

Our Mission for the Commission

~ Matthew 28:16-20

Riley N.

November 4, 2018

I'm just going to start by saying how honoured I am that I can be preaching from the Word in front of you all today. My overwhelming nervousness is matched only by my excitement and joy about coming to you with this message of hope, and joy. This message is firm, and I will be honest about it. I want to move all of us to a place where we are actively pursuing what God has called us to pursue. Along with this firmness, I love everyone in the church, and the desire from my heart is that you would receive the same joy, excitement and urgency for God's Great commission. Read with me from the ESV, if you don't have a Bible and you aren't 'hip and with it' on YouVersion, there is an NASB Bible in the pew backs in front of you, or underneath you if you are in the front row. We'll be reading from Matthew 28:1 on page 704

“Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. ² And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. ³ His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. ⁴ And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. ⁵ But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. ⁶ He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where He lay. ⁷ Then go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead, and behold, He is going before you to Galilee; there you will see Him. See, I have told you.” ⁸ So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy and ran to tell His disciples. ⁹ And behold, Jesus met them and said, “Greetings!” And they came up and took hold of His feet and worshiped him. ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and tell My brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me.”

¹¹ While they were going, behold, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests all that had taken place. ¹² And when they had assembled with the elders and taken counsel, they gave a sufficient sum of money to the soldiers ¹³ and said, “Tell people, ‘His disciples came by

Our Mission for the Commission

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night and stole him away while we were asleep.’ ¹⁴ And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.” ¹⁵ So they took the money and did as they were directed. And this story has been spread among the Jews to this day (And ironically, to *this* day as well).

¹⁶ Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them.

¹⁷ And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. 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.”

When Pastor Tom and I were discussing what I would be preaching on a few weeks ago, he suggested that I start with an important life verse, and so I was considering preaching on Romans 12 as it had made such a difference to my Christian walk. But even during that conversation I knew that I wanted to preach on something else, and I had the heart to preach from Matthew 28, and the Great Commission. This *Vision 2025* has had me so excited for the future of Sturgeon Valley, and where our goals lie. It is a great leap forward and it also means that we are taking very seriously the Great Commission from Christ. We have just read through Matthew 28, and the last thing I want to leave with is a command from God without any context placing it among its chapters. Context is key in understanding the Word. So what exactly *has* just happened?

Jesus has just been crucified and died while destroying the sins of mankind. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary stumble upon the empty tomb, angels scare the daylights out of everyone, and announce Jesus’s resurrection, giving them instruction for the disciples. The Jews start the cover up about Jesus then and there. “His disciples came by, moved a 20-ton rock without

Our Mission for the Commission

~ Matthew 28:16-20

Riley N.

November 4, 2018

us noticing while he was asleep, and then slipped away unnoticed!” And this is spread among the Jews unto *this* day.

Jesus meets the disciples on the mountain at which He instructed them to meet upon and reveals Himself to them. Somehow there are doubters there, according to Matthew, who saw the risen Christ and doubted His resurrection. Remember that the Word is not clear on exactly *who* saw the crucifixion. We know Mary Magdalene and Mary, Jesus’ mother, were there and the John says that he was there too. So, 1 of the 11 standing around Jesus at this time were witness to His crucifixion. Still hard to doubt in my mind, when the Man has holes in his hands and side, and you buried His dead body 2 days ago behind a 20-ton stone.

Despite the doubt that the disciples had from verse 17, Jesus gives them their mission which would endure for the rest of their lives. Despite their fear, He still instructs them to carry out what He has planned for the world from the very beginning.

Many people quote the Great Commission at verse 19, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations,” but the word *therefore* in the Bible always points to something just before the statement that completes the statement. It clarifies our understanding of what is to come. So then we need to go back to 18. “And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. SO THEREFORE GO and make disciples of all nations.”

The reason He commanded His disciples to go and disciple people, bringing them to a knowledge of the truth and baptizing them accordingly, is because *He has all the authority in heaven and on earth*. The disciples could preach boldly the message of the Gospel *because* Christ had given them all authority in the spiritual and natural to complete the mission with. God through Jesus to them.

