

Our Great Commission

Matthew 16:18-19; 28:18-20

As this week progressed... and I do mean progress... in light of some very, very exciting possibilities for this church... Possibilities I think you should now all hear about and possibly be involved with it... I grappled with the possibility of changing the subject of my sermon this morning...

I didn't finish my sermon last week... I had probably about twenty minutes more to go... On Wednesday I thought... I will finish my sermon then spend the rest of the time sharing with you this exciting possibility.

By 3:00 on Wednesday I was ready to tell Holly to change the sermon title completely... Do I have a right to change my mind? Some of you were possibly anxious to hear the rest of speaking in tongues in 1st Corinthians 14.... Others of you were anxious for the topic of tongues to cease and hoping to get it done so we could move on.

Well...I do have the right to change my mind... A profound meme flashed across my computer screen... a quote from Oprah Winfrey.... "*You have the right to change your mind!*"....seriously!... so with Oprah's blessing and wisdom... I have changed my mind and my sermon for this morning!... Lord willing we will conclude 1st Corinthians 14 next week!

What I want to do this morning is lay the biblical ground work and context for what we want to present to you... So for the next few minutes... I would like to center our thoughts on three passages of scripture... In Romans and in the gospel of Matthew... most of you are familiar with them... if you would first turn to Matthew 16...we will be looking at verses 18-19.

Some of you have had your dreams dashed... what were to be exciting plans for your lives didn't turn out... financial disasters... health issues... relational tragedies... you worked hard, saved your money for retirement... planning to golf three days a week... only to retire and suffer a debilitating stroke changing your future for the rest of your life...

The twelve disciples of Jesus are in this category of disappointment... they had left their professions and their homes to follow Jesus... their Messiah... they knew who Jesus was... in verse 16 Simon Peter says to Jesus after being asked that probing question by Jesus... *who do you say that I am?*

Peter said... **You are the Christ... the Son of the living God...** the twelve knew Jesus was the Messiah... but they had great expectations from their Messiah... they had expected that with the Messiah's arrival the entire political system would be taken over in Israel...

They expected the Jewish Messiah to come and throw out all of Rome... and establish a new kingdom that embraced the entire world... *we've been following you for almost three years... but where is that kingdom?...* The disciples looked around and what did they see at this time?

They saw that they were apparently alone in their convictions... their expectations... this “new kingdom” wasn’t apparently happening... people were rejecting this Messiah... this idea of a great spiritual revival... wasn’t happening...

This small band of twelve men following this Messiah felt more like they were on the run... they had ended up to the farthest northern point in the land of Israel... basically hiding out in an obscure town called Caesarea Philippi... on the border of what is now Lebanon.

They were trying to regroup... reenergize their mission... they needed instruction from their leader the Messiah Jesus Christ... They had abandoned everything... for the promise of this new kingdom... now they are huddled up wondering what in the world is going to happen to them...

Unfulfilled hopes... disappointment in outcomes... dashed dreams... Jesus is going to tell them some news that will not help them much... down in verse 21... imagine getting this news as a disciple:

Read verse 21

I don’t think they heard the **be raised on the third day** part... I think all they heard was this Messiah... this “Savior” that they gave up their lives to follow was going to be tortured and slaughtered. That’s why Peter blurts out **God forbid it! Lord this shall NEVER happen to you!**

The rest of the Messiah’s plan?... **if you want to follow me... you will also have to take up your cross and follow me... be willing to lose your life in order to have life.**

The point for us is... that was a time when the world looked bleak... An oppressive government... a sense of hopelessness... bleak future in front of them... they were looking at a future of persecution... of martyrdom...

But Jesus had it handled... He looked the disciples in the eyes... specifically Peter.. and He delivers to them some of the most profound... affirming... triumphal... hopeful words... Jesus says **I will build My church.**

Read verse 18

I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH!... These are amazing... profound... powerful words... did the disciples get it?... not yet.... Something I haven’t thought about until this week... when the disciples heard these words... they didn’t mean much if anything to them.

The disciples are sitting around Jesus... hanging on His every word... waiting for some big powerful hopeful words... Jesus opens His mouth and says **I will build My church....** They don’t know what a church is! They’ve never seen a church... heard about church... there’s never been a church!

They've never seen a church building... they've never heard of any organization calling itself a church!... Jesus probably was speaking to them in Aramaic... He would have said... *I will build My qahal*... translated "I will build my congregation"....

A congregation would have been a body of believers assembled together in the name of the Lord... If He spoke in Greek and if the Jews could understand Greek He would have said *I will build my ekklesia*... assembled congregation.... *My called out ones*....

