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Sermon Notes

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Christ Commands and Confirms the Spread of the Gospel

Mark 16:15-20

As we come to the end of the Gospel of Mark, we come to the point of it all. Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Period. That saving work was only BEGUN when he died and rose again. The blood of the Passover lamb was shed, but it also had to be applied to the doorposts and lintels of the Jewish homes in Egypt for the angel of death to see it and pass over.

So also Jesus' blood had to be shed... but then it also had to be APPLIED to individual sinners. That is the purpose of Christ's continuing mission in the world, a mission that has extended now for almost two thousand years.

I. Christ's Mission Continues

A. The Unifying Message of Mark's Gospel

Mark 1:1 The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Essential to the message is the identity of Jesus Christ... the Son of God

The whole Gospel of Mark unfolds the significance of that truth

The NIV has the phrase, "the gospel ABOUT Jesus Christ, the Son of God"

All other translations simply say, "the gospel OF Jesus Christ, the Son of God"

The word "gospel" means "good news"

The word “of” in English accurately translates the Greek grammar in the simplest sense...

But what does that “of” mean? It is either the “good news FROM Jesus” or “that Jesus proclaimed” ... “of” means “origin” ... this message came from Jesus, it is the message he preached

Or the word can mean “ABOUT” ... the good news ABOUT Jesus Christ, the Son of God”

Both are true, but in the end, it’s marvelous to think of Jesus as not merely the messenger of the good news, but he IS the good news.

Matthew 13:44 "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field."

He is the treasure hidden in the field, worth selling everything so that you can buy that field and own the treasure. So Paul said

Colossians 2:3 in [Christ] are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Wisdom and knowledge are not the only treasures hidden in Christ. So also perfect love, total forgiveness of sins, reconciliation with Almighty God, access to the throne of God, a promised eternal inheritance in heaven, resurrection from the dead and life forevermore. Christ is infinite and immeasurable treasure, most of it hidden from our minds, ready to be unfolded for all eternity in heaven.

So the gospel is not merely a message Jesus proclaimed... he IS the good news. His incarnation is good news. His perfect, sinless life is good news. His astonishing miracles are good news. His astounding teachings are good news. His fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies is good news. His substitutionary death on the cross is good news. His resurrection from the dead is good news. His promise to return to earth and consummate the Kingdom of God is good news.

B. Christ's Mission to Earth Began... and Continues

1. Mark starts with the statement, "The **beginning** of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God"
2. It's not just that Mark 1:1 is the first of the 679 verses that make up his Gospel account
3. Rather it's that Jesus mission to earth was just beginning with his own short life
4. He himself had more work to do!
5. Luke makes this continuation clear

Acts 1:1-2 In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach ² until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen.

C. Mark Makes It Just as Clear...

Mark 16:19-20 After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God. ²⁰ Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it.

Jesus is continuing his saving mission to sinners in this cursed world

II. What Christ Commands of the World

A. The Central Call to Sinners All Over the World

Mark 1:15 "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"

B. This is the Command of the Gospel... from Almighty God through Jesus Christ, through the Church, to the world!

C. The Gospel is Good News to Be Believed... but also a Command to be Obeyed!

Romans 1:5 Through him and for his name's sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith.

Acts 17:30 In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent.

D. The Two Commands of the Gospel

1. Repent
2. Believe
3. What do these commands mean?
 - a. Repent means to think differently about sin and self, resulting in a turn from sin toward God
 - b. A change of mind resulting in a decisive change of life
 - c. Believe means to see with the eyes of the heart the invisible truths of GOOD NEWS... believe that Jesus IS the Son of God, and that he died in our place for our sins, and that he rose from the dead on the third day, and that he offers full forgiveness of sins to all who believe

E. The Reason for Repentance and Faith

1. The TIME has come... and
2. The Kingdom of God is AT HAND

2 Corinthians 6:2 Today is the day of salvation!

Time is essential...

3. Salvation is eternal

Eternity in heaven, with no death, mourning, crying or pain awaits all who repent and believe

4. So is condemnation

Mark 16:16 Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

Condemnation is terrifying...

Jesus warned clearly about hell in Mark 9:43-48

Mark 9:43 If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out.

Mark 9:48 where "'their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.'

Anyone who refuses this gospel message will be condemned to that eternal terror

So the urgency of this gospel work!

III. What Christ Commands of His Church

A. Five Great Commissions

B. Mark's Version

Mark 16:15-16 He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. ¹⁶ Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

C. Our Task is Going and Proclaiming

1. The proclamation of the Word of Christ, the word of the gospel, is essential to the salvation of sinners

Romans 10:13-15 "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." ¹⁴ How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? ¹⁵ And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

Romans 10:17 faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.