Our Mission for the Commission

~ Matthew 28:16-20

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November 4, 2018

Not only that, let us analyze the word which Christ uses in verse 19. He doesn't say "If you feel inclined today, you men can go disciple the nations." It's not an option. I imagine a mother and her son; "Could you please go clean your room." Or "Go clean your room." One is nice, puffed up, and meant to illicit a sort of option. The other is Go clean your room. **Christ isn't giving the disciples an option with their mission.** *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations.* He is commanding them to finish the job which He came and started through them. Jesus preached the Gospel to His disciples, *trained and instructed* them on how to effectively reach others, and then he sends them off to do the same. It's a three-step formula to creating an effective disciple. 1]- Evangelize the Gospel, 2]- Teach and Instruct them in the ways of Christ, 3]- Send them out with the same mission. This is why in verse 20, Christ clarifies the follow-up saying "teaching them to observe all I have commanded you." The disciples were to go out, disciple the nations, baptize them, and teach them in the same ways that Christ had taught them. Finally, that He would be present with them unto the end of time. What an exhortation and encouragement. God doesn't for a moment leave His chosen ill-equipped. He provides them with His Son, who has all authority to complete His mission of preaching and teaching, and then He is *with* them into the end of time! Doesn't this bring us great joy? Well if it doesn't, it could be because you are falling into the trap of objecting to God's command

There are motives for denying God's command, but they are in two categories: implicit, that is not obvious to us, and explicit, which is very obvious. The easy objections against completing the command **are always explicit.** For example: "Well, Jesus wanted this to simply be to His disciples, it is not for us. The church has changed!" Most objections run along the line of removal of responsibility, and then placing it on someone else, at some other time. There are people who do this openly and defiantly of God, but there are also those of us, very much like myself, who don't or didn't do it openly. We have taken the implicit route and hidden the lie within

Our Mission for the Commission

~ Matthew 28:16-20

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November 4, 2018

our hearts. It's quiet. It's far in the back of our minds, and it's a whisper from Satan. "It's for the church. It's for missionaries, it's for evangelist, those with the gift of sharing the Gospel. Not for you." Maybe you feel *I'm too busy*, or *evangelism is not my gifting*. Frankly, it doesn't matter. Let me tell you *why* busyness does not matter, lack of opportunity doesn't matter, and evangelism isn't just about gifting. This command *is* for you, believer.

John 10:15-16 says, "I lay down My life for the sheep. But I have other sheep that are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will listen to My voice. Then there will be one flock, one shepherd." What Jesus is explaining here to His disciples is that He will shed His blood in order to bring many different sheep to His flock, the flock of God. Jump ahead one chapter to 11:51 and 52; we get more clarity. "He (This speaking of Caiphas the High Priest) did not say this on his own but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but also to *unite the scattered children of God*." We know fully that Christ is shedding His blood to bring the scattered children to God Himself. How will this good news be spread unless we as Christians open our closed mouths to announce the Good News? How can the nations come to a knowledge of the truth when everyone is turning to the other, waiting for others to bring their friends to church while we applaud their 'audacity.' How can we effectively disciple people through the Word, if no one is bringing anyone *to* the Word? How is it that we are *too busy* to complete a command of God? Therefore it is the believers job, and it is written to every believer. We have written accounts of the Great Commission taken to heart, through the NT writings of Paul. We know Paul internalized the Great Commission and Paul made himself *relevant to his audience*. Not only was he relevant, but exciting, and he made the Gospel compelling to those to whom he preached. So, we know now that our objections don't stand up to the truth of Christ. If you're afraid to speak up for the Gospel, you aren't alone, and you aren't the first. You're among friends here, who suffer with the fear of speaking out. Our society has taught

Our Mission for the Commission

~ Matthew 28:16-20

Riley N.

November 4, 2018

us very well how to fit in and go with the flow. The Bible teaches us how to march against the current, upstream, where the unbelievers are.

