

## **“You Are On A Mission”**

Matthew 28:16-20

This morning I want to talk about mission. I hope that the first thing that comes to mind when I say that word is “Missionary” and not the movie “Mission Impossible.” Mission is a specific task that is given to a person or a group. Businesses have a mission statement: individuals have a mission in life: groups rally around a mission.

And what the Lord wants us to hear again today is that as His followers we are people of mission. We have a mission, as individuals, as a church body, as a denomination and as the people of God. Every Christian has been called to a mission by God.

When we speak about mission we often think about missionaries like Harmon Schmelzenbach, pioneer missionary in Africa for the Church of the Nazarene. At an early age he felt the call to be a missionary, so on May 5, 1907, Harmon set off for Africa on board a ship with nine other missionaries.

Schmelzenbachs' ministry in eSwatini did not begin smoothly and he and his wife were not accepted by the Swazi people. Indeed, at one point, a group of warriors were even given orders to kill the Schmelzenbachs. The Schmelzenbachs endured many hardships as missionaries, including burying three of their children who died as infants.

When Harmon began work on a church building the materials were burned twice and his house beaten with clubs. Nonetheless, Harmon built a church building even before he and Lula, his wife, saw their first conversion. Long before people began coming to services, Harmon would go to pray at the altar of that small building. Soon Harmon realized that the people would not come to him, so he began his daily travels to minister to the Swazi people where they lived and worked. That kind of itinerant ministry continued throughout the rest of his life and work as a missionary.

An evangelistic breakthrough finally did come and the people of eSwatini ultimately fell in love with Harmon Schmelzenbach. His work began to take root throughout the country. People turned from the darkness and came to Christ in increasing numbers. On May 22, 1929, at age 47, Harmon Schmelzenbach died with his adopted people.<sup>1</sup>

Truly people like the Schmelzenbachs had a mission. They saw people who were lost in sin and needed to hear the story of Jesus and the salvation found in Him. They dedicated their lives to this mission.

But what about us? Students, business people, retirees, labourers, administrators and care aids, nurses and sales people, managers and dishwashers: do we have a mission?

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<sup>1</sup> <http://home.snu.edu/~hculbert/schmel.htm>, accessed September 19, 2020.

This morning I need to make clear to everyone – if we are Christians we have a mission. Not just some people, those we call missionaries or pastors, but every single person who calls on the name of Jesus for salvation must enter His mission.

When Jesus walked this earth he revealed the heart of God – and we saw that God is not an angry God trying to destroy us, but God is love, and He desires to rescue us from sin, Satan and death itself. Jesus would declare his mission in many ways, but always it sounded something like this: **“The son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.” (Luke 19:10)**

Jesus knew His mission. He could not be distracted from it: not by Satan, who tempted him in the wilderness, not by the crowds, who offered to make him a king, nor by his disciples, who wanted to stop him from going to the cross. Jesus was determined to do what it took to see that salvation would come to this lost world, and the only way that could happen was if he went to the cross and died there in our place.

God wants every person to be given the chance to embrace Jesus as Lord of their lives, and allow Him to bring forgiveness and cleansing to their lives. Hear this clearly: God does not want one person to go to hell. In fact, hell was never created for people – it was created for Satan and his followers according to Revelation 20:15. Sadly, however, when we choose not to follow Jesus we are a follower of Satan. There are only two choices.

What does that have to do with there being a mission for us? Our mission is to join with God to make sure every person has a chance to choose Jesus and avoid hell.

Our text today is the last message Jesus gave to his disciples before he ascended back up into heaven. It is so important for in it we find the

## **Confession of Believers, Commission of Believers and Comfort of Believers.**

### **1. Confession of Believers**

Jesus begins with these words: **“All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me.” (v. 18)**

This simple phrase encompasses one of the greatest confessions of faith of the church: Jesus is not just a wise teacher, or a prophet or a good man. This he was, but he is so much more. In this statement by Jesus there is a claim to have all the power and authority of God. Only one being can hold all the authority and only one being can hold all the power and that is the one true God. Small “g” gods share power and authority, for they are not real gods. But the One True God holds all power and authority in his hands. And Jesus is saying, I am that God!

This is the great confession of the church. Jesus is God.

Jesus made that clear during his earthly ministry, saying things like –

- If you have seen me you have seen the Father. We are one.

- Your sins are forgiven – but who can forgive sins but God alone?
- Before Abraham was, I am
- And John would add, **“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... and the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us. And we have beheld his glory, the glory of the One and only who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.” (John 1:1, 14)**

So it is clear that Jesus is God, and he therefore has the right to tell us how to live, and what to do with our lives. He has the right to give us a mission... and that is what he does here.

So if we choose to ignore the commission of God, the mission he is sending us on, then we cannot call him our God. All authority is his... So as Christians we must stop and listen to what Jesus says to us today.

## **2. Commission of Believers**

The next thing Jesus tells us is this: **Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” (v. 19)**

With these words Jesus sends his disciples on a mission. It is about letting others know about Jesus and His great love for each person, telling them about the cross and the price that was paid for our salvation. It is continuing the work of Jesus that he was doing while on earth, “desiring that none should perish but all should come to repentance.”

It starts with the word “Go.” It is an action word – it means we must do something. Is it saying we all must sell our homes and go overseas? For some the answer will be “yes” but for most people the answer is “no.” The verb “Go” might be better translated, “As you go” for Jesus wants his followers to have a certain mindset. Whether we are going to work, or to school, or to the grocery store or our neighbour’s house we always need to remember that we are on a mission.

What does the mission look like? “Make disciples of all the nations.”

“Hold it,” you say. “You want me to make disciples? Isn’t that the job of the pastor, or Sunday school workers, or missionaries?”

Jesus says it is the job of every Christian. Too many Christians believe the journey is all about going to church, reading my Bible, praying and making sure I am ready for heaven. That is important, but not the whole story. Every believer is also called to share the faith with others. Making disciples is simply passing the faith on to others. It is not always sitting in a circle with study guides and formal agendas. It is passing on the reality that there is a God and we can know Him personally through Jesus.

When you ask your neighbour if you can pray for them – or better, with them – you are discipling, passing on your faith. When you tell a child a Bible story, or your testimony, you are discipling. When you stand up for honesty and integrity at work you are

discipling those who notice. When you pass your faith on to anyone else, even in the smallest of ways, you are discipling.

COVID has given us a unique opportunity to enter the ministry of discipling. As you know I have challenged each of you to consider opening your home and gather with a few people to study God's Word. The Provincial guidelines say those groups should be small – about six people. It is not hard to think of six people from the church you would love to study scripture with. But what if we all invited at least one family from the neighbourhood to join? How might that affect our community?

Remember, discipling often includes gathering and sharing time together in a formal sense, but it will always be about how you live as a Christian before people who need to know the Lord. And when opportunity arises, tell them about the hope that is within you. Those opportunities will come often when we live knowing we are people on a mission. We have been sent by Jesus to make disciples.

### **3. Comfort of Believers**

So you see, Jesus has sent us as light into the world, as salt, as carriers of the Good News of the Gospel. It will not always be easy to choose God's ways over those of the world. We also have our own sinful nature to battle, as selfishness and pride and anger and fear all try to unsettle us, and destroy our witness. We too will have to face sickness and tragedy, loss and persecution. There will be those so entrenched in the ways of Satan that they will stand opposed to anything that is of God. When you stand up for Jesus they will make life difficult for you.

That is why Jesus ends this teaching with words of comfort. He says, **“Lo I am with you always, even to the end of the ages.” (v. 20)**

What this looks like – the presence of Jesus in the life of the believer, helping him or her be strong in the faith, true to the teachings of Jesus, a witness no matter where they go to the love and grace of Jesus – is what the Book of Acts is all about.

There we read about the Holy Spirit filling the believers and causing them to be witnesses to everyone they met. They were fulfilling the mission – they were making disciples. But they were not doing it in their own strength or wisdom, but the Holy Spirit was working through them. The Holy Spirit is the presence of Jesus with his followers. Jesus did not leave us alone, but comes to us through the Holy Spirit so we may be His Holy people and we so that may share our faith with others.

### **Conclusion:**

This morning we are confronted with the truth that every Christian is on a mission – a mission to make disciples. This means we are aware that we are passing on our faith in everything we do, plus we are looking for ways to sit down and share our faith with others. We are missionaries – ones who are sent by God to let a dying world know about Jesus.

Imagine, if you can, that there is a deadly virus that has infected the whole world. It causes people not to think well, to be weak and to die. In fact no one escapes the death this infection brings. It robs people of life and causes fear and anxiety. It is destroying nations, homes and individual lives. People desperately look for a cure but no one seems to know what to do.

Can you imagine a situation like that? Sure you can. COVID has really helped us see that lived out. Now what if I told you there is a cure for this mystery infection? What if I said no one has to suffer or die as the cure is here now? The trouble is, the few people who know about the cure are not willing to share it with others! What would you think?

You see, the deadly infection I speak of is sin, and it has touched every single person in this world. All will perish, if a cure is not found. And to die of this infection reaches beyond this life to eternity.

But Jesus came and died on the cross of Calvary to provide the cure. Now those who look to him for salvation will be saved. Jesus' followers, those who have trusted their lives to him for salvation, now carry the cure within them.

And Jesus says to us, Go, share the cure – make disciples of all nations. I will be with you as you go. Please hurry, for the time is short – go.

So we have heard Jesus' call to us again today – what will we do? What will you do?