

Matthew 28:18-20

The Most Loving Thing...

Image Church // Love Your Neighbor: Week 2

Introduction

Well, good morning Image fam, I hope you're doing well! If it's your **first time** we're so glad that you're here with us this morning... We want to connect with you and so we would love for you to stop by the FTG tent, or **you can text GUEST to the number on the screen...**

Real quick, **just a reminder** that we're moving on **March 8th**, so make sure to mark your calendars for that day- it's going to be an exciting weekend and a great opportunity for you to invite people to join us as we celebrate the start of this next season in the life of our church!

All right, well last week we kicked off a brand-new series called **Love your neighbor** where we're going to be looking at how we practically live out the gospel in the way that we engage our neighbors as we break down the **what**, the **how** and the **who** behind it all...

As a church we're in a **1-year discipleship journey** where we're looking at, and striving to grow in **knowing Jesus and Make Him known...** And in this series, we're going to see how these two things are not separate of each other, but that they fit together...

Last week we laid the foundation for this series as we looked at what Jesus said in **Matthew 22** where Jesus lays out what's been referred to as the **Great Commandment** which is to **love God with all your heart, soul and mind, and to love our neighbor as yourself...**

And the reason why it's been called the **Great Commandment** is because Jesus says that everything else **depends** or **hangs** on these two things...

That doesn't mean that everything else is in Scripture is irrelevant or not important, it means that these two things are what everything else is pointing to! That ultimately, loving God and loving your neighbor are at the **heart** of God's redemptive plan for humanity...

That God's desire for us as Christians is to **love Him** and **love our neighbor...**

And so, this morning I want to look at the single greatest, and most primary way that you **love your neighbor as yourself...**

You know what that is? Well, ask yourself this question- *what is the single greatest thing that you need every day??*

The gospel... Gospel means *good news*, and what you and I need more than anything on a daily basis is the gospel... In the same way it's the greatest thing that our neighbors need, which means the greatest way that we can love them is by sharing the good news of Jesus with them...

See, the **Great Commandment** sets the stage, and leads the way for the **Great Commission** that we're going to be talking about today...

Traditionally, this charge to share the gospel this has been called **evangelism...** I don't know about you, but when I think about the evangelism here's what I think about:

- Pit Preacher at **UNC** holding signs and telling people they were going to hell...
- *Tracks: the \$20 Bill is the worst...*
- Chances are *some of you have had a bad experience* with **evangelism** and so that word may strike a chord with you...
 - And if you're here and you're not a Christian, you may have experienced this in a way that really turned you off to Christianity... *I'm sorry!*

Here's the thing **evangelism** is actually a great thing- there's nothing at all wrong with evangelism, the problem is it's often just executed in the wrong way...

This morning, I want to lay out for you the model that Jesus gives us for evangelism in **Matthew 28**... **If you have your Bibles go ahead and turn there...**

As you're turning there, I want to clarify the direction I am going with this... There are several types of evangelism...

- There's the **one-off times** where we should be intentional...
- There are times *through the vehicle of a local church* where there is an intentional effort to **broad gospel sowing** where a group of people go out and engage people in a specific area with the gospel...
- There are **evangelists** like Billy Graham who travel around and preach the gospel...

All of those are good things, and ways that evangelism *should happen*... But this morning I want to drill down on what evangelism should primarily look like within the context your everyday life rhythms...

Alright, so let's read through the whole text, and then I'm going to do a *play-by-play analysis* of each part of the text so that we can make sure we have a clear understanding of what it's saying... And then we'll get practical...

I think what happens a lot of times, is that because this is such a familiar text that often times it feels more like a **theory** instead of an **action plan**... So it's important we really get what Jesus lays out here. *Alright here we go...*

Matthew 28:18-20

18 Jesus came near and said to them, "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. **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 everything I have

commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

OK, so let's walk through this...

V. 18 Jesus starts off by saying: "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth."

This is the foundation... *Before Jesus tells us to do anything for him, he tells us what he can do for us here in **verse 18**. "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."*¹

Authority means **power**: Jesus is all-powerful and over everything... He put His absolute power on display in the **resurrection** in His triumph over the **natural** and **supernatural**!