I am so excited about Sturgeon Valley's *Vision 2025*, because it is an initiative seeking to accomplish this command of God. Our goal is trying to reach the unsaved people of our current society and present the Gospel in a **relevant, compelling manner** that draws them to a meaningful and lasting relationship with God. It's the same thing I pray for my children. Pastor Tom said it earlier this month, that right now there are 250 souls destined to perish. Unless God, using us, intervenes in their lives, they will die and live in eternity apart from God. 250 people is a bold goal in our current state, it is God-sized. It's something we could never do alone. Thank God that we don't have to. *All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me*, says Christ. We are doing this mission with God on our side. We don't have to question whether God is in the decision because it's not really a decision in the first place. It's simply putting a number on a command that we are *already* supposed to be doing. I cannot stress enough how important bringing people to Christ is, and that involves more than we are doing right now. We, as the body of Christ, are not doing enough to seek and save the lost. We aren't the 99 seeking the 1 anymore. We're the 1 seeking the 99.

At the beginning of this semester I took a 1-week intensive course called 'Church Vitalization'. I believe it is the most important course that I've ever taken because for 40 hours that week I was in shock and awe at what I was hearing. The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada organization of churches are the fastest growing and most prolific denomination in Canada right now. They have the most believers by conversion of any Christian organization. According to the PAOC, in their churches, it **takes 1 person 87 years to successfully reach an unbeliever for Christ**. In some churches it is so bad, that statistically the last time they had an unsaved person devote

Our Mission for the Commission

~ Matthew 28:16-20

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November 4, 2018

their life for Christ, Martin Luther was about to nail the 95 theses to the door of the Catholic Church.

If 1 person reaches someone for Christ in 87 years, it means they will be born, live 99% of their life and then at that point they *may* reach 1 person, and then they pass away. ‘Ouch’. And that is the appropriate response to the truth. It hurt me to realize this fact. It hurt me more to realize that I was being part of the problem and not being part of the solution. I was being a disciple, the noun, not a disciple, the verb. I was just a thing, like a noun. I wasn’t a verb, like the word disciple is in that verse. Are we an action word or a thing? Are we a verb or a noun? “Go, therefore, and **make disciples**” is not a fully correct translation of the Greek, because the word at this point for disciple is an **active verb** of the 2nd person plural. This means **YOU people, disciple**. In English we don’t have second and third tense of indication like Greek, French, German, Dutch, and many other languages do. So, we must read this word disciple as a command directed at the followers of Christ Jesus. It doesn’t mean we go and create little people who follow Jesus. It means we go as He came. He came and disciplined the disciples. Jesus walked with the disciples, taught them and instructed them in the Truth about God, taught them how to teach others about God, and then sent them out. This is our job now. It’s appropriate to say we are spiritual descendants of these men *because* they were obedient to this command and so we are supposed to be obedient to the command.

Now that we have the command in front of us, we know Jesus is calling us to do this, how are we going to practically live this out? What things can we start doing today, right now that will make a difference in the Great Commission?

We do what Jesus did, and we update ourselves into our modern culture. It’s not about making Jesus culturally acceptable and making the two, one; it’s about making Jesus culturally relevant. We don’t sit at each others’ homes and wash each others’ feet anymore, we aren’t

Our Mission for the Commission

~ Matthew 28:16-20

Riley N.

November 4, 2018

consistently drinking wine at every meal in order to stave off infections from bad water, we aren't walking everywhere, living in tents, wearing tunics, bathing twice a year, etc. We must prioritize the Great Commission and bring it into St. Albert, to Sturgeon Valley, right now.

Now, I am a convert to Christ, and I was won when I was 17 for Christ because a girl in the youth group stepped up to bat against me on the school bus for Jesus. This is a great way of representing Christ; discussing Him, fighting for Him, and then inviting the lost to an event that encourages love and fellowship.

Practically, we **should** be seizing the opportunities to bring them to church as much as we can. I learned from my class that, in Canada, 10% of people are hostile to the Gospel. They hate it, want nothing to do with it. 10% are Christian or announce themselves to be Christian and attend church regularly. 80% of people are indifferent towards the Gospel *but would be open* to coming if we invited them. Those are great odds. That means if you count ten friends, or ten people who you have influence with, 8 would be willing to come with you to church, 1 is a Christian and the other is someone who needs to be introduced to God's love through your action before they would come to church.