So what the disciples heard was... *I will assemble My redeemed people together*... *I am going to collect all My people together*... Now... these words were like a salve (sav) on a wound for these disciples... why?

1. What Jesus said He said with certainty. I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH... it's going to happen!... the world looks bleak... you think your future is awful... don't worry... you are a part of THE CHURCH... you are one of the called out ones... and I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH.

That's a divine promise... I hope you're putting all this in today's context as you listen... the world doesn't look so great today either does it?... we've not come to the place where they were but it's pretty bad!

All the news is telling us that the church is failing... the numbers are falling... people are leaving the church... churches are dying.... But the words of Jesus are no less true today.... JESUS IS STILL BUILDING HIS CHURCH!

What about all the failing churches today?.... that's a part of Jesus's building plan!... many churches need to die... not all churches are churches build by Jesus!....another reason these words are so comforting... look who's doing the building!

2. I...will build My church. Jesus is the builder... we must never forget that!... I'm not the builder of the church.... Either are you!...*No... I remember building this building!... 2006... we had plans drawn up... we had the Alabama Baptist Builders raise the walls... hired some contractors... I remember nailing a few boards myself!*... We just build a building and called it a church!

What is Jesus building?... **He's** assembling His people together... He chose His people... and He brings His people into His body... remember?... all Christians become the body of Christ... Jesus is doing that!.... oh.... Remember He gave us each the Holy Spirit... and each a spiritual gift that is to be used to "build up that body"?... we have a part to play in the building of His church..... Jesus is the builder.

John MacArthur in his commentary: *We cannot figure out a better way to get more folks in than God had in mind... Nor can we mess it up so fewer arrive than He planned on. It doesn't matter what human means we use... we cannot increase the number God has ordained, nor can we decrease it by our ineptitude... **WE ARE ENDEAVORING TO BE HOLY AND FAITHFUL AND OBEDIENT SO THAT GOD CAN DO HIS WORK AND WE MAY HAVE THE PRIVILEGE OF BEING INSTRUMENTS IN IT.***

3. The church is His... the body of Jesus Christ... the church is His body... each part He purchased with a price... His blood... being His church He is the one to be glorified!... this is not our church... it is Christ's body....His possession...

4. The church is invincible and will be triumphant.... This is the great news... The disciples didn't understand that... but we can... *Jesus WILL assemble all His called out ones... His people... every Christian together... and they will be invincible and triumphant...* against what?

(18)... **the gates of hades...** what's that?... most people think Jesus was talking about Satan... The church will be triumphant over everything that Satan throws at it... that is true but I don't think that is what Jesus is saying here... we can get that in the book of Revelation.... But here.

The gates of hades is speaking about death... it is the idea that death has absolutely no power over God's redeemed people... the gates aren't strong enough!... not strong enough to imprison the church of Jesus Christ!... AMEN?

The church is a beautiful thing... it should be our most cherished thing... not the building!... but the victorious body of Christ... so what now?... are we to just relax on our hammocks and wait for Jesus to finish building the church and wait for Him to come for His bride.... The church?

He's doing it all, right?

What about our neighbors who don't know Christ?... what about the majority walking the same streets we walk on who has no eternal hope of any kind other than to return to the earth as dust?... what about the doors of the church of Jesus Christ still open?... are we so comfortable and smug to not invite the lost in?

Let's take a look at another familiar passage... turn to the end of Matthew's gospel to chapter 28... In chapter 16 Jesus was foretelling His death and resurrection... in chapter 28...all that has happened... these are the final words of the resurrected Jesus to His disciples prior to His ascension.

Remember chapter 16... Jesus promises triumphal eternal victory for the church He is building... the building has not stopped!... He's still building... and He wants us to be a part of that building.... So He delivers marching orders to His disciples and to all disciples since.

Read verse 16 (only eleven because Judas had betrayed Jesus and killed himself)

Read verses 17 & 18

This is vital... before telling His disciples what they were to do... their mission... and our mission... He establishes His absolute pervasive authority... **SUBMISSION TO THE ABSOLUTE SOVEREIGNTY OF JESUS CHRIST IS NOT A BELIEVERS OPTION BUT IS ONE'S SUPREME OBLIGATION**...

So in light of this absolute sovereign authority... Jesus commands them and us:

Read verses 19-20

BECAUSE I AM THE SOVEREIGN LORD OF THE UNIVERSE I HAVE BOTH THE AUTHORITY TO COMMAND YOU TO BE MY WITNESSES....AND.... THE POWER TO ENABLE YOU TO OBEY THAT COMMAND.