And it's through the resurrection and His power over the natural and supernatural that Jesus makes it possible for us to be in a relationship with God...

- **He accomplished perfection for us in His life**... See, we failed to live up to the standards that God set as the perfect and Holy ruler of the Universe, and that failure is called **sin**, and that sin is what separates us from God...
 - It's in Jesus' life that He does what we couldn't, He perfectly obeys God for us...
- And then in Jesus death on the cross He deals with the **consequence** of sin... Jesus doesn't just deal with the **problem** of sin, He deals with the **penalty** of sin...
 - Jesus took the punishment that we deserved for the sin that we committed...
- And it was in His **resurrection** from the dead, that Jesus brought everything to completion... He conquered sin and death and freed us from condemnation... And extended to us new life through Him!

Jesus is **all-powerful** and He has **authority** over everything- there's nothing on earth that could stop Him, there's nothing outside of this earth that can hinder Him...

¹ John Piper, *Go and Make Disciples*. Nov. 14, 1982.

- Jesus is Immanuel- God with us, He is the Great High Priest, He is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, He is the Lion of Juda, He is the rock of ages, He is the one who holds all things together... *He has been exalted...*

Philippians 2:10-11

... so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow— in heaven and on earth and under the earth— **11** and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The question is do you believe?!?!?

Here's the deal, whether or not you believe who Jesus is, doesn't change **His** standing- He always has been and always will be in authority over all things...

- But whether or not **you** believe in who Jesus is, **does** change **your standing...**

See, when you believe in the finished work of Jesus it changes your standing, and when you're standing before God changes, everything changes...

- If Jesus is your savior, then He is also your Lord... ***It's not one without the other...***

When you **surrender** to Jesus as your Savior and Lord, it means that you completely **submit** to Him, that your **allegiance** is with Him... That you are loyal to Him as the true King of your life...

Which is why Jesus uses the word **therefor** in **verse 19** as He transitions to what He's calling us to...

This is so important because it's the connecting piece between **who Jesus is** and **what we're called too...**

That **therefor** means that because your **allegiance** is to Christ and He has power and authority over everything, that you have you have the **right** and the **ability** to go and make disciples...

2 Cor. 5:20 would say it like this: ***you're an ambassador of Jesus!***

And what He's asking us to do is *reasonable*, notice, *Jesus didn't say, "Do it because I told you to." He said, "Do it because all authority is mine." Nothing is more reasonable and more **loving** than to petition rebellious humans to turn and trust in Jesus and give their devotion to the King of Kings!*²

Let's look at **verse 19**

He says: **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,

What is a disciple?

- A disciple by biblical definition is a follower of Jesus.

How do we **make a disciple?**

Jesus said in **Matthew 16:24**: **If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.**

So, making disciples is calling people to **deny** themselves, and **to take up their cross...**

IOW: It's a call to submit to the Lordship of Christ in light of who He is and what He's done through the gospel... Turning from sin to the Savior...

- And it's a call to surrender to Jesus by laying down your life to where life is no longer about you but it's about Him...

Here's the other thing to notice about what Jesus says here when it comes to making disciples, He says to engage **ALL NATIONS** with this good news of the gospel...

² Ibid

Jesus said this, because He **created** all of the nations...He loves the nations, and he died for the nations...

You can't help but see the division that exists in our culture today...And what we need to know is that the foundation for change and unity is found in the gospel...

Listen, our framework for viewing people is broken, but the gospel gives us a new frame work, a new lens to view people through... One of unity and reconciliation.

See the gospel eliminates any division among nations or ethnicities you know why? Because in the gospel you see that man has one problem: sin; there's one Savior: Jesus; we're all part of 1 race: Human; with one hope: the resurrection.³

The gospel brings together people who are different for the glory of God. That's the beauty of **Ephesians 2!**

But even more beautiful is the fact that that's exactly what Jesus did for you, He came after you when you were nothing like Him!

As we continue in this series we're going to continue to press into the implications of this...

But what you need to understand is that the call to make disciples is not a call to share with only the people who are **like you** or only the people you **want** to share with... Or the people you're most **comfortable** with... it's a call to share with all nations, and it's a call that's going to make you uncomfortable...

