

## ***Christ Among the Nations*** **Luke 24:44-47**

We are wrapping up our short three week series on the Christ-Centered Life this morning. Our first week we talked about Christ at Home and tried to look at our homes through the lens of the gospel. Last week we talked about Christ at Church and the fact that he is the head of his body, the church. This morning we are going to look at Christ Among the Nations.

Let me invite your attention to Luke 24 this morning, but as you do I want to recognize that the topic of global missions, that is, the call to go and make disciples of all nations, isn't completely clear for many Christians.

For example, for some it may be **unknown**. In fact, in a recent survey, a sample of U.S. churchgoers was asked if they had previously, "heard of the Great Commission."<sup>1</sup> The results of the survey revealed that 51% of respondents said they did not know the term, 25% said they had heard of the term but could not recall the meaning, and 6% said they were not sure. Only 17% percent of those surveyed indicated that they had heard of the term and were able to define it. Again, that is 83% of surveyed churchgoers were not able to explain Jesus' commissioning of the church to make disciples of all nations.

Again, for some the task of missions is unknown. For others it is **misunderstood**. For them, missions might be something that a few people are involved in, but it is more of an option, like one item on the Christian's spiritual buffet. Missions is not something that looks appealing to them so they walk past it on to something else they'd rather have on their plate. OR, for some mission is simply acts of mercy to those in dire need, void of sharing the gospel, baptizing new believers, and planting churches.

So missions is unknown or misunderstood, or especially more recently, for some, missions is simply **wrong**. In their eyes, for an American missionary to go overseas and make disciples is nothing more than an act of colonialism. An oppressive act by a "white savior" who arrogantly spreads their "superior" ways.

However, it is vital that we understand what the Bible says about global missions because without it, I believe, we actually diminish God's work in the gospel and we will live Christian lives that fall short of God's plan and calling for life in this world.

So, again, let's look at Luke 24 this morning...

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<sup>1</sup> "51% of Churchgoers Don't Know of the Great Commission." Barna, March 27, 2018. <https://www.barna.com/research/half-churchgoers-not-heard-great-commission/>.

This is after Jesus' arrest, trial, and crucifixion. This is after his burial and resurrection. Here in Luke 24, Jesus appears to a few disciples on the road to Emmaus and then appears to more disciples back in Jerusalem...

**Luke 24:44-45**

**44** He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."

**45** Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures.

So, Jesus begins to explain what has happened and why saying this is what was written about me in the Scriptures: the Law, Prophets, and Psalms. In other words, all of the Hebrew Scripture, all of the Old Testament, was pointing to the same thing.

He goes on...

**Luke 24:46-49**

**46** He told them, "This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, **47** and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. **48** You are witnesses of these things. **49** I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."

What I really want us to grasp in those verses is that the entirety of the Scriptures has in its sight not only the death and resurrection of Jesus, but the entirety of the Scriptures also has the goal of repentance for the forgiveness of sins to be preached to all nations. In other words, the goal for the nations to be reached with the good news of the gospel was not a new idea for Jesus. It was not a new task for the Church. It was not a new plan for the New Testament.

Missions has always been the plan of God. And all of history, as recorded in Scripture, shows it.

So, what I want to do is give a simple, quick run through of some of the major missions plot points within the story of Scripture.

**OVERVIEW OF BIBLE'S MISSIONAL STORY**

In the book of Genesis, where the Bible begins, where all of history begins, we read of the creation account. God makes all things, including Adam and Eve, placing them in the Garden of Eden. He gives them boundaries, very wide boundaries, for life in the garden under his rule and reign.

We know the story, Adam and Eve disobey, they eat of the fruit that they were told not to, and in Genesis chapter 3 we read that they knew they had done wrong and so they hide when they sense the Lord coming their direction.

**Genesis 3:9**

But the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?"

Now, does the Lord know where they are? Yes, of course he does. He is being quite gentle with them, in my opinion. Not raging through the garden in a pillar of fire, but approaching them with ease, he asks, "Where are you?"

RC Sproul said, it's as if the rest of the Bible is the story of God searching out and continually asking that question of his people. "Where are you?"

Jumping ahead in the storyline we come to Genesis 12 where we come across a major plot point in the storyline of Scripture, what we call the Abrahamic Covenant, this moment when God makes a promise to a man named Abram saying...

**Genesis 12:1-3**

**1** The Lord had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. **2** "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. **3** I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

This promise God makes with Abram is that he would give Abram many descendants. So many, in fact, that they will become a great nation. And that great nation will ultimately be a blessing not just to each other, but as God said, "all peoples on earth."

It is here not long after the fall of Adam and Eve, God says I am going to work so that my people, who I will redeem from the penalty and power of sin and death, will be made up from every nation on earth.