If we want to reach these people in our spheres of influence, it means we're going to have to take drastic steps forward from what we are currently doing. It will mean taking Matthew 9:13 seriously, "I desire mercy and not sacrifice, for I didn't come to call the righteous, but the sinners." It means we are going to have to sign off on bold initiatives put forward by the leadership and if *you* have a bold initiative, now is your chance. But please, PLEASE, make it relevant. It does such a disservice to the Gospel of Christ when we aren't making the Gospel relevant to unbelievers. It reminds me of what I said earlier; do you go to your buddy's house and wash his feet while explaining Jesus? Do you wear a tunic around and wear leather sandals and bathe twice a year?

Our Mission for the Commission

~ Matthew 28:16-20

Riley N.

November 4, 2018

Consider how you would make the Gospel relevant to people like my dad, my mom, my grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins? Those who don't know God at all in your family/friends. If they aren't made to feel welcome in this place, and like he's meeting new friends for the first time, and we don't engage with him, we have a problem. People desire to belong and belong to something vibrant and having something to offer others. The problem is that we're a church about us, and not a church about *them*. We do these things because they're comfortable to us, not because we're sacrificing our desires for them. I'm guilty of everything I've talked about today, and certainly more. I've ignored the prompting of the spirit to greet someone I know is new. I've purposely not shaken anyone's hands, I've avoided inviting people I don't know to lunch. The difference this class made was making me realize my sin. Realize that what I was doing was not holy and pleasing to God. It created this yearning and this desire in my heart to see us seek and save the lost, to go boldly where Christ called us through those words; Go therefore and disciple the nations.

You've got to understand my heart, brothers and sisters. I love all of us. I love what we're doing. But if we aren't doing the command of God, if we aren't running after the sheep who are walking towards the cliff where the wolves lay, and instead were all sitting in a circle singing kum-bay-ya, praising Jesus, what are we doing at all? My encouragement to everyone here is to start by making slight changes. Small changes can be as simple as actually taking the Spirit on the prompting when He tells you to shake that man's hand, even if it means being awkward [anecdote about greeting people]. It could mean inviting that friend that God has put on your heart, here, or to any Christian Church. The worst thing that happens is they lie to you and tell you they're busy that day. Either way, it has them thinking about this place, where we will love them as Jesus has loved us. We don't all have to start by standing on a soapbox, and doing street ministry on Whyte at midnight, Saturday. It starts by just taking that one little step. By saying yes to helping in

Our Mission for the Commission

~ Matthew 28:16-20

Riley N.

November 4, 2018

ministry, by volunteering to do Alpha, or by starting coffee ministry that engages people coming to take a cup. I reworded John F. Kennedy's quote, "Ask not what your church can do for you, but what you can do for your church!"

It begins by welcoming and inviting, but then in our church we must have a vast array of diverse ways to teach these newcomers to observe what Christ has commanded. Discipleship is not just about inviting and bringing someone to church. Its about answering their challenging questions afterwards and encouraging them to seek the truth in different mediums. As I mentioned, many churches have alpha programs for unbelievers in an open and nonthreatening setting to ask the real questions. The discipleship follow-up is another sermon in itself! So, for now, let's just start by opening the floodgates of dialogue and honesty with these lost sheep around us.

Remember that it's up to us, but it's up to you. We need to have an odd mix of collective individual responsibility. We need to know that all of us are accountable to complete this goal, to listen to our leaders, to reach those around us who don't know God. But, it's also your job. It's not the person sitting next to you in the pews job, it's yours. You are a Christian, it's on you. But the best part is that we have God backing us every step of the way. "All authority under heaven and earth has been given to me, go therefore and disciple all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all I have commanded you. and I will be with you from now, until the end of the age."

Let's pray together about this passage.

Father I pray for:

-Conviction to complete the Great Commission where it is lacking

-Opportunities to spread the Gospel

Our Mission for the Commission

~ Matthew 28:16-20

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November 4, 2018

- Joy in the knowledge that God is with us as we go.
- Bold steps to be taken for friends and family who are lost
- Wisdom and profound knowledge as we make decisions to honour this mission
- Strength and patience for leadership to deal with the vision effectively