2. The extent of the Great Commission: **“Go into all the world, preach the gospel to all creation”**

Mark’s version: All the world... All creation

Matthew’s version:

- a. All nations

Matthew 28:19 ... go and make disciples of all nations

- b. All commands obeyed

Matthew 28:20 teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you

- c. All eras of human history:

Matthew 28:20 surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

3. Baptism an essential sign of discipleship

- a. Mark makes it plain

Mark 16:16 Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved,

- b. Matthew 28 says “make disciples of all nations, BAPTIZING them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit

- c. A disciple is a follower of Jesus, obedient to his Lordship

- d. The first simple test of obedience is water baptism

- e. The word “baptize” means to IMMERSE... it is a plunging under water to symbolize death and resurrection, as well as cleansing from sin

IV. How Christ’s Church Has Obeyed

- A. The Church Has Been Overwhelmingly Obedient in Every Generation

Mark 16:20 Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere

- B. It is easy to be discouraged about our FAILURES

- C. But we need to realize that those first three centuries of Christians were willing to lay down their lives for Christ, to die, to allow their blood to be seed for the church
- D. They spiritually conquered the Roman Empire in three short centuries
- E. And the missionary drive has continued
 - 1. Over the last two centuries in particular, the gospel has spread through the Indian subcontinent, led by William Carey, through Burma, led by Adoniram and Ann Judson; through China led by Hudson Taylor and Lottie Moon; through Africa led by David Livingstone, Mary Slessor, and many others; through the steamy jungles of the Amazon, led by Jim and Elizabeth Elliot; even to Irian Jaya led by Don Richardson and Mark and Gloria Zook
 - 2. The Holy Spirit HAS come on the church and, as verse 20 says, the disciples were obedient to their role
- F. YET we must admit LOTS of failure and sin as well
 - 1. Not every generation of Christians has been equally faithful and equally fruitful
 - 2. Many individual Christians have lived their whole Christian lives with very little evangelistic effort or fruit
- G. The Call is to FBC to be faithful NOW!

V. How Christ Confirms His Word

- A. Christ's Sovereign Power is Essential to the Spread of the Gospel

Mark 16:19-20 After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God. ²⁰ Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it.

- B. His Position of Absolute Authority
 - 1. At the right hand of God
 - 2. Ruling over heaven and earth

Matthew 28:18 “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me...”

Ephesians 1:20-23 he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, ²¹ far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. ²² And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way

3. This authority is vital because every advance the Kingdom of Christ makes in this world is opposed by Satan, demons, and unconverted people
4. The church is portrayed as taking enemy territory

Matthew 16:18 on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

Gates represent the power of the dark kingdom of sin, death, and Satan that we are assaulting

5. Jesus actively rules over daily events for the benefit of the spread of the gospel

Proverbs 21:1 The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD; he directs it like a watercourse wherever he pleases.

[to the church at Philadelphia, Christ says] *Revelation 3:7-8 What I open no one can shut, and what I shut no one can open. ⁸ I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut.*

6. The nations are as nothing before Christ's power

Isaiah 40:15 Surely the nations are like a drop in a bucket; they are regarded as dust on the scales; he weighs the islands as though they were fine dust.

Isaiah 40:22-23 He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth, and its people are like grasshoppers. He stretches out the heavens like a

canopy, and spreads them out like a tent to live in. ²³ He brings princes to naught and reduces the rulers of this world to nothing.

7. Jesus is at the right hand of God and is exerting his authority to spread the gospel of salvation in every generation

C. The Holy Spirit Delivers Christ's Power

1. It is by the Spirit that Christ actively works in this present evil age to win sinners and spread his Kingdom

John 16:7 I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.

2. The Spirit works in us as his messengers

Acts 1:8 you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

- a. We are weak, frail, fearful, selfish
- b. Peter's failure the night Jesus was arrested is clear indication of how easy it is for us to cave in to fear
- c. The Parable of the Good Samaritan shows the Priest and Levite walking by the bleeding man without any pity at all
- d. It is natural for sinners to be selfish, to not want to get involved
- e. But if the Holy Spirit comes on you, you can develop the heart of Christ... his compassion for sinners, his yearning to alleviate their suffering
- f. Jesus wept over Jerusalem's lostness; Paul wept deeply for unconverted Jews:

Romans 9:2-4 I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. ³ For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race, ⁴ the people of Israel.

- g. So Jesus works and works and works in us to make us care about lostness, care about people on their way to hell
- h. He does this by the indwelling Holy Spirit
- i. He gives POWER to us, moving us from laziness and selfishness
- j. He gives POWER to us, conquering our fears

3. The Spirit also works in sinners for their conviction and conversion

John 16:8 When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment

- a. Repentance and faith are radical transformations of the core of a human being
- b. It is nothing that a person can do to himself or herself
- c. It is so radical, it is likened to a heart transplant:

Ezekiel 36:26-27 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

- d. The Spirit works repentance and the Spirit works faith... this is how Jesus from his heavenly throne calls his unconverted elect, his sheep, by name

John 10:27-28 My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand.

D. Jesus Confirmed His Word by Signs of the Spirit

Mark 16:20 the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it.

