

Missions Sunday
Every Disciple's Mission
Matthew 28:16-20
August 25, 2024

Tom Pennington, Pastor-Teacher
Countryside Bible Church, Southlake, Texas

Well, this morning, we're going to step away from the study we've been in because of the Missions Emphasis Sunday. And I want to look at something that is familiar. You know, when I think about that reality, it's amazing how little we know about the familiar things around us, even when it comes to our own bodies.

For example, we see our eyes every day in the mirror, and of course, our eyes see for us every day. And yet, we understand so little about how they work. You realize that on the back, inside of your eye is your retina. It's a kind of onion skin wallpaper filled with nerves. In fact, the retina covers less than a square inch, but it contains 137 million light-sensitive receptor cells. Only your brain handles more information than your retina.

When the lens in front of your eye receives light, it brings it first into correct focus and then projects it on the retina. The retina then generates a tiny wisp of electricity, a few millionths of a single volt. And that electrical charge or those charges are transmitted to the brain through the optic nerve, which consists of 1.2 million nerve fibers.

And those electrical impulses traveling from your eye to your brain travel at a breathtaking 300 miles per hour. From the moment light hits the lens of your eye until your brain has interpreted the data is two one hundredths of a second. We're so familiar with our eyes, but we really don't understand them.

And that's true with so much about what we take for granted, even in our own bodies. I share that because this morning, I want us to examine a biblical text that likewise is extremely familiar. In fact, you've probably seen it and read it many times.

Available online at: www.countrysidebible.org
Copyright © 2025 Tom Pennington. All rights reserved.
Unedited transcript for personal use only.

But it's equally misunderstood as those things that are familiar to us, even in our bodies. Because this text, what it says is far different from what most Christians think it says. In fact, I am confident many here this morning have misunderstood this text.

It's the text we call the Great Commission. I invite you to turn to Matthew 28. Matthew 28 let's start by reading it together, and then we'll study it. Matthew 28 verse 16,

But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated. When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some were doubtful. And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

The average Christian thinks that text is only appropriate for those who are overseas serving somewhere as a missionary. "Yeah, I know that passage, but it's really not for me. Why are we going to look at it this morning?" The truth is exactly the opposite. Christ intended this message for me and for you. And I want you to see that together.

Before His ascension, our Lord assigned His church and every individual Christian this one primary mission to the world. In these famous words, we're going to discover four key truths about every disciple's mission. Four key truths. Let's look at them together. This is your mission. This is my mission.

First of all, let's consider its singular importance. Its singular importance. For 2,000 years of church history, this passage has towered like an Everest over the New Testament revelation. It's a passage that so many have gone to and have quoted and have built their lives on. Why? Well, there are several good reasons for that.

This command, first of all is of singular importance because of Matthew's placement of it in his gospel. You see, between the resurrection and the ascension, there were 40 days. This event occurs in the middle of those 40 days.

Jesus didn't ascend into heaven until 2 to 3 weeks after this event. And he appeared to His disciples several times after this. But under inspiration, under the inspiration of the Spirit, Matthew ended his gospel with these dramatic words. And by recording this as Christ's last command, Matthew intentionally underscores its importance.

This command is important secondly because of Jesus' own emphasis on this meeting described here. Look at verse 16, "But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated." You see, Jesus had already given His disciples the command to assemble in Galilee several times. The first time was on the Thursday night of the Passion Week at the Last Supper. It's recorded in Matthew 26, verse 32. He said they were to go before him to Galilee after His resurrection. On the morning of the resurrection, the angel repeated this same command to the women.

Back up in verse 7 of this chapter. Then Jesus told the women the exact same thing later, that same resurrection morning in verse 10. I love the disciples because like me, they're a little slow. They've been told this several times, but eight days later, the disciples were still in Jerusalem. So, Jesus appeared to them again. This time with Thomas present, and reminded them again what He had commanded.

And the disciples finally took the three-day trip north to Galilee. There, Jesus met them on the mountain that He had designated and that's when He gave them this Great Commission. What I want you to see is clearly Jesus considered this meeting absolutely strategic for His disciples.

There's a third reason for its importance, and that is the disciples to whom He gave it. You see, most believers think this was just for the 11 apostles. Absolutely not. Jesus intended this

commission for all of His disciples. Look back up in verse 10. You'll see that the angel orders Jesus' brethren to leave for Galilee. The Greek word for "brethren" is a word Matthew always uses to refer not to the 11, but to all Jesus' true followers. So, Jesus planned then for a larger group of His disciples to be there on this occasion.

You remember in 1 Corinthians 15 verse 6, Paul refers to a post-resurrection appearance of Jesus in which more than 500 saw Jesus at one time. Most commentators connect that appearance in 1 Corinthians 15 with this meeting in Galilee. That's why Jesus told the 11 who were already in Jerusalem and He's there with them to travel to Galilee to meet with Him. Why?

Because most of His ministry and therefore most of His disciples were in Galilee. Verse 17 hints at this as well. Look at that verse, "When they saw Him, they worshiped Him, but some were doubtful." Clearly, the ones who worshiped included the 11. But the 11 were not the ones who were doubting.

This is the fourth time Jesus has appeared to them after the resurrection. And while they were still in Jerusalem, Thomas, the last of the doubters, had embraced Jesus as the risen Lord. He said, "My Lord and my God."

So, who were the ones here who were still doubtful? The "some" who were doubtful. They're among the 500 who had gathered, many of whom had not yet seen Him.

So, the Great Commission then was Jesus' command to all who had come to believe in Him. He assigned this mission to all of His disciples then and now. Listen, if you're a follower of Jesus Christ, this commission Jesus gave to you. You've got to embrace it as your own. This wasn't to the 11, this was to you, this was to me. It's impossible to overstate the singular importance of this mission to every follower of Jesus Christ.

The second truth we learn here about our mission is its supreme authority. Before the Great Commission comes the Great Claim. Look at verse 18, “And Jesus came up and spoke to them saying, all authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.” Now, don't misunderstand as God's eternal Son, He had always possessed supreme authority.

And even as the God man, when He came into the world through the womb of the virgin Mary, He was always fully God, fully man. And as the God man, He had authority even before His death. He had authority to forgive sins. He had authority to cast out demons. There was a great deal of authority that He had.

But after the resurrection, the sphere of Jesus' authority as the God man became all-encompassing and absolute. Notice what He says, “all authority.” The Greek word for “authority” means “the right and power to act.” Jesus says, all right and power to act as has been given to Me. The Father gave Jesus this comprehensive authority as the reward for His perfect obedience and His work on the cross. He adds in verse 18, “all authority in heaven and on earth.” That's comprehensive. The Father gave our risen Lord Jesus the absolute, incontestable right and power to rule everything in the universe.

Now, why is Jesus saying this here? It's because He's about to give all of us an audacious mission. And He wants us to know that that mission flows from His absolute right and power to rule everything. And Jesus has supreme authority. He has authority over all peoples in all nations. He has authority to command all sinners everywhere to repent and believe the gospel. He has authority to forgive sins. He has authority to tell his followers how to live. He has the right to establish our mission, and He has the power to carry it out. I love what Jesus says back in Matthew 16. He says, I will build my church, and nothing will keep Him from building His church because He has supreme authority.

A third truth we discover about our mission, and this is really the heart of the passage, is its specific orders. What exactly is our mission? Well, Jesus details it here very clearly. This is your

mission. This is my mission. Let's look at it. Verse 19 begins with the word, “therefore.” Because Jesus has the unquestioned right to rule in all things, including in His church, He now gives us who are a part of His church, we who are His followers, our specific orders. The first specific order that He gave us is “go.” “Go,” verse 19, “therefore, go and make disciples.”

Now, you probably know that in Greek the word “go” is actually a participle. Literally, the Greek text reads like this, “having gone, make disciples.” Some try to make a lot of that. The truth is, grammatically, this participle functions as an imperative. So, it's just like the main verb. That's why most translations, probably the one you have in your lap, says, “therefore, go and make disciples.” Also, the context itself implies this is a command to go, because the next phrase is “all the nations.”

Kind of hard to make disciples of all the nations if you don't go. And the other three versions of this commission in the Scripture make it clear that Christ is sending His followers to the world. Now, what does this mean?

What does the command to go mean for us? Well, first of all, our Lord intended that some of His disciples relocate to carry out this mission. In Acts 1, He tells them nearby, they're in Jerusalem or in Samaria, or to the remotest parts of the world. And some who heard this command did just that. I mean, think of Peter who eventually went to Italy. Think of the apostle John who went to Ephesus in Asia Minor. Many historians believe Thomas served in India. Shortly after His ascension, persecution followed the stoning of Stephen and forced others in the Jerusalem church to go, to leave and go.

What I want you to see is Jesus wanted some of those who heard Him that day to leave their own people and their own nation and their own homes and go. And He still expects some of us to do that as well. It was this great text that drove William Carey, the father of the modern missionary movement, to go to India.

You and I need to understand this is a command from our Lord. We need to pray for the Lord to raise up missionaries within our church to go. We need to consider going on short-term missions trips ourselves to support the worldwide mission of the church. And we need to be willing, each of us, to go permanently, if that's the Lord's purpose and will, and that would advance His kingdom.

But here's where it gets important for you not to get confused. If you read this passage, you might think that those who stayed were disobedient, because not everybody went. Jesus didn't intend for all 500 who heard this command to relocate. He planned for many of them to return to their homes. Some who were on the mountain that day would eventually have to go because of persecution, or they would choose to go for ministry purposes. But many of them, including even James, our Lord's brother, would remain in Jerusalem for the rest of his life.

So, were they disobedient? Because they didn't go? No. Why didn't they relocate? Because “all nations” included their nation. “Make disciples of all the nations.” You see, for them and for most of us in this church, we are not commanded by Christ to relocate. Some of us should. And my prayer is God would raise up people from our church who would.

But not all of us are commanded to relocate. However, there are two important implications of this command to go for all of us. First of all, we are all called to carry out the Great Commission wherever we are. No Christian gets a pass from this command. This is to you: “Make disciples of all the nations,” including your own.

But there's another implication here, and that is every church, and every disciple must personally own the worldwide mission of Christ as well. If our Lord leaves us here, we have to not only pursue the mission here in our own church, our own community, sharing the gospel with the people around us, but we still have, you still have a mission to the world, and you need to own that mission. You say, what is that? Well, the Lord is going to explain as we go. Jesus says, “Go.”

The second specific order in this mission is to make disciples. Make disciples, verse 19, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations.” “Make disciples” is actually the main verb of the sentence. It's obviously an imperative, a command.

It's non-optional, but what does it mean to make disciples? I love the classic explanation of this by John Broadus, writing in the 1800's. Listen to what he writes,

To disciple a person to Christ is to bring him into the relation of pupil to teacher, taking his yoke of authoritative instruction, accepting what he says is true because he says it and submitting to His requirements as right because He makes them.

That's what it means to make a disciple. Now, there is confusion in North Texas, sadly, because some have been taught that you can become a Christian and accept Jesus as your Savior today, and someday, maybe, you might choose to become a disciple of Jesus and really get serious about your faith. That's not what the New Testament teaches.

In fact, listen to how “disciple” and “Christian” interrelate in Acts 11:26, “the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.” You see, to be a disciple is to be a Christian, and to be a Christian is to be a disciple. Our mission, then, is about making disciples. It's about calling a person to follow a real, living person. The goal is not decisions, but disciples.

Many people talk about having a personal relationship to Jesus. Maybe you've used that expression, and I'm not raining on your parade here, but let me just think about this for a moment. Every person on our planet has a personal relationship to Jesus. He is their creator. He's their sustainer. He's their lawgiver. And someday, if they don't repent, He'll be their judge. They have a personal relationship to Jesus Christ.

But that's not really what we mean. What's the nature of a true spiritual relationship with Jesus? Let me let Jesus define it. This is John 13:13, He says, "You call Me Teacher and Lord." You call Me *didaskalos* and *kurios*, Teacher and Lord. And he says, "and you are right, for so I am."

That's a true spiritual relationship with Jesus. Christians are students, and Jesus is our Teacher. And Christians are slaves, and Jesus is our Master. That's a true spiritual relationship to Jesus. D. A. Carson writes, "Disciples are those who hear, understand, and obey Jesus' teaching."

Making disciples is not asking people to pray a prayer. It's not asking people to profess momentary faith in the facts of the gospel. It's a call to follow a person as Master and Teacher. Maybe you're here this morning, and when you were young, you prayed a prayer, walked an aisle, signed a card, joined a church, whatever it is, and you really haven't lived as a Christian your entire life. You haven't followed Jesus. He's not your Master and Teacher. Listen, you're not a Christian. You're not a Christian.

How do we make disciples who will follow Jesus like He describes? How do you make disciples? Well, listen to Acts 14:21, they preached the gospel and made many disciples. They preached the gospel and made many disciples. We make disciples the same way. The Father works through the gospel message to call to Himself those whom He gave His son in eternity past, and they become Jesus' disciples, His students, His slaves.

So, to make disciples is the command at the epicenter of the church's mission to the world. And Jesus adds in verse 19, "make disciples of all the nations." The word "nations," the Greek word is *ethne*, and Matthew sometimes uses it to mean the Gentiles, all the nations except Israel.

But when he adds the word "all" as he does here, as Jesus does, he always means "all nations including Israel." And Luke 24:47, Jesus is clear, He says, repentance for forgiveness of sins is to "be proclaimed in [My] name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem."

The Father intended that for the sake of His name, His son would have disciples from all nations everywhere. And folks, it's going to happen. In Revelation chapter 5, you remember verse 9, John sees that vision around the throne of all these believers. And remember, they are those who have been purchased for God by Jesus' blood from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. Christ commanded us. He commanded me. He commanded you to make disciples of all the nations.

How do we do that? Well, for some in our church, this will mean leaving their families and their friends and going to the nations. For others, this command will mean using vacation time to travel overseas and use your skills on a short-term basis to support the missionaries that we are partners with. And for every Christian, even if you don't actually go to all the nations, you are still responsible for the nations. You say, well, how can I do that?

You can pray. You can give to make sure that we can send missionaries. You can stay in touch with our missionaries to make sure they have what they need. To use the language of those who sent William Carey, you can hold the rope for those we send.

Let me just ask you this morning, have you ever really owned this responsibility? Have you ever owned your responsibility for the nations? We get so myopic. We focus our lives on ourselves and our needs and our families. Listen, if you're a follower of Christ, you are called to have a heart like God for the nations. Every believer must actively support the international mission that Christ has given His church. You need to personally embrace this responsibility.

But the mission doesn't stop with the main verb, "to make disciples." There are two participles that modify that verb that tell us what to do next. They have the force of commands, imperatives. They describe the activities that always accompany true disciple making. A third specific order that Christ gave His church, notice in verse 19, is "to baptize." "Baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit."

Now obviously in this text, we have the rich theology of the Trinity. There is unity of being. Disciples are to be baptized into the name singular. There is only one God. But there is a plurality of persons in the name singular of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. We worship one God eternally existing in three persons.

And notice here, if you have any question about Jesus' deity, He places Himself as the middle member of the Divine Trinity. We are to baptize everyone who becomes Jesus' disciple. This Greek word is the only word used in the New Testament to describe the baptism of believers.

And according to every classic Greek lexicon, and trust me, these guys were not Baptists, the word means “to dip” or “to plunge underwater.” It was a picture. It was a picture of the fact that the person I was before Christ died was buried, and I've been raised to new life in Jesus Christ.

In the early church, this symbolic act was often accompanied by the verbal confession, “Jesus is Lord.” Because in the end, baptism is a public confession that Jesus is your Lord. That's why Peter ends his sermon in Pentecost in Acts chapter 2, verse 38, and he says, “Be baptized in the name of Jesus the Messiah.”

True disciples publicly confess Jesus as Lord and submit to His authority, and that includes being baptized as He commanded. If you're here this morning and you're a follower of Jesus Christ, and you have never been baptized, you need to ask yourself why. I understand it's hard, hard to get up in front of a group of people, maybe it's hard because you've waited a long time, seems embarrassing. Listen, you need to obey Jesus Christ. If He's your Lord, you need to pursue baptism. It's not optional.

By including baptism in the mission of the church, Christ was showing just how important this ordinance is. It's a crucial part of our mission because it's a public confession of Jesus as Lord. We're to baptize.

A fourth order is in verse 20, “Teach.” “Teaching them to observe all that I commanded you.” Every disciple is to be taught all that Jesus commanded. That is a demand, folks, for a biblically centered teaching ministry. Teachers are not to teach their own ideas, but all Jesus commanded. Let me be blunt with this. If a church is not teaching all Jesus commanded, if they're not teaching all of this book that you hold in your hands, then they have not fulfilled the Great Commission, regardless of how many missionaries they have on the wall in their lobby.

But Jesus doesn't stop there. Don't miss the main point. Notice, He demands that we teach all disciples to observe all that He commanded. You see, the ultimate goal of teaching is not information, but transformation. It's not just justification, but sanctification. It's not just saved sinners, but saints. That's what the teaching is supposed to accomplish. To be a disciple is to follow Jesus. It's to obey His teaching. A true disciple not only learns the truth from his Teacher, Jesus, but practices it.

That's why Jesus says in John 8:31, “If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine.” Again, you may claim to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, but Jesus says, it's only those who really hear Me and really seek to obey Me that really are My disciples. So, whatever you may claim, whatever you may have written in the front of your Bible, some date that you think you were saved, if you're not obeying Jesus as a pattern of your life, you're not a Christian. Obedience to Jesus' word is the test of a true disciple.

Now, notice what Jesus says here. It means that every church should be doing this every Sunday. We are to carry out the Great Commission, and we're to do so by teaching God's people all that Jesus commanded in the Scripture. Now, step back and look at all that we've just discovered. I want you to see the main point, the huge main point that Jesus is making here. And this is where most people never see the reality of this passage. The fact that Jesus includes baptism and teaching in this passage should transform our understanding of the Great Commission. Because where does the New Testament demand that baptism and teaching be carried out? Under the leadership of elders in the context of a local church. Think about what that means for our

understanding of the church's mission to the world. It's not some disconnected missionary going off to do his or her own thing somewhere.

No, the mission is only accomplished when we have made true disciples, when those disciples have been added to a church, or a new church has been planted if none exists, and when in that church, they are baptized and are being taught to obey the Scripture. Now we see the significance of this monumental passage. Back in chapter 16, Jesus said, “I will build My church” and here he tells us how.

This is how He builds it. Your mission, Christian, don't miss this, your mission is to be actively involved in the mission by being actively involved in the ministry of a biblical church. And then, through that church, to be engaged in sending out and supporting others who will make disciples and plant indigenous churches and equip indigenous pastors where those disciples are baptized, are taught, are being sanctified, and are learning to reproduce themselves in the Great Commission.

That's the mission of every follower of Jesus Christ to the world. Your mission, Christian, is to be engaged in a biblical church where all of those things are taking place, and you are actively involved in that process. You're not a member of an audience. You're an engaged follower of Jesus Christ.

We've seen the mission's singular importance, its supreme authority, and its specific orders. That brings us to the fourth and final truth we need to understand about our mission, and that is its sustaining promise. Verse 20, “and lo, I am with you.” “Lo, I am with you.” A friend of mine used to joke that that's why he didn't fly in planes, because Jesus said, only lo, am I with you.

That's not what he's saying here. In Greek, it reads, “certainly, I myself am with you.” And lo, or certainly, I myself am with you always. I love that Greek word “always. Literally, it's “in all days.” It's a Jewish idiom, meaning “the whole of every day.”

For how long? Even to the end of the age. The terminal point of the mission is when this age ends, and Jesus decides it's over and He comes for His own. That's the only time the mission ends. By the way, this also means that this Great Commission wasn't just for those who heard it in the first century, it's for us too. Even to the end of the age.

But do you understand and believe what Jesus is promising here? Look again at verse 20. He says, Surely I Myself will be with you, Emmanuel, God with us, I'll be with you through the whole of every day, regardless of when you live or where you live.

But this isn't a generic promise of Christ's abiding presence. It's a promise of His presence as we strive to carry out the mission. That's so encouraging. Because let me ask you, do you feel inadequate to carry out the Great Commission? If you don't, there's something wrong with you. I feel inadequate to carry out that mission.

But when you and I seek to share the gospel, when in the church we baptize new believers, when in the church we teach the followers of Christ to obey all that he commanded us in the Scripture, when we send people out from us to plan a new church nearby, when we send and support missionaries to do the same thing across the world, folks, we are never alone. Our Lord has promised to be with us whenever, wherever, to whomever. We can do this, beloved, not because of who we are, but because of Who is with us.

Now, clearly and obviously, this is a profound text with many far reaching, huge implications. I don't have time to give you all of them. Let me just give you four key implications of this text for you and me. Four key implications. Number one, here's how we should apply these truths. Number one, make sure that you are truly a disciple of Jesus Christ. Jesus' priority is making disciples. Those are Christians. Christians are disciples and disciples are Christians. So, you need to make sure that whatever you profess is genuine, that you really are a follower of Jesus Christ, that He is your Savior and Lord, that you have truly repented of your sins, placed your faith entirely in Jesus, the Messiah, as your Savior and your Lord. Can you honestly say today, if you

claim to be a Christian, that He is your Teacher whom you learn from and obey, and He is your *Kurios*, your Lord. You are His slave, and He is your Master. If not, you're not a Christian. Make sure that you're truly a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Number two, if you are a believer, commit yourself personally to this mission. Commit yourself personally to this mission. Hudson Taylor, the great missionary, wrote, "The Great Commission is not an option to be considered. It's a command to be obeyed."

You need to commit yourself personally to the mission. You say, "How, Tom? How can I do this?" Let me give you several ways. Number one, pray. Pray for global missions. Pray for our missionaries. You can do that as an individual. We also have prayer teams for our missionaries. Join one of those prayer teams, and pray with other people for our missionaries. But you need to pray.

You need to pray for God to raise up more missionaries from our church. Matthew 9:38, Jesus said, "Beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest." When's the last time you asked Jesus to do that from our church?

Spurgeon said, "There is a prayer I mean to continue to offer until it is answered, that God would pour out on this church a missionary spirit. I want to see our young men devoting themselves to the work, some that will not be afraid to venture and preach Jesus Christ in the regions beyond." Is that your prayer for this church? Pray for God to raise up more missionaries from our church.

Pray for God to grant success to the Word as our faithful missionaries proclaim it. Second Thessalonians 3:1, Paul said, "Brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified." Do you pray that for our missionaries?

Pray for God to protect them physically and spiritually. Romans 15:31, Paul says, pray for me “that I may be [physically] rescued from those who are disobedient in Judea.” Pray for their physical safety.

Pray for their spiritual safety. Ephesians 6:12 says, “We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against spiritual powers.” And down in verse 18, he says, “Therefore pray.” Pray. So, you need to commit yourself personally to this mission and one way to do that is to pray.

The second way to do that is to give. So, you personally support the mission by praying, and you personally support the mission by giving. Give so that we can generously support our missionaries. Give to our general fund. That's where we support our missionaries. And we want to do that generously.

We don't want a missionary to have to come back from the field and visit a thousand churches because everybody's giving them five bucks a month. We want to support them so that they can be free to do the ministry God's given to them. Second, or excuse me, 3 John, 7 and 8 says, “They went out for the sake of the Name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. Therefore we ought to support such men, so that we may be fellow workers with the truth.” Listen, as you give in your heart, you give to the general funds saying, Lord, I want this to go to support the missionaries of the church. I want the gospel to expand. You are, as John says, fellow workers with the truth.

A third way you can be personally committed is be personally committed to help care for our missionaries. When Paul and his missionary companions came back in Acts 14 to the church from which they had been sent out, they gave a report, and then they stayed with the church and were supported by and encouraged by and cared for by the members. You need to do that. You need to own that personally. Did you know we have missionary care teams where you can find out the real practical needs of our missionaries and you can be a part of making those needs happen and see them fulfilled?

A fourth way that you can commit personally is tell the Lord, you're willing to go, and this is harder, that you're willing for your children to go. You know, we get pretty provincial here in North Texas. It's like, I want my children to go to a school here in Texas. I don't even go to college outside of Texas. And I certainly don't move outside of Texas. Listen, you need to own Christ's heart for the nation, and you need to be willing to say, "Lord, not only send me if You want me to go, but send my children if You want them to go."

That's what Jesus says in Matthew 28. Now, don't misunderstand. God has to call and gift a person to be an evangelist. The elders have to affirm that gifting and calling, and that person has to be adequately trained to go. But every one of us should have a heart that's willing to go if that's what the Lord should choose. Jim Elliott, the missionary martyr, said this, "He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose."

John Paton, missionary to the South Pacific, wrote this,

Among many who sought to deter me from going to the mission field was one dear old Christian gentleman, whose crowning argument always was, "The cannibals! You will be eaten by cannibals!" At last, I replied, "Mr. Dickson, you are advanced in years now, and your prospect is soon to be laid in the grave, there to be eaten by worms; I confess to you, that if I can but live and die serving and honoring the Lord Jesus, it will make no difference to me whether I am eaten by cannibals or by worms, and in the great day, my resurrection body will arise as fair as yours in the likeness of our risen Redeemer."

Tell the Lord you're willing to go, and you're willing for your children to go.

There's a third way that we should apply this passage, and that is share the gospel with the people in your life. That's part of what this commission means: Make disciples where you are. Spurgeon said, "Every Christian is either a missionary or an imposter" because Jesus has commanded that

of all of us. Henry Martyn, missionary to India and Persia, said “The Spirit of Christ is the Spirit of missions.” Think about that. What greater missionary is there than Christ? He came from heaven. He left the glories of heaven to come down, to see people reconciled to God. He says, “The nearer we get to Christ, the more intensely missionary we become.”

And number four, remember that this is the reason that Jesus left you here. I love the interchange between Jesus and the demoniac of Gadara in Mark chapter 5, after Jesus has healed him, in Mark 5:18, the demoniac was imploring Jesus that he might accompany Him, literally in the Greek text, that he might be with Him. All he wanted was to be with Jesus. What's wrong with that? Now, remember the context, in that passage, Jesus has just accepted the request and granted the request of the demons to go into the pigs, and He's just accepted the request of the people of Gadara to leave. But when this man that He's healed asked just to be with Him, Mark tells us Jesus did not let him, but He said to him, “Go home to your people and report to them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He had mercy on you.” Jesus refused this man's request to be with Him. Why? Because He wanted him to spread the gospel, to be an expression of Jesus' grace to his community, to his family.

And folks, the same is true with us. We want to be with Jesus, but Jesus left us here. Everything else that you do in this life, you'll do better in heaven. Your worship will be perfect in heaven. Your fellowship will be perfect in heaven. Your service will be perfect there. Your love for God, your love for others will all be perfect there. So why does Christ leave us here after He saves us? There's just one reason. It's the mission. It's the mission. It's the only thing we can't do better in heaven.

So, my plea with you today, Christian, is don't you dare ever read this passage again and go, “Oh yeah, that's for somebody else. That's for those people that serve as missionaries over on the other side of the world.” No, this is for you. You have to embrace your responsibility for the international mission of Jesus Christ. And I've showed you very practical ways to do that. Christian, don't ever forget your mission.

Let's pray together. Father, thank You for this very clear, straightforward command. Thank You for Your own heart, that You are the ultimate missionary, having sent Your own Son to the world. Lord Jesus, thank You that You demonstrated this missionary spirit in such a profound way in coming into the world to save us, to bring the message of the gospel. Help us, oh God, to have the same missionary heart. Even if You don't cause us to go, Lord, I pray that You would raise up from this church, young men and young women, who we could train and prepare and send, who would be willing to go.

But Father, for the rest of us, don't let us ever excuse ourselves from our responsibility to be fully, wholeheartedly engaged in the mission where we are. Making sure that our missionaries are cared for, that others are sent, that they are provided for, prayed for. Lord, doing everything we can in this church to forward the mission, whether it's planting another church or equipping young men to serve, Lord, help us to be all in to the mission.

Don't let us be consumed with our own lives and families and careers. Lord, those are good things, and You want us to do those things well, but don't let us ever lose sight of this one. And Lord, I pray for those who are here this morning who don't know You, who are not disciples. Maybe they think they are. Maybe they've made a profession, but to them, Jesus is neither Teacher nor Lord. Help them to see that they're not really Christians at all, and Lord, bring them to repent and believe today.

For the glory of Your name, and because Your Son deserves the reward of His suffering. It's in His name we pray, amen.