

MBC - 1/26/2020 - Pastor Doug Thompson
 SERIES: KEEPING OUR FOCUS - PT. 3
 “Looking Outward”
 Matthew 28:16-20

I. Jesus told us to go.

Jesus is preparing to ascend to heaven, to return to His Father to rule and reign over His church from heaven, but before He goes, He gives His church our *primary responsibility in this world until He returns*. This is it: to go and make disciples of all the nations. It’s not primarily upward toward God, or inward toward other believers, it’s *outward* toward the lost world.

- Matthew 28:16-20 ¹⁶Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. ¹⁷And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. ¹⁸And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

(Prayer - preaching to the choir - but we want to “abound more and more, with knowledge and discernment,” . . .)

I want you to leave here convinced that the Great Commission is our commission - yours and mine - and I want you to know your part in fulfilling our outward priority. John MacArthur preached on this passage. He said this—

“I know we enjoy Christian fellowship and it is rich and rewarding but it is not our primary responsibility. I know that we are called to praise and worship and that too is rich and enriching but that is not our primary responsibility. I know we are called to learn the Word of God, to teach, that we might understand better the Scripture but that, as good as it is, as vital as it is, is not our primary responsibility. Our primary responsibility is summed up in one verb here in this passage in verse 19, “make disciples” and then the breadth of it, “of all the nations.” That is the primary reason the church is here.

If we were saved for fellowship then we would be taken to Heaven where fellowship is perfect. If we were saved for praise and worship we would be taken to Heaven where praise and worship is unhindered and perfect. If we were saved for the sake of teaching and training and knowledge and wisdom we should be taken to Heaven where knowledge is perfect. The reason we are left here is in order that we might make disciples of all the nations. That is our God given priority as a church. Jesus came, the Bible says, to seek and save the lost and we have the same task to seek and bring salvation to the lost.”

This is why we are still here. Everyone Jesus *saves*, He *sends*—

- John 17:18 ¹⁸As You sent Me into the world, so (in the same way) I have sent them into the world.
- John 20:21 As the Father has sent Me, even so I am sending you.

Just as the Father sent the Son - in like manner - the Son sends His followers. To seek and save the lost. We are His ambassadors, going out in His name, in His authority, empowered by the Holy Spirit, to proclaim His Gospel!

What did Jesus say when He called His Disciples? *“Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men!”* Every follower is a fisherman! Think about this: All of the teaching and training that Jesus poured into His men culminated in this commission for them to go and make disciples of the nations; the Gospel couldn't stop with them, they had to take it and go global. Remember what He said in John's Gospel—

- John 10:15-16 I lay down my life for the sheep [His elect]. ¹⁶And I have *other sheep* that are not of this fold [He is speaking of His elect who are scattered through the world, and throughout history.] I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.
- John 11:52 and . . . also to gather into one the children of God who are *scattered abroad*.

This is why He told His Disciples they must go - they have to *go* to where His sheep are, and they are out there! - Scattered among every people, nation, tribe and tongue - we know this from God's promise to Abraham, 3,000 years ago. And Jesus promised, “If I be lifted up, I will draw all men to Myself.”

If we do the proclaiming, He will do the saving! Do you believe that?

I want to take a minute to show you how our outward focus fits together with the upward and the inward—

A. Upward requires outward—

If we seek to magnify and exalt God, we want *everyone* to exalt and magnify Him! God said this about His Son—

- Philippians 2:9-11 ⁹Therefore God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus *every* knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and *every* tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

If God has exalted His Son above every name, and declares that every knee will bow and every tongue confess that He is Lord, then how can we not do everything we can to take His name to every part of this planet? We want Jesus exalted among all the peoples!

- We should be *thrilled* when Tom Johnson tells us that within 7 years, the ministry we support in Uganda has gone from one church with 240 people to 17 churches with over 5,000 people. Because that means more people worshipping our God! We should be dancing in the aisles like a bunch of Pentecostals!

And that's how they worship in Uganda! Drums too! You see, worship alone is enough reason for us to be passionate about missions. John Piper has said, *“Missions exists because there are still places where worship does not exist!”*

Think about the first three petitions of the Lord's Prayer: “Hallowed, or *holy*, be Your name, Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” That's a missionary

prayer: "Oh Father in heaven, may Your name be praised and honored as holy among all races, languages, and skin colors - with none excluded. Oh Father, may the rule and reign of Jesus Christ extend to *all the nations*. And just as you are obeyed in heaven, perfectly and passionately, may your will be done among *all peoples* because You are worthy!" Is He worthy - of all blessing and honor and glory? He is.

Idolatry should grieve us down to our bones, shouldn't it?