And so history continues and God makes good on his promise. He gives Abraham many, many descendants, making a new nation, the nation of Israel, and in establishing this nation he desires not only a nation that lives in accordance with his law but a nation that does so with all other nations in view.

In fact, in Deuteronomy, before his death, Moses is reminding Israel about the covenant they made with God at Sinai and notice what he says...

**Deuteronomy 4:5-8**

**5** See, I have taught you decrees and laws as the Lord my God commanded me, so that you may follow them in the land you are entering to take possession of it.

**6** Observe them carefully, for this will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations, who will hear about all these decrees and say, “Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.” **7** What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the Lord our God is near us whenever we pray to him? **8** And what other nation is so great as to have such righteous decrees and laws as this body of laws I am setting before you today?

In other words, Moses reminds them, if you really do walk according to decrees of the law, the peoples of other nations will look at us and say, wow, that nation is incredible and even more than that, wow, the God of this nation is incredible.

They were to live with the nations in view. That they might know the one, true, living God.

And we see this play out a number of times in the Old Testament, Gentiles believing and becoming a part of God’s people. Rahab, for example, a non-Jew living in Jericho, expresses faith in God and seeks refuge and salvation and she, along with her family, are spared of judgment. But the Bible doesn’t say that she is merely spared judgment, it says that she finds a home with God’s people Israel.

We can read in the Psalms, the songs of God’s people, that desire to see God known and worshipped by all nations.

#### **Psalm 67**

**1** May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine on us— **2** so that your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations. **3** May the peoples praise you, God; may all the peoples praise you. **4** May the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you rule the peoples with equity and guide the nations of the earth. **5** May the peoples praise you, God; may all the peoples praise you. **6** The land yields its harvest; God, our God, blesses us. **7** May God bless us still, so that all the ends of the earth will fear him.

#### **Psalm 96:1-3**

**1** Sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth. **2** Sing to the Lord, praise his name; proclaim his salvation day after day. **3** Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples.

Again, God’s people overcome by the majesty and goodness of the Lord react by saying, let the whole world know about this majesty and goodness!

We could move on to the prophets of the Old Testament. Prophets were mouthpieces for God who spoke to his people. And they mainly spoke a word of warning. They warned God's people concerning their sin and idolatry and called them back to repentance.

But, they also brought a word of hope. That despite Israel's failing, God would remain faithful. That one day God would really make good on his promises. He really will provide a Messiah to deliver his people.

Just one example is found in Isaiah 49, in describing the coming "Servant of the Lord," the prophet declares...

**Isaiah 49:6**

he says: "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."

Again, this servant, we know as Jesus, will come to not only redeem from within Israel, but also from without, reaching to the end of the earth.

Then in our Bibles we come to Jesus, who is sent by the Father, steps into his creation, has compassion on the crowds he sees, and continues in the mission of redemption and reconciliation through his life, death, and resurrection.

And Jesus, after his resurrection, sends the Church, to continue in this mission, bringing the gospel to the ends of the earth.

In fact, we find this commission in each of the four gospels and in Acts. We already saw it in Luke, but see also in Matthew 28...

**Matthew 28:18-20**

**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."

Then in Acts we see the early church bring the good news of the gospel starting in Jerusalem to the ends of the known world, seeing those of different people groups put their faith in Jesus and new local churches planted.

And then as we jump to the end of the Bible, to the book of Revelation, the apostle John is given a glimpse of this heavenly scene and shares it with us...

**Revelation 5:9-10**

**9** And they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, **10** and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.”

So, from beginning to end, the Bible is a record of the mission of God to redeem lost men and women from every tribe, nation, and tongue. As Jesus taught in Luke 24, the trajectory of the gospel is the proclamation of his life, death, and resurrection to the nations.

Now, here’s why this is important for us. As we grasp Scripture’s testimony concerning the work of God in Christ and the global scope of which that work constitutes, we are confronted with an important realization: **We can not claim to be passionate about the gospel if we are apathetic towards the nations.** Another way to put it might be that **a gospel-centered church will be a global-minded church. Individually, a gospel-centered Christian will be a global-minded Christian.**

One of the things we try to instill in our church is a knowledge of the gospel and how to apply the gospel to all of life. We should love the *content* of the gospel, but we shouldn’t neglect the *scope* of the gospel or the *messengers* of the gospel.

Now, what might this look like, **practically?**

Concerning the options for a Christian’s involvement in global missions, John Piper once said we have three: “Go, send, or disobey.”

The point of course being that every single Christian is called to missions in one way or another. God’s people are called to God’s mission. The church is commissioned to make disciples, but that will look differently for different people.

