

Go Where You Are: A Missions Message

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning. Thank you so much for treating me so well as I have been here and I've really enjoyed being with your elders. And as Pastor Scott said, I am from the state of Mississippi.

I've enjoyed being here, growing to get to know Pastor Scott very well and loving him. I am beginning to question his integrity. He said, we would love to have you out to Spokane in the spring. Thankfully, I'm from the deep south and we're used to this, right?

So it really has been a joy to be here this weekend with your elders, your leadership, your pastors, and now I'm just grateful to be able to stand in front of you and take a look into God's Word this moment, this morning for just a few minutes. If you have your Bible with you, go ahead and open to Acts chapter 28. That's where we will be spending most of our time this morning.

We did get a chance to spend the weekend together and discuss what does it look like for God to fulfill his purpose by making good on his promise to redeem a people for himself, for his glory. And even in the song we just sang, we said, we go to all the world. And we are called to do that. My primary purpose and work is with an organization that sends people into various and sundry places to do work, Lord willing, to plant churches amongst minority language groups. You guys have sent a family from here through this organization. And we are grateful for the work that they are doing in their language learning. And I just want to encourage you. That is a diligent and difficult task, often an unheralded task to begin to learn a new language. So continue to lift them up, continue to reach out to them and encourage them. And, and Lord willing, we will be praying that one day Fourth Memorial will have a great celebration for a new church that you have planted through the ambassadors that you have sent to another part of the world. At, at my church in Mississippi, we have a saying, we say we are saved to be sent.

And it's very easy to think about that in terms of being sent far and far away. But the reality is all of us, every one of us who have been saved by the shed blood of Jesus Christ, we are not saved just for our own benefit. We're not saved just to forego a punishment that we rightly deserve. We are saved to be sent out into this world for the glory of Jesus Christ. And to spread the good news of the gospel that he embodied when he was here with us. So this morning, even as we might be tempted to only think about how do we send people to far, far away places, I want to challenge you, if you have been saved, if you have been redeemed, that you are sent as well. And that may be near here in our neighborhoods, in and around Spokane, it may be into the greater Washington area, it may be to serve in a church plant somewhere across the U.S. or across the world. But nevertheless, your life is to be given through commission to serve the purpose of the gospel for the glory of his name.

[3 : 34] Back in 2022, our church had an experience that I understand is much like you've had here at Fourth Memorial. In 2022, we had a commissioning service where we stood 52 people in the front and prayed over them. Some of them were headed to Europe. We had one single lady who was headed to the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and most of them headed across town to a new church plant that our church was endeavoring to see happen. That meant that sometime in the coming days, almost 10% of our people that normally worshiped at our church each Sunday and contribute to the ministries there, that they would be leaving with the specific intent of going somewhere else for the spread of the gospel. So the people who have never heard the good news that there is forgiveness for sin available, that salvation is available, could hear that. And so that healthy new gospel-centered churches can be built up and that they might be obedient to how he believed and that they might be obedient to how they believe that God was calling them to participate in this great commission that Jesus gave to the church. That is the missionary task as we define it, is to go about the job of proclaiming the gospel in another context so that healthy

gospel-centered churches will exist where they currently do not.

But that meant that about 90% of our congregation would stay right there where God had placed us. Now, I do believe that being a missionary involves some unique circumstances where we cross boundaries and barriers, but the commission, we just sang our commission is the same, right? We just sang that in our song that we were led in just a moment, but our commission that's been given to all of us believers, even the ones who may never leave. When Jesus said, you will be my witnesses in Acts 1, and when he said, you go and make disciples among all nations in Matthew 28, he could not have just been speaking to the small group of people that stood in front of him, right? I mean, think about that.

We are talking about an enormous task. That ragtag little bunch of people that stood before him could in no way accomplish what he was commanding. He was speaking to the church. That's you, and that's me. That's all of us.

And in the past, our pastor has described believers. I shared this with the elders yesterday. Our pastor would describe believers, those Christians, as two types.

[6 : 24] Type 1 believer is anyone and everyone who claims the name of Christ. Anyone who has been redeemed and is called to make disciples of all nations.

The type 2 believer is someone who simply is going to do it somewhere else. That's our missionaries. They'll be asked to do the same thing in another context. But what about the 90% of the Christ followers on that day who believed at that moment that God had not yet revealed his desire for them to go somewhere else?

How are they to participate in a life of faithfulness to Christ and the Great Commission? Well, I think we can find a good example of this in the life of Paul.