- When Paul entered Athens, Acts 17:16 tells us, "*his spirit was provoked [irritated] within him as he saw that the city was full of idols.*" I remember feeling that way in India: there were shrines to gods everywhere - vendors going up and down the streets selling idols., that like dumb elephant god, Ganesh. Many years ago, some of us men felt grief, almost *anger* in Mexico City, years ago, when we saw poor people crawling for yards on bloody knees to worship a statue of Mary.
- Henry Martyn was a missionary to India in the 1800's, and the idolatry there made him sick. He wrote, "I could not endure existence if Jesus wasn't glorified, it would be hell to me if He were to be always thus dishonored." A Muslim asked him, "Why do you feel like that about the glory of God?" He replied, "If somebody plucks out your eyes there's no saying why you feel pain - it is a feeling. It is because I am one with Christ that I am thus dreadfully wounded."

*If God has opened your eyes to see His glory and saved you to be His worshiper, you want others to worship and praise Him too.

B. Inward requires outward.

When you think about the love and care and blessings that you experience in this church family, shouldn't you be grieved to think of so many people *outside* of Christ, perishing without a Savior, and without any church family, alone and lost in this dark world?

How could we weep for joy at having been rescued from our sins and not weep for those who haven't been rescued from theirs? When we were just like them? If you obey Jesus' second commandment to love your neighbor as yourself - you *have to be* an ambassador for Christ, a minister of reconciliation. As Paul said, "The love of Christ constrains us - it compels us to go!"

Listen to Paul's heart for the very people who did all they could to kill him for his faith in Christ—

- Romans 9:1-3 ¹I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit— ²that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. ³For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh.
- Romans 10:1 ¹Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved.

These were people who called Paul their enemy! But they weren't Paul's enemies. To Paul they were POW's being held captive by Satan. Beloved, if we have the heart of Christ, we will have a love for those outside our church family. We want others to know the mercy we have been shown. How can we keep it to ourselves?

But believe me, not all Christians believe we should be marching off to other countries with the Gospel. We have enough to do right here in America - have you heard that? I've heard it from my own family.

A few years ago Dr. Kent Brantly, a medical missionary with Samaritan's Purse contracted ebola in West Africa. Ann Coulter, who calls herself a Christian wrote an article calling Dr. Brantly an idiot—

“Why did Dr. Brantly have to go to Africa? The very first “risk factor” listed by the Mayo Clinic for Ebola – an incurable disease with a 90 percent fatality rate – is: “Travel to Africa”. . .Can't anyone serve Christ in America anymore?

American Christians go on “mission trips” to disease-ridden cesspools. They're tired of fighting the culture war in the U.S., tired of being called homophobes, racists, sexists and bigots. So they slink off to Third World countries, away from American culture to do “good works”. . . Today's Christians are aces at sacrifice, amazing at serving others, but strangely timid for people who have been given eternal life. They need to buck up and serve their own country”. . . she called our missions efforts, “Christian Narcissism.”

Well God had mercy on Dr. Brantly. He survived the ebola virus and said: “God called us to serve the people of Liberia . . . I prayed that God would help me be faithful and that in my life or my death, that He would be glorified. . . I serve a faithful God who answers prayers. . . . God saved my life. . . .”

That doesn't sound like an idiot to me. Sounds like someone with the heart of our Lord Jesus.

- There are over 7 billion people in the world today - 41% are unreached by the Gospel - almost 3 billion people, perishing apart from Christ.

That's why Jesus says “Go!” They're not going to come to us, we must go to them. So I'm saying that love for God and His glory, is *enough* reason to go. And love for people and a desire to see them rescued from hell is *enough* reason to go.

But even on a purely selfish level—

C. Our personal happiness requires it—

Obedience to Jesus brings happiness, doesn't it? There is no happiness on earth that compares to having a part in another person's salvation. That's eternal. That lasts forever.

- Mark 8:35 ³⁵For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will *save* it. Matthew's Gospel says, “will *find* it!” I.e., You will find life as God meant for it to be - the abundant life Jesus talked about - when you give your life for the sake of Christ and the Gospel.

Think of our own missionaries: Are they grumpy, bored, complaining about the long hours - hard boss (God), looking around for a better gig? I can't think of one. They're the most joyful people you will ever meet because they've traded earthly security, comfort, and safety for the massive happiness God gives to those who “*go and make disciples of all the nations!*”

*Think about our brother Nilo Sanchez in the Philippines. What a guy. Nilo has trained and sent out over 700 men as pastors and church-planters. He's had terrible, life-threatening health illnesses. But God keeps sparing him.

Do you picture Nilo dragging himself out of bed in the mornings wondering what to do with the rest of his day? Complaining about his aches and pains and problems? Dreaming about retirement in The Villages, down in Florida? If you do, you don't know Nilo! He e-mailed this awhile back after another bout in the hospital—

- “I have been back teaching since January. I am not as strong as before but still able to teach Monday through Friday, 8 hours per day. Been also back preaching on the radio. Almost back to normal routine in my church, seminary, radio, outreaches and mobile school. Can't afford to slow down in the light of the shortness of life and the urgency to preach Christ.”

Just before Christmas he wrote about traveling all over the Philippines training pastors until his son Kemuel, who is a doctor ordered him to go to bed and rest. But he said, “More work to do before “night comes” and we cannot work. Been always thinking of this: I want to die tired!”

But Nilo knows the secret that Jim Elliot y knew: “He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.”

*The key to happiness on this earth is to live in synch with God and His purposes - and Jesus told us what that is: yourself for His sake and His Gospel. Have a part in making disciples of all the nations.

So Jesus said “Go!” Point two—

II. You don't have to go to obey Jesus' command.

Wait - what? Turn with me to Philippians 1—

Paul is jail in Rome, writing to comfort the church in Philippi because they were sick with worry over him. He's doing fine - great jail ministry, food's not so good, but the Gospel is bearing fruit, and he is a happy camper. And he is so thankful for this church because had supported him in his missionary travels. His picture was up in their lobby. He was one of their missionaries.

- Philippians 1:3-5 ³I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, ⁴always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, ⁵because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.

Look at the word, “*partnership*.” It's the Gk. word *koinonia* = usually translated as *fellowship*, it comes from the word “*koinos*” meaning “to have in common.” Paul is thankful for what they have in common regarding the gospel - “your *partnership* in the gospel.” Now jump down to v.7:

- Philippians 1:7 ⁷It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all *partakers* with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel.

“*Partakers*” is the same Gk. word for partnership with the pre-fix *sun* = together; He's saying this: “You Philippians are *partners together* with me, in my current jail ministry!”

We haven't seen *how* they were partners in his ministry, but he wants them to encouraged:

- Philippians 1:12-14 ¹²I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, ¹³so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. ¹⁴And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

“And you all are a *partners with me* in this ministry.” And look at how he signs off—

- Philippians 4:22 ²²All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar’s household.

He was winning people to Christ in Caesar’s own household! And even though none of the Philippians had ever been in Caesar’s palace, it was just as if they had been, because they shared Paul’s ministry.

Now look at *how* they shared in his ministry—

- Philippians 4:14-19 ¹⁴Yet it was kind of you to *share [fellowship, partner together with me in]* my trouble. ¹⁵And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church *entered into partnership [koinonia]* with me in giving and receiving, except you only. ¹⁶Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again.

So how were they partners with Paul in his gospel ministry that was winning people in Caesar’s own household? Money. **They financially supported Paul.** That’s not all they did - they prayed for Paul, and they even sent him one of their own, Epaphroditus, to minister to Paul in jail. But couldn’t have had the ministry he did without them. Their money, prayers, and help were as much a part of that gospel ministry as Paul’s own preaching! I.e., ***In terms of the gospel ministry, Paul would not have distinguished between those who go and those who send those who go!***

IV. Miners and rope-holders.

Let me tell you a true story that illustrates this—

Andrew Fuller started the Baptist Missionary Society in 1792. The first missionary they sent out was William Carey. At one of the meetings, after hearing an account of the spiritual needs of India, the secretary of the meeting remarked: "There is a gold mine in India, but it seems almost as deep as the center of the earth. Who will venture to explore it?" "I will venture to go down," said Carey, "but remember that you must hold the ropes."

What he meant was: "I am willing to be the one to actually go to India, but I will need a whole lot of people at home praying for me, supporting me, and encouraging me!"

Andrew Fuller later wrote: 'But before he went down we engaged that while he lived we should never let go the rope.' And they never did. Carey went on to translate the Bible into 34 different languages, planted churches, started schools and colleges - he is still a hero in India even today - there are statues of William Carey, but it’s not just because he went to India, but because he had faithful friends in England who were holding the rope for him.

This Great Commission that Jesus gave His church requires *miners* - people who go - but it requires even more *rope-holders* - to support those who go.

- We 've had people GO - for a short time - to Mexico, China, the Philippines, Uganda, Haiti, Costa Rica. But we hold the ropes for the Sanchez', Christophers, Williams, Tolentinos, Solomons, and the Molinas. And by God's grace, MBC will send Ashlee Trenerly to Cameroon - and we have committed to hold the ropes for her while she is there helping the Baca get a Bible in their own language!