**For some, INVOLVEMENT IN MISSIONS MEANS GOING**

**Romans 10:13-15**

**13** For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” **14** How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? **15** And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!”

Jesus has sent us to make disciples, and there isn't a different plan than us going. The church is the means through which God has decided to reach the nations with the gospel. So, involvement in missions means going. That will look differently for different people.

That might mean serving on a short-term missions trip. We hope to create some opportunities for that in the next year or so.

For some, that might mean serving long-term. It might mean moving overseas to live and minister among an unreached people group or a nation with little to no access to the gospel.

For some, it might mean taking the skills and abilities that you've been blessed with and intentionally finding a job overseas so that you can root yourself in a different place to impact people in a different culture through your career.

It might mean intentionally reaching out the nations that we find here in our city, whom the Lord has brought near to us because they are seeking a better life.

We are blessed to have sent out a few missionaries from Grace Road to serve in Cambodia and Costa Rica, and it is my prayer that we send many more. So, I want to challenge you this morning, could God be calling you to go? Now, I know immediate pushback, thinking I could never go. But if God is calling you I want to gently challenge you that you aren't exempt from the call to go just because you have a mortgage...or children...or an established career. When the King calls on his ambassadors to go, we joyfully take up that calling.

So, involvement in missions means going; when and where might the Lord be calling you to go?

Of course, not everyone is called or even qualified to go, but for everyone else, we are to be involved in sending.

Involvement in missions also means sending, and that involves a couple of ideas:

### **INVOLVEMENT IN MISSIONS MEANS PRAYING**

#### **Col. 4:2-4**

**2** Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. **3** At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the

mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison— **4** that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak.

It means learning about our missionary partners who regularly send out updates with prayer requests.

It means praying for gospel workers that they might be fruitful in their efforts, praying that they would cling to the gospel themselves and maintain their own personal walk with the Lord.

It means learning about the nations of the world and their spiritual needs. It means learning about the over 7,000 unreached people groups around the world and regularly praying for them.

Ultimately, it means expanding our prayer beyond our own personal needs and wants to encompass the nations, echoing Jesus' prayer, "your kingdom come."

Do you regularly pray for gospel workers? Do you regularly pray for other nations and people groups, praying that the church would flourish there through the spread of the gospel?

## **INVOLVEMENT IN MISSIONS MEANS GIVING**

### **Philippians 4:18**

I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God.

Missions takes money. There is no way around it. A portion of our church budget goes to our international partners. Financial sacrifice is needed for the glory of God among the nations. To financially give so that you can serve on a short term trip or give to a ministry or missionary that they might minister is a great use of our resources.

Go. Send. Or Disobey. These are our options when it comes to participating in the mission of God.

But ultimately, participating in missions should be motivated by more than obligation. Though Jesus' commands should be enough.

The Bible is the story of God's work in the gospel, so, far from trying to guilt you into serving or being concerned for the nations because that is what a good Christian is



supposed to do, it should be the natural response to what God has done for us in Christ.

We go because Jesus went. He, sent by the Father, laid down his own glory, came into this world, stepped into our brokenness, and sought out the lost. We go because following Jesus necessitates our movement to our world.

This means, because God moved toward you, you can move towards others. Because God generously and sacrificially gave His Son as a substitute for your sins, you can give generously and sacrificially. Because Jesus left the glories of heaven and entered this messed up and broken world, you can leave what is comfortable and step into a messed up and broken world.

So, let me leave you with this challenge once again - recognize the heart of God for the nations, hear the call of God to move toward the nations, and embrace your place within God's work among the nations.

## **COMMUNION**

To remember the sending of Jesus into the world and his sacrifice for us and the nations, we were given the gift of communion. We eat the bread together and drink the juice together recognizing that what Jesus has accomplished for us is good news for the world.

## **CONFESSION**

## **PRAYER**

## **ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

### **1 John 2:1-2**

**1** My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

**2** He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

## **VERSES**

Luke 24:44-45

Luke 24:46-49

Genesis 3:9

Genesis 12:1-3  
Deuteronomy 4:5-8  
Psalm 67:1-7  
Psalm 96:1-3  
Isaiah 49:6  
Matthew 28:18-20  
Revelation 5:9-10  
Romans 10:13-15  
Colossians 4:2-4  
Philippians 4:18  
1 John 2:1-2

### **SERMON DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. How familiar are you with global missions?
2. Do you know what the “Great Commission” is?
3. What did Cody mean when he said, “We cannot claim to be passionate about the gospel if we are apathetic towards the nations”?
4. Have you ever considered going overseas?
5. Do you know our missionary partners? Consider learning more about them, praying for them, and communicating with them.
6. Are you involved in giving that the gospel might go to the nations?