What Jesus is saying is... I want you to go out from where you are right now... and share the gospel to everyone who is not a part of My body...His church... we call this the Great Commission... Jesus wants us to make it OUR commission.

Our commission given to us by Jesus Christ Himself is His command for us to bring unbelievers to a saving knowledge of Himself...Jesus Christ... each one of us are to be His instruments for making disciples... that was the mission given by Jesus to the eleven..... and it still is for each one of us today.

Someday we will flesh out this entire command... we could spend a month on baptism... and the intricacies of being a disciple... suffice it today.... We've been given a command to share the gospel...

[notice what the mission is... it is NOT go and transform the politics of the nation...it's not even fight the cultural battles...]

“THE LAST COMMAND OF JESUS MUST REMAIN THE FIRST PRIORITY OF THE CHURCH!” - H.B. Charles

Romans 10... A little Romans here...the apostle Paul classically explains how one is saved... Verse 9

If you **confess** with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and **believe** in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; 10 for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. 11 For the Scripture says, “Whoever believes in Him will not be put to shame.” 12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him; 13 for **“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”**

That's the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ!... all of you in this room who are truly Christians came to the Lord in this way... you heard the word, the gospel... you confessed from your heart Jesus as Lord of your life...you called upon His name!

How did you hear that gospel?... that's what Paul rhetorically asks in the verses to follow... listen to these:

14 How then are they to call on Him in whom they have not believed?... How are they to believe in Him whom they have not heard?... And how are they to hear without a preacher? 15 But how are they to preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written: **“How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news of good things!”**

Every part of the body... every Christian... every member of the body of Christ has the marching orders to go into all the world... be the beautiful feet that delivers the good news of good things!

So... we are given this great promise of Jesus Christ building His church...and the “Great Commission directly from Jesus Christ...This is a part of that building up the church of Jesus Christ... Notice the first word of the command?... **GO!**... that means leave this building!...*Where do we go?*... Glad you asked!...I’ve got some ideas

Listen to this:

Early in the year... I received a call resulting in a meeting with Mitchell Gibbs the then new pastor of Orchards Baptist Church in Lewiston... one of our sister churches... nice meeting... but he came to share his desire to spread the gospel in the L.C. Valley....maybe....like... Clarkston.... OUTSIDE the walls of our churches... wondered if we would be interested in such a vision.

I had not thought about that ever... He shared it with Randy as well... that was that... back to work..... a couple of months later... I received a call at the fairly new pastor of Tammany View Baptist Church in Lewiston... Dan Chambers...

Dan said, there is a young man our church with a vision for being a part of planting a church in the L.C. Valley... specifically Clarkston... He explained to me their church Tammany View was extended as far as they could be and wondered if we would be interested.....HMMM

Back to work

A month or so later I received a phone call from Grant Nollman... some of you remember Grant... He and his family were members here until he left his job and went to Dallas Theological Seminary...after seminary, Grant and family moved to the L.C. Valley and he has been in various ministries in the valley... well...

Grant called and asked... have you ever thought about planting a church in the L.C. Valley?... maybe Clarkston?

I received a letter from the North West Baptist Convention inquiring if any churches in the Moscow/Pulman area would be interested in planting a churchin the L.C. Valley.... like... Clarkston.

Hmmmmm....back to work...

Robert Selzer...our Robert Selzer made an appointment with me to just to get to know each other... he shared with me his passion and vision for planting a church.... In the ... L.C. Valley.... Maybe.... Clarkston!... would we be interested?

I said... We'll pray about it and if God gives us a sign!.... *I don't know... what would you have said!!!*

WHERE DO WE GO?.....verse 19

Since then... we've had many meetings with Robert... Prayed about it...the elders have discussed this... interesting elder meeting... after telling them the same story you all just heard... I said what do you guys think?.... *we're not going to say no!!!!*

I emphasize... what you are now going to hear was not a whim of the moment impulsive idea... this is the result of months of prayer, discussion, planning, seeking God's wisdom... talking to people and pastors in the LC Valley... and all of that is still going on....we've a ways to go...

But the "*what do you think about a church plants in the L.C. Valley, maybe Clarkston* has become a real vision, possible mission.... For all of here at Trinity... our opportunity to become those beautiful feet in spreading the good news.... Specifically to the L.C. Valley

If you have not had the pleasure of meeting Robert Selzler yet.... I would like to introduce him to you now...