Only a few go, but God has called the rest of us to stay here and be rope-holders, right? It generally takes many churches and individuals to support one missionary, BUT (if you only get one thing I say this morning, get this) *those who stay and hold the ropes are fulfilling the Great Commission just as much as those who go.*

And these are the only two options for a Christian: you either go, or you help those who go. Beloved, Jesus said the same thing when He said, "He who does not gather with me - scatters." He meant, "If you are not a miner or a rope-holder, you're following Me."

- So how can you hold the rope for those who go? How can you obey Jesus Christ in this Great Commission? It starts in your own heart, and in your prayers for all of those people on our wall in the lobby, and for those who go out from MBC. Pray, pray, pray. All of us can pray for those who go. When you get an update on the prayer chain from one of our missionaries, please take a few minutes to read it, and then pray.

When MBC has sent me out to jungles and dangerous places - where I have to cover myself in mosquito to sleep at night - I have felt those prayers! It's hard to explain it, but there is a peace that I'm not alone! The prayers of my brothers and sisters are ascending to God on my behalf for my protection. And when you do that, God counts that as obeying His command to go just as much as if you under that mosquito net!

- You're a rope-holder when you put money in the offering plate because we use that money to support all of those folks and ministries on the lobby wall. (And if my math is right, about 25% of the money that came in this year, went out to missions.)

And let me tell you, your giving encourages believers in other churches. You heard that a couple weeks ago from our friend Tom Johnson - the generosity of this church almost brings him to tears, and he sings the praises of MBC to other churches. You are a blessing.

- You are a rope-holder when you send cards and e-mails and gifts. More than one of our missionaries have told me that MBC has a special place in their hearts because of the personal ways we show our love for them: the gift bag the ladies gave Allen Kiwanuka when she and Emma were here - the Bissonnettes giving their whole house to the Molinas and their 5 boys when they were here.

But maybe you're thinking, "I don't see what I do here as having any impact on the Great Commission. I help with children's church, I went to camp with our teens, I mow the grass, make meals for people - I don't see the connection."

I want you to see the connection: We have no outreach unless our own church body here is healthy and strong enough to hold the ropes for others.

- So maybe you help with the upward: your ministry here is worship, you fan the flames of passion for the name of God that moves His people to support those who go out and "proclaim the excellencies of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light."

- And if you help with the *inward*, teaching, discipling, making meals, phone calls, and 100 other things to make this church strong in truth and love, that will mean more people committed to being rope-holders. You are a part of this Great Commission.

Ask yourself this question this morning: “What am I doing to help fulfill Jesus’ Great Commission? What is my part?” Maybe God is going to call some of you to go - for a short trip, or even longer, like Ashlee Trenergy - what she wants to do in Cameroon could take 20 years or longer.

But for most of us, God wants us to stay here and help make this church strong, so we can hold even more of the rope for those who go. And beloved, God counts that as partnership in the Gospel with those who go. Keep that fixed in your mind and it will make ministry here a joy. Maybe you’ve heard this story—

- The English architect Sir Christopher Wren was supervising the construction of a cathedral in London. A journalist went out to interview some of the workers. He asked the first worker, “What are you doing?” He said, “I’m cutting stone for 10 shillings a day.” The next one said, “I’m putting in 10 hours a day on this job.” He asked a third worker, ‘What are you doing,’ and he said, “I’m helping Sir Christopher Wren construct one of London’s greatest cathedrals.”

I want to close with a note from one of the families on the wall. We’ve loved and supported them for many years, and their ministry has borne much fruit in leading people to Christ and training up pastors. They wrote awhile back—

To my Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ at MBC,
Thank you so much for your love, prayer, support and words of encouragement throughout the years. I can't tell you how much it means to ___ and me to know MBC was in our corner. There were days when we knew it was Christ strengthening us through the prayers of the saints.

There’s a little known verse in 3 John: **3 John 1:5**” “Beloved, you are acting faithfully in whatever you accomplish for the brethren, and especially *when they are* strangers; ⁶ and they bear witness to your love before the church; and you will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God. ⁷ For they went out for the sake of the Name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. ⁸ Therefore we ought to support such men, that we may be fellow workers with the truth. (3Jo 1:5 NAS)”

When I think of MBC, I think of this verse. You sent us in a "manner worthy of God." With love, encouragement, prayers, hope, you sent us. We were able to do what we did because of your service to Christ. No, it won't be in the newspapers. No, you won't get an Oscar for it. But we saw it. More importantly, every word of encouragement, prayer, and support, Christ saw. It is wonderful, that by God's grace, I can whole-heartedly say that MBC's generosity allowed us to serve Christ here undistracted. The text also says that as you help us, you too are "fellow workers with the truth." We are co-laborers in this great endeavor called the gospel of Christ. Thank you for holding the ropes.

We love you and praise Christ for you. We will be in touch shortly. Please pray our hearts will be filled with joy in Christ as we follow Him.”

How Sweet and Awesome