Back to **verse 19**, Jesus then gives the instruction to celebrate the new disciple *or Jesus follower*, by **Baptizing** them...

Really quick:

- Baptism is an outward expression of an inward heart change.
- Very clear on the order here...
- Baptism is a declaration- it reveals that your identity is now in Christ- it's a celebration for the church as they witness the work of God.
 - Some of you need to do that- stop by the connection center after our gathering...

Alright here's what happens, most of the time people **stop right there and say go get 'em**... But in doing that we miss a massive part of all this that Jesus lays out in **verse 20**... That actually gives us even more clarity...

Let's look at it: So, **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, *then Jesus says:* **20 teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you**. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

Here's what you need to see that's so important in **verse 20**:

Disciple-making is the call to share the message of Jesus... but here's the thing, **it doesn't stop** after somebody comes to faith in Christ... Your job as a **disciple maker** is to teach the new **Jesus follower** what it means to follow Jesus... There's a word for this, it's called **discipleship!**

Discipleship is teaching someone what it looks like to follow Jesus...

- This means that **you** as a Christian need to know what it looks like to follow Jesus!
- **Christianity is about more than just conversion!** Which is why Christianity isn't mass produced, it's something that's deeply personal...

It's why we can never stop growing as disciples in what it means to follow Jesus, because the expectation is that we're able to bring others along with us...

³ Chris Green, The Summit Church. RDU, NC

Now, before you feel incredibly overwhelmed by this understand that ***discipleship is yes, an individual responsibility, but it's also a shared task***...

This is why the **local church** is so important, and why it's vital that you invite new disciples, new Jesus followers into the church so that we can dispel them together...

- For this to work the way that God's designed it, you have to understand that what we're doing here this morning, is **not** the full extent of the church... This is one element of the church, it is a form of discipleship, but it's not all encompassing- it's not the complete essence of discipleship...

Discipleship primarily happens through relationships... Jesus modeled this for us... Then we see it lived out in the **NT Church**...

- This is why we have **Community Groups** and why they are so important... Because this is where life together happens...

*For some of you the reason why you're not discipling other people is because you don't have a place to bring them into life on life relationships with other believers...

Now, here's a common question that comes up often in all this...

What does discipleship actually look like?? What does it look like to teach someone all that Jesus has commanded??? It feels big and it seems like a lot, do we have a framework for this??

Yes, the Bible! Ok, let me help put some handles on this for you so that I can help drive this home...

Here's what we've put together as a church based on what the Bible holds up for us when it comes to following Jesus...

Discipleship is when a disciple responding to the gospel by growing as a:

- **Worshiper**: Growing in the knowledge of God, and in your love for God, having right beliefs, right practices and right affections.

- **Family Member**: Gathering regularly with the family of God corporately, and communally throughout the week for the purpose of growing in personal holiness, love for one another and mission
- **Steward**: Leveraging your time, talent and treasure through service, hospitality, and generosity for the sake of the church family and your neighbor
- **Missionary**: Living as an ambassador of Christ by engaging the lost with the gospel in order to show what it means to know, love and follow Jesus

That's the **framework** for what it means to teach everything that Jesus has commanded... It's not all encompassing, but it's a framework toward that end... Which is why we orient what we do as a church around growing in these areas...

So, there you have it, we just walked through the **blueprint** for the **single greatest way** that we can love your neighbor, and that is by sharing Jesus and showing what it means to follow Jesus...

And here's the reality that we have to understand... If your allegiance is to Christ, then this is the mission of our lives.

That the primary motivation behind everything that we do is **sharing** Jesus and **showing** what it means to follow Jesus!

- Sometimes you may be sharing, and other times you may be showing...
- A lot of times these things go hand in hand...

But the primary way that either of these two things happen in everyday life is by being committed and intentional to live this out...

- We have to understand that at the heart of this is **consistency**, consistency in your efforts, and consistency with **who** your being intentional to engage...
- It takes time and effort, it takes reorienting your priorities, and to be honest it's costly...

- Which is why we have to keep coming back to the Lordship of Christ, remembering who he is and what He's done, this is the motivation for us...