- 1. The Lord WORKED WITH THEM!! What a majestic picture of cooperation

2 Corinthians 5:20 We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.

2 Corinthians 6:1 Working together with him, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain

1 Corinthians 15:10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them-- yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.

2. He worked with his messengers to give them energy, power, the words to say
3. He worked with his messengers by enabling them to do miraculous signs and wonders in that apostolic age

It's the very thing he said would happen in verse 16:

Mark 16:17-18 And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; ¹⁸ they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well. "

Paul testified to it as well:

Romans 15:18-19 I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done-- ¹⁹ by the power of signs and miracles, through the power of the Spirit. So from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ.

Hebrews 2:4 God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

4. The miraculous signs confirmed the truthfulness of the gospel

Acts 8:5-8 Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Christ there. ⁶ When the crowds heard Philip and saw the

miraculous signs he did, they all paid close attention to what he said. ⁷ With shrieks, evil spirits came out of many, and many paralytics and cripples were healed. ⁸ So there was great joy in that city.

5. The signs also showed that Satan was being driven out of his throne of power in the people's hearts

Luke 10:17-19 The seventy-two returned with joy and said, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name." ¹⁸ He replied, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. ¹⁹ I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you

- E. Church History testifies that these signs abated after the Apostolic age was done

BUT they were essential to confirming the word of Christ in that earliest stage

VI. Our Part In This Work

A. First... come to Christ!

1. This sermon has contained the clear and simple gospel... the good news that Jesus, the Son of God, has come to earth, lived a sinless life, died an atoning death, risen from the dead, and ascended to heaven...
2. He commands all people to repent of sin and believe in that good news

Mark 1:15 "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"

B. Our Work: Share the Gospel with Near Neighbors and Distant Nations

1. This sermon and next week's will lay out specifics for FBCs members
2. The elders are all unanimous that the greatest area of growth for our church is in evangelism

3. We cannot be comfortable here in these walls, hearing the word of God and not paying the price to share it with the hundreds of thousands of lost people around us
4. We've said it many times: the Triangle region of Raleigh, Durham, Chapel Hill, Cary has a present population of 1.1 million (2020 census). According to US News and World report, it is the 21st fastest growing metro region in the US; it's expected to add another half million in the next 25 years.
5. We are responsible to reach this region with the gospel
6. There is a FIELD assigned to us, which the Lord will ask us about on Judgment Day

C. What Is Evangelism?

Mack Stiles:

Evangelism is teaching the gospel with the aim to persuade

Four key aspects: teaching, gospel, aim, persuade

1. Teaching: words are essential to evangelism; so is explaining the meaning, teaching its aspects
2. Gospel: [good news]... God—Man—Christ—Response

God made the world and everything in it. Because he made it, he is King over it, therefore makes Laws by which we are to be governed; he will judge the world based on those laws

Man was created in the image of God to have a love relationship with God. Essential to that is our submission to his rule. We have broken God's laws and stand under his judgment.

Christ is God's Son; he was born human, lived a sinless life, died an atoning death for sin; rose from the dead on the third day. He is King and must be obeyed.

Repent and believe in Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.

3. Aim: evangelism is purposeful; intentional; we have to see our purpose in this world in light of Christ's mission in the world

Luke 19:10 the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.

We need to be purposeful in all our relationships with human beings. Everyone we know is headed either to an eternity in heaven or an eternity in hell. We need to care about that and have an AIM of winning the lost. AIM... a purpose as individuals and as a church.

4. Persuade: we try to win people, persuade them to repent and turn to Christ; we use argumentation, proofs, passion, persistence... it matters to us what they do with the gospel

All of this can only be done in the power of the Holy Spirit

The Spirit sets up our good works for us to walk in

D. Goal: a Culture of Evangelism

1. Mack Stiles describes a "culture of evangelism" in a healthy local church
2. He speaks of "communal evangelism" where it's a churchwide focus
 - a. We hold one another accountable
 - b. We strengthen our mutual resolve
 - c. We learn from one another
 - d. We rejoice together in success and cry together in failure
 - e. We bond through shared experiences in intense situations
3. What is a church's "culture"? Shared ideas, shared language, shared behavior patterns, shared expectations
 - a. A culture motivated by love for Jesus and his gospel

- b. A culture that is confident in the gospel (it is the POWER of God for salvation; we don't need gimmicks or sales techniques)
- c. A culture that understands the danger of entertainment
- d. A culture that sees people clearly
- e. A culture that pulls together as one (especially in prayer)
- f. A culture in which people teach one another (What is the gospel? What is evangelism? What is conversion? How can we best share the gospel message? New converts taught these things... multiplication!!)
- g. A culture that models evangelism
- h. A culture in which people who share their faith are celebrated
- i. A culture that knows how to affirm and celebrate new life
- j. A culture that does ministry that feels risky and is dangerous
- k. A culture that understands that the church is the chosen and best method of evangelism