

## MATTHEW 22:34-40

### MISSIONAL LIVING: COMMANDMENT, COMMISSION, COMPASSION

Today we pick up with the third sermon in our series, we are focusing on our priorities as we look forward to the year ahead and into the foreseeable future as a congregation. Pastor Dan opened the series by reminding us of our vision, mission, and identity which serve as the foundations for setting our goals and establishing our priorities. Our vision is to Know the Father, Grow as Disciples of Jesus and Go with the Spirit.

The three major emphases that we have established as priorities are:

- Living and Growing as Disciples (who make Disciples)
- Working to Reach the Next Generation
- Witnessing and Serving in Christ's name - Missional Engagement

Pastor Dan covered the first priority and Pastor Jonna covered the second for Reaching Our Next Generation. Today, we will focus our time on the third "Missional Engagement: Witnessing and Serving in Christ's name". As we think about this priority, our leadership plans to increase opportunities for a shared response (and involvement) within the congregation, as well as raise the bar on your own individual engagement in living out the responsibility to speak and share your faith. We are going to challenge you, encourage you, and equip you in your efforts to witness and serve others where you live, work, love and serve those God brings in your life.

In Hebrews 10:24, the Bible challenges us: *"And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds."* In this simple, one-sentence appeal, God asserts and reinforces the focus we should have for the relationships in our lives. He gives us an essential and fundamental truth to all he has called us to be and do in relationship with him.

With this in mind, let me introduce a dear friend and someone who I have grown to admire in his ability to personally witness and serve others in his daily walk – Michael Stamos. My hope is his testimony will serve as an example for us to learn and grow in our abilities.

{Michael Stamos Testimonial}

Thank you Michael not only for your personal example but also for your ability to raise up others to do the same.

Now let's take a deeper look at Missional Engagement by relying on the Scriptures for the Greatest Commandment (Mark 12:28-34), the Great Commission (Matt 28:16-20), and what I like to call the Great Compassion (Isaiah 61:1-3) as we explore further how to live this out daily.

In His Greatest Commandment "Love God, Love Others," God leaves no doubt for us that everything in life that matters will spring forth from our relationships – foremost with Him and then almost as important with others He brings into our lives. From the lunchroom to the locker room, from the bedroom to the boardroom, regardless of the place of engagement, relationships are where the Lord makes it known He will move us forward as disciples.

In these connections with others, we build trust and credibility; we engage in casual acquaintances, embark with colleagues, and embrace our loved ones. We live on mission by bringing His Word and His presence into every relationship.

Since 2012, I have been blessed to walk alongside two young men – Chris and Mike - now in their late 20's who found their way through many of life's battles. Both became close friends and they would say brothers when they grew up together in a foster home environment. Separated from family, these young men lived their young lives overcoming abuse, separation, and overwhelming challenges. I happened to meet these young men during a service opportunity at our church in Florida and quickly recognized they were searching for answers and trying to find meaning for their lives. We began our journey with simple, meaningless conversations that led to an invite to join with me in a men's bible study and accountability group.

Over the years, we have prayed through strongholds that were holding us back in living out God's purpose, locked arms in difficult circumstances, and celebrated blessings that come with life's victories – we laughed, we cried, we spurred one another on. To this day, we have stayed connected by sharing in Bible study, prayer and accountability.

After 6 years, we have dispersed geographically - each of us is now living miles apart from one another – one in Maryland, one in Florida and me in California. Through these years, we have remained spiritually joined through phone calls, messaging, and online bible study. Our current devotional study and fellowship focuses on a book entitled "The Trust Protocol" by Mac Richard, Founding Pastor of Lake Hills Church in Austin, Texas.

In his book, He shares what He calls the Trust Protocol, "What exactly is the Trust Protocol? It is simply this: forging credibility through integrity and action. It is deliberately demonstrating our dependability to the people with whom we live, work, love, and serve—when we excel and, especially, when we struggle. It is backing up our talk with our walk. It is being consistently the same person we were created to be no matter where we are or whom we are with."

This my friends is missional living. This is living out the calling God has given us – every one of us - His Greatest Commandment, His Great Commission and His Great Compassion. We are called to love God, love others, go and make disciples, reach the brokenhearted, free those we see held captive by their sin and the temptations of today's world.

## **His Greatest Commandment**

The idea presented by His Greatest Commandment in Mark 12 is that everything in our lives that matters radiates from the relationships that God brings into our lives. Regardless of how God brings us together, we have the opportunity to connect with one another and let God be our guide. We live this commandment out very simply where we live, work, love and serve. These are the places God opens doors. These are the places relationships can grow.

Being intentional in these interactions can lead us to powerful community, connection and collaboration as we begin to disciple others centered on our relationship with the Lord and extending that relationship outward to those the Lord calls us to come alongside. We simply walk together in life to lock arms in the battles that life brings our way and rejoice in the blessings that God shines over us as we move forward in love and friendship.

One of our young women being confirmed today shared with us when we asked how she will continue to grow her faith, "I will continue to grow my faith in many ways. The first is my involvement in the church. I will be volunteering as a crew leader during Vacation Bible School in the summer, going to youth group and its activities frequently, and sharing my talents with the church ... The second thing I will do to grow my faith is by living out the teachings of the Bible. I will do so by inviting friends to church, following the Ten Commandments and helping others to do the same. The third is by working on consistently doing my five minutes a day with God. This means prayer and reading my bible once every day. I am going to continue to grow my faith for the rest of my life." What a great example of living out the Greatest Commandment.

### **His Great Commission**

We must realize that Jesus commands us in the Great Commission to go and proclaim the gospel and then to help new believers grow spiritually. He gives us marching orders, just as he has for all believers throughout history. To make it all possible, Jesus promises to be with us, empowering us each step of the way. Christ's missional journey for us: "make disciples of all nations." He gives us steps along this journey: (1) simply "as we are going," as part of our everyday lives, (2) "baptizing them" by washing over them in Word and prayer and (3) "teaching them to obey everything" Christ has commanded by modeling this in our own lives.

Absolute sovereign authority—lordship over all—is handed to Christ, "in heaven and on earth." Christ has given us undeniable proof of His deity. On the basis of His authority, the disciples were sent to "make disciples of all nations." The sweeping scope of their commission is aligned to His unlimited authority.

We are given the Great Commission on Christ's full authority. Since Christ's dominion is universal, the gospel must go out to all those in the world to which we are called, well beyond the walls of our church. This commandment is the primary reason for evangelism and missions. Witnessing is the primary purpose for which Jesus called the apostles, and it remains the central mission for all of us as His people.

Discipleship flows from our baptism as seen today in our confirmant's proclamation for the affirmation of their baptism and declaration of Christ as their Lord and Savior. Throughout our weeks together in confirmation, we taught these young disciples not just what we are to believe as followers of Christ, but how to live a life surrendered in obedience to His Word. Jesus taught us practical holiness – how to grow to be more like Him in our lives.

One of the young men being confirmed shared, "Confirmation means saying and proving that you believe in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It also means that I will continue to try

to go to church, teach others about God, pray, and use God's word and teachings in our day to day life to help others. I will continue to go to church weekly, I will talk about God's teachings to others to help them in their lives, be kind , and do volunteer work, and donate. I can also pray about others twice a day, daily, and show people to the path of God." What great ways to make Great Commission a reality!

Discipleship also includes teaching. The extent of witnessing called for in this commission does not end with the walking alongside the unbeliever until they come to faith. This is the starting point of our witnessing. When Jesus taught his disciples, He never intended it to be limited to an inner circle of followers. Christ intended for everyone to take on the responsibility as His disciples. He intended for each of us to share the good news of His kingdom with the world around us. As we walk alongside others, He will open their understanding, He will guide them to the full truth of His deity, He will help them become unclouded by the darkness of confusion or doubt. We demonstrate through our own lives that as real disciples we are both learners and faithful followers.