Very practically here, I want to give you some ways to think through to help you navigate this...

Proximity: Who is around you that needs to hear about Jesus?

Examples:

- Your spouse-
- Your kids- *it's why we want to partner with you in your discipleship efforts...*
- You coworkers
- You physical neighbors
- Your friend

How can you use every day experiences to share the hope of Jesus?

Who can you invite into your Community Group to experience what it means to walk with Jesus??

How can you invite people into your life so that you can begin to build a relationship with them that leads to the opportunity to share Jesus with them?

What are you already doing that you can use with gospel intentionality??

- We always say here, intersection not addition...
- If you think addition it will paralyze you...

Examples: You have to eat, you watch shows or ball games, invite people to join... Help your neighbor in their yard or by watching their kids...

- Do your kids play sports or do activities? How do you be intentional with those opportunities?

Here's something else to think through in this:

How can you intersect your life with people outside of your normal circle with the gospel? How can you engage with people from different nations with the gospel??

- In a lot of ways, we have the nations here in ATL. But are we engaging with them?

How can you create rhythms for this?

Going to places where you normally wouldn't go to meet people you normally wouldn't meet... Maybe there's someone at your work or around you already that's different than you, how can you build a relationship with them? Not because they are a project but because they are a valuable creation made in the Image of God and you can learn from them in so many ways if you will engage with them...

And ultimately, at the end of the day their heart needs what your heart needs- and your intentionality to learn and engage helps create a bridge for sharing the most loving message on earth...

Local ministry opportunities:

- This puts you in a place where you're able to build relationships with people who are different than you...
- By the way this is why we don't like one off projects... They eliminate the opportunity to build a relationship and bridge to the gospel...
- We don't just want to be about charitable acts- we want to be about the gospel and the gospel goes beyond charity because it restores dignity which is something charity can't do.

The goal behind everything that we do is building relationships so that we can do exactly what Jesus has called us to do...

Missions trips is another opportunity to

One could be making it a priority each year to go on a mission trip- this could be a natural life rhythm that you establish for you and your wife or you and your kids or even for the family...

Going on a mission trip helps orient our hearts around the mission that God's given us... It awakens you to the realities of the need for the gospel... We forget this in our context...

- **Missions fair after the service**, everyone should be there... There is no reason to not find out more... All you're doing is getting info...

Here's the last part of this I want you to think through...

For those that have trusted in Jesus, how can you leverage those same relationships and those same life rhythms to help people grow as a disciple?

- Often times when you press in here you may find that they have never trusted in Jesus...
- How do you help people engage in the local church?
- How can you help them grow as a Christ follower?
- As a Christian, you're charged with teaching others what it means to follow Jesus...
- This is where the multiplication happens... You take a new disciple and disciple them to be a ***disciple-maker!***

How does your life rhythms enable you to take others deeper in their walk with Jesus? ***Or*** maybe how does your life disable you from this?

Y'all listen, at the end of the day we want everything to be about Jesus- We want to constantly be pointing people to Him...

Often times it starts with our actions but then eventually it has to come out in words as we share the greatest news on earth...

And we want to be pressing deeper, and diving deeper in to who Jesus is so that we can know what it means to follow Him and we want to lead others toward that end...

Conclusion [VAMP]

Here's the encouragement in all of this, Jesus finishes by saying:

And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

This is your confidence!

Now, this is very important here: We are not the ones that make people come to Christ, God does, "No one comes to the father unless the spirit draws"

Here's the cool part about that- when you have trusted in Christ you get the Holy Spirit, so God can use the Holy Spirit through you to draw people to Himself.

That's was God's plan, that why Jesus left instead of staying here- so that we could get the Holy Spirit (**John 16:7**).

Scripture is very clear that God uses us as an instrument to declare the gospel, **2 Corinthians 5** – We are ambassadors of Christ message, He is making his appeal through us!

Let me ask you this- Is the message of Jesus being made known through you?

Or are there othering things that you're making known that have nothing to do with the message of Jesus?? ...

It's because God loved you that you're able to love your neighbor and the greatest and most loving thing that you can do is share the hope of Jesus!

Would everything that we do be to that end!

Some of you need to trust in Jesus today...

Pray