process. We just took what we learned and put it in a book to make it as easy as possible for mentors to nurture and develop faith in new believers.

Sixthly:

vi. We support and send resources to similar ministries around the world

We are first and foremost SENT to Orillia. This is after all, one of the “nations of the world”. When the disciples received the Great Commission in Jerusalem I doubt very much that they could have imagined any place further away or more foreign than Orillia, Ontario Canada. This is missions! There are 30,000 people going to hell within 10 km of this place. I will not apologize for being radically committed to local mission. That being said, we are an overflow church and we have the ability to invest in other churches in other places and we do that eagerly and with great joy. We invest in churches in India, we invest in churches in the Dominican Republic and we invest in churches within our own province and region who are likewise involved in preaching the Gospel and making disciples of Jesus Christ.

This is what we do as we pursue our Great Commission. These are the things we do as a church and through our partners as we address the command we were given by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

The second and the third question I want to ask I think we will be able to deal with much quicker.

2. How Can I Help?

If you are a Christian and if you want to obey Jesus then obviously, after hearing about our mission and what we are doing to address it your very next question is going to be some version of how can I help? Or what do you need from me? Let me suggest a couple of ways you can get involved.

i. Get some training on teaching God’s Word

That would be very helpful. We are always looking for Bible teachers. We need Small Group leaders and we need table leaders down at Family Foundations. We offer lots of training in house – we have B1 and B2 for men and we have just started a program called T2 for women. Those sorts of programs aim to train you as speakers and proclaimers of God’s Word. Take the training and then USE THE TRAINING. Some of you B2 men need to step up and take a group or grab a table down at RCC and you need to use your training as a teacher of God’s Word. Most of you have done that. All of you are able to do that. So let’s get it done.

ii. Become a CM, YM or SM volunteer

As I said earlier we make disciples by meeting in large groups and in smaller groups – just like the early church. Many of our groups are age specific. We have Children’s Ministry small groups on Sunday morning, we have Youth Ministry small groups mid-week and we have Seniors’ Ministry groups that meet in various ways in various places and we need volunteers and teachers for all of those groups. You can speak to Ryan about CM, you can speak to Pastor Jon about YM and you can talk to Pastor Bill about SM.

iii. Become a “front door” volunteer

When I say “front door” I mean that you can volunteer for some of those ministries that serve to invite people in. You can help out with Family Circle – speak to Brenda Aitken, you can help out with reCOVER – speak to Dr. Craig or to Pastor Evan, you can help with Family Foundations – speak to Ron Aitken or Pastor Evan – there are tons of ways you can be involved in the ministry of calling people out of darkness and into his marvellous light.

iv. Become a “Mile 1” mentor

As I mentioned we had more than 30 people get baptized over the summer. That means we are looking for a whole lot of Mile 1 mentors. Some of those people will slot into Youth Ministry or Seniors’ Ministry but a bunch of them are going to need 1 on 1 mentors. Speak to Pastor Evan.

Then lastly, we need you to:

v. Give generously

It is the normal way of God to accomplish his great purposes through ordinary means. He uses people, he uses programs and he uses places and all of that costs money. I make absolutely no apology for saying that. The kingdom of God, humanly speaking, goes forward on the basis of your time, talent and treasure. If you believe in this mission then you need to give generously of all 3. Don’t pray for us if you won’t minister beside us. Don’t pray for us if you won’t invest you money in what we’re doing. God isn’t going to write a message in the clouds, he is going to

speak to people through your lips. He is going to do it in a place with a furnace hooked up to union gas. He is going to do it with a book or a hand-out copied on our Xerox model 7855. All of that costs money and requires investment. If you care about what we are doing then put some skin in the game.

Lastly and very quickly, the third question I want to look at is this:

3. Where Should I Start?

First of all you should start:

i. At home

Preach the Gospel to your kids. Make disciples of your kids. Parents your job is not just to restrain bad behaviour it is to make disciples of Jesus Christ. The Great Commission starts in your kitchen. Its starts at your table and it starts with your kids. Go into your kitchen and make disciples of all nations.

ii. Where God put you

God is Sovereign so wherever you are that's where he wants you. You have a job, you have a neighbourhood and you have a street. Plant yourself there and call people here. Call them out of darkness and into his marvellous light.

Thirdly and lastly you should go:

iii. Where God calls you

Let me show you something in the Bible. Turn to Acts 13:1-3.

¹ Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. ² While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." ³ Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off. (Acts 13:1-3 ESV)

There were 5 gifted preachers at Antioch and God called 2 of them to become foreign missionaries. What does that tell you? It tells you that not everyone is called to foreign missions but some people are. God obviously cared about the people in Antioch so he didn't call every person there to leave and go somewhere else. He called 2 people to do that. But here is the other thing I want you to see. The church fasted and prayed in order to DISCERN whether there were people who should be sent somewhere else. That's huge! Do you ever pray and ask God if you or if someone else should be sent somewhere else in order to preach the Gospel and make disciples of Jesus Christ? Are there 2 people here or 10 people here that are called to go to India or the D.R. or the Congo or who knows where in order to preach the Gospel and make disciples of Jesus Christ? Are you one of those people? Am I one of those people? I don't know – so we should pray about that.

What I know is that I should make disciples of my kids and we should work together on all our kids and on the neighbours kids and on the seniors and on everyone in between. There are 30,000 people within 10 km of this place that need Jesus. You don't need a special call to them – God already put you here. But some of us may be called to go somewhere else and we should all be praying about that.

Like Abraham we need to put all our love and all our life upon the altar. God may give it back to you – he did with Abraham; he did not with Jesus. So you put your life on the altar today and you leave it there at God's disposal. That's what it means to offer your life as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God. This is our reasonable service of worship and this is the Word of the Lord.