### **His Greatest Compassion**

When Jesus was ready to announce himself and his mission, he began with a dramatic quotation of this passage from Isaiah (Luke 4:18–19). He affirmed that it depicts the essence of His ministry. He used this opportunity to describe the basic ministry He passed on to His church. Because of God's great love for His people, He would send His Son, our Savior, to comfort, heal, and set us, His people free. He would clothe us and those to whom we witness and serve with goodness and salvation. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus inaugurated the "day of salvation" in which we are now called to share the good news so that those who are alienated from God can find peace in Christ.

In *Life Together*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer shares, "We must be ready to allow ourselves to be interrupted by God. God will be constantly crossing our paths and cancelling our plans by sending us people with claims and petitions. We may pass them by, preoccupied with more important tasks, as the priest passed by the man who had fallen to thieves, perhaps even while reading his Bible. When we do that we pass the visible sign of the Cross raised across our path to show us that, not our way, but God's way must be done."

The purpose of the Lord's comfort to those struggling in their suffering will be to glorify Himself (Isaiah 60:21). When a repentant sinner recognizes he can't achieve his own righteousness by works and turns from their sin and calls on the mercy of God, the Lord covers that person with His own divine righteousness by grace through their faith. Many times God allows us to face hopeless circumstances in order to test and try our faith; it is the hopelessness that forces us to seek God, and it is there that we find strength and refreshment. If we give him reign over our hearts and minds, Christ will take our lives, no matter how bruised and broken, and make something beautiful out of them. Isn't this what hope is all about—beauty for ashes, gladness instead of sorrow, and a coat of praise instead of sense of hopelessness.

Another of our young confirmant's shared, "for me growing in my faith isn't just going to church and praying. It is about being a follower outside of church. Being kind to others at school and at dance. It is about being helpful, patient, and loving."

### **Missional Living: Commandment, Commission, Compassion**

C.S. Lewis said "The Church exists for nothing else but to draw men into Christ, to make them little Christs, if they are not doing that, all the cathedrals, clergy, mission, sermons, even the Bible itself, are simply a waste of time. God became Man for no other purpose."

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- Missional Engagement: Witnessing and Serving in Christ's name

Reflecting back on the young men I have been blessed to walk alongside – Mike and Chris. I praise God every day for the spiritually grounded men they've become. Chris reuniting with his birth family and completing his education to become an airline mechanic for Piedmont Airlines. And Mike, after being baptized a few years ago moving forward in life to start a family and begin to raise a son of his own.

Michael Breen in his book *Leading Missional Communities*, exhorts us, "do the small things we see around us with great love, trusting that God will take our small things and all the other small things we don't see and weave them all together into a tapestry that announces His love for humanity and calls all people to new life under God, who is making everything new."

I challenge you and encourage you to witness and serve others where you live, work, love and serve. Encourage those whom God brings into your life. Take the opportunity through our Grow Groups and Middle Hour bible study fellowships to equip yourself to being your journey to touch the hearts and minds of those around you. As we walk alongside others, we are called to speak truth in love.

Let us pray...

Worship song...

First Service: Lord Speak to Us, That We May Speak – LBW #403

Second Service: Build My Life

## **MISSIONAL LIVING: COMMANDMENT, COMMISSION, COMPASSION**

### ***His Greatest Commandment***

<sup>28</sup> One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?"

<sup>29</sup> "The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. <sup>30</sup> Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' <sup>31</sup> The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."

<sup>32</sup> "Well said, teacher," the man replied. "You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. <sup>33</sup> To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices."

<sup>34</sup> When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions.

(Mark 12:28-24)

### ***His Great Commission***

<sup>16</sup> Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. <sup>17</sup> When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. <sup>18</sup> Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup> 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, <sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:16-20)

### ***His Great Compassion***

*The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, <sup>2</sup> to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, <sup>3</sup> and provide for those who grieve in Zion — to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor... <sup>10</sup> I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. <sup>11</sup> For as the soil makes the sprout come up and a garden causes seeds to grow, so the Sovereign Lord will make righteousness and praise spring up before all nations. (Isaiah 61:1-3... 10,11)*