And you might say, okay, hold on. Time out, Kylie. Paul is sometimes said to be the greatest missionary that ever lived. So how are we going to model the life of Paul as we stay right here in Spokane and seek to make disciples?

How does emulating him help us understand discipleship in our own context? Well, if we are careful Bible readers, we will see that Paul did not spend all his time traveling around Asia and Europe.

[7 : 38] A quick review of Acts tells us that after his conversion, he spends a great deal of time in Jerusalem, in Syria, in Cilicia. We read about his beatings, how he was chased out of the city.

We talked about this yesterday with the men together. Towards the end of the book, he goes through not... How many of you have ever been shipwrecked? No? Paul was not just shipwrecked. He was shipwrecked multiple times. Paul is the king of bad luck. Right? Shipwrecked, storms, even snake bites.

Paul cannot catch a break. His missionary journeys would take him all over Asia and Europe, including many island locations. But when he came into conflict with the Jewish leaders, he appealed to the Roman government and found himself in a Roman prison for the first time. Not exactly the home context that one would choose, right? Prison. But nevertheless, he will stay there for some time.

[8 : 44] And I want you to take a look at our text to see how Paul lived a life of faithfulness, even when he wasn't traveling, whether by his choice or not.

Right? So when he wasn't traveling to foreign countries and planting churches and do all the things that we think Paul is famous for, I want us to see how he lived a life of faithfulness.

And this morning, our message is called, Go Where You Are. And that's what we're going to see in the life of Paul right here. So if you'll join me in Acts 28, I'm going to read beginning in verse 17. And after three days, he called together the local leaders of the Jews. And when he had gathered, and when they had gathered, he said to them, Brothers, though I had done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers, yet I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans.

When they had examined me, they wished to set me at liberty because there was no reason for the death penalty in my case. But because the Jews objected, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar.

[9 : 51] Though I had no charge to bring against my nation. For this reason, therefore, I have asked to see you and speak with you, since it is because of the hope of Israel that I am wearing this chain.

And they said to him, We have received no letters from Judea about you, and none of the brothers coming here has reported or spoken any evil about you. But we desire to hear from you what your

views are, for with regard to this sect, we know that everywhere it is spoken against. And when they had appointed a day for him, they came to him at his lodging in greater numbers. From morning till evening he expounded to them, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus, both from the law of Moses and from the prophets. And some were convinced by what he said, but others disbelieved. And disagreeing among themselves, they departed after Paul had made one statement. The Holy Spirit was right in saying to your fathers through Isaiah the prophet, Go to this people and say, You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive. For this people's heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and with their eyes have closed. Lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn, and I would heal them.

[11:13] Therefore, let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles. They will listen. He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, proclaiming the kingdom of God, and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.

Now, as we look at exactly how Paul set out to accomplish the Great Commission, when he actually couldn't go anywhere, right?

We need to go back. We need to back up just a little bit. I want to point out one little thing. If you'll turn back with me, look at just before where we started at verse 16. And it says, And when he came into Rome, Paul was allowed to stay by himself with the guard, with the soldier who guarded him. Paul is under some sort, some type of house arrest, it appears here. He's in house arrest in Rome. It seems he's not in a traditional setting, as far as we can tell here, but it's apparent that he's always under Roman guard.

So what does Paul do? Paul makes the most of the situation. And that's what you and I are called to do. We've got, I'll just tell you, if you happen to be a note taker or something like that, we've got five, five admonitions to us this morning, okay?

[12:39] Number one, make the most of your situation. That's exactly what Paul was doing right here. It says from verse 30 toward the end and onward, we will also see that Paul was in this situation for two years, and that he welcomed anyone who would or could be in his company.

He starts out by proclaiming to the Roman guards. Then we read that he invited the Jewish leaders to hear his teaching, and ultimately, anyone who would listen. It's truly amazing how he approaches this situation.

I mean, Paul's a prisoner, but he's not complaining. He's proclaiming. Even as he wastes away in prison. As a matter of fact, Paul pens a number of letters while he's in this prison.

One to the church at Colossae. In Colossians 4, we read that he asks them to pray that he will be able to minister while he wears his chains and to open a door for him to be faithful.

It's important that we see in the life of the Christian, in the life of the believer, this one thing that we observe here in Paul's life. Paul is not asking for God to miraculously intervene in his situation and release him from prison.

[14:00] Instead, he is asking that his time in jail would actually advance the gospel. And I have no doubt that with a group this size this morning, everybody's not riding on a high right now, right?

Probably safe to say that some of you are in a bit of a low spot. Not in prison, because you're here this morning. But life is hard at times, right?

And what we see here from Paul is not, Lord, break down the wall. Lord, break this chain. Lord, give me a pardon. Lord, help me be faithful. Where I am.

And we know that God answered his prayer more than once. Anyone remember a guy by the name of Onesimus?

Onesimus was the subject of the book of Philemon, the letter that Paul had written. And when Paul wrote his letter to Philemon, he was asking him to forgive Onesimus, Philemon's slave who had accepted, and to accept him as a new brother in Christ.

[15:14] Presumably because Paul had shared the gospel with him. He was asking Philemon to treat him as a brother. And don't you think that Onesimus was thankful that Paul remained faithful while God kept him in prison?

It happened more than once. We know that many of the Roman guards were hearing about Jesus. More than likely, the soldiers were rotating and watching Paul. And in Philippians 1, one of the other

letters that Paul wrote at this time, Paul says this, I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest of that my imprisonment is for Christ.

And most of the brothers, having become more confident in the Lord, by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. I mean, the military was hearing the message of the gospel.

Even the Jewish believers and Jewish leadership were returning to Rome after Claudius had kicked them out, and they were being emboldened to share their faith. The gospel was changing people inside the prison walls and throughout the city because of the faithful testimony of believers like Paul.

Paul's life was making a difference for the kingdom, and he wasn't just staying in the same place. He's chained to another dude. Right?

[16:48] This wasn't a rebellious choice not to go. He's chained to the wall. He has no choice. And yet, he remains faithful.

We need to make the most of every day that the Lord gives us to speak the truth to every single person that crosses our path. We need to pray and encourage our fellow believers here.

Paul was having this global impact without going anywhere. And as believers, we are called to do the very same thing. Make the most of your situation.

Secondly, Paul's example, I think, shows us that we are to teach from the Scripture. We are to teach from the Scripture. We see this modeled in the life of church leaders throughout the New Testament.

Stephen, teaching from Scripture, even as he was being killed. Philip, encountering the Ethiopian, beginning in the Scriptures with where, where was the Ethiopian reading?

[17:54] Isaiah, starting right there to proclaim the good news of the Gospel from the Scripture. And in Paul's second meeting here with the Jewish leaders in verse 23, the Scripture says, When they had appointed a day for him, they came to him at his lodging in greater numbers.

And from morning till evening, he expounded to them, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus, both from the law of Moses and from the prophets.

And some were convinced by what he said, but others believed. Or disbelieved, excuse me. When I was in seminary, I had a preaching professor, Tony Morita.

Some of you may have read books that he has written, that kind of thing. He liked to say that he observed that Paul taught from the Scriptures in four ways. Here they are. He said that Paul would teach from the Scriptures from dawn till dusk.

Remember the story in Acts 20 where Paul preached all night in Troas? Paul preached all night. He preached so long that poor Eutychus fell asleep and fell out the window.

[19:00] And they thought he was dead. I hope this morning that we all walk out of here together in a little while.

I mean, nothing kills a service like somebody dying, right, Pastor Scott? Yeah. It's a real service killer. Ha ha. We need to be urgent about the Great Commission, but not hasty.

Many of you would say, okay, that's great advice. Preach from dawn till dusk. But you know what? I don't get the chance to stand here and preach. I don't get the chance to do that.

Well, the reality is, for most of us, gospel conversations will take place over time in relationship as we share the truth of God's Word.

So as the Spirit moves and brings people across your path, do your duty. Reach into the Word and expose it for them.

[20:10] Expose them to where the true power is in the Word of God. He preached from dawn till dusk. He also preached from cover to cover. Paul's example shows us that he reasoned with them, where does it say?

From the law of Moses and the prophets, and began to teach them about this new king of Israel who was crucified for the sins of the entire world.

Much of the New Testament, and part of the reason Paul did this is because he wasn't holding the New Testament at this time. Quite frankly, he was writing lots of the New Testament at the time.

So he was reasoning with them from God's Word, which at that point was primarily the Old Testament. And the lesson for us is let's not neglect Paul's example here.

What does it say? All Scripture is God-breathed, profitable for teaching, right? God's purpose to redeem his people is from Genesis to the maps.

[21 : 14] The maps are not inspired. Just want to point that out. I don't want to get accused of heresy. But all of God's Word, profitable for teaching. Paul also preached heart to heart.

Look back at what it was said in verse 23. When they had appointed a day for him, they came to him at his lodging in greater numbers. And from morning till evening, he expounded to them, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus, both from the law of Moses and from the prophets.

What I want us to see here is as we share with other people, it is not simply a transfer of information. We know that conviction and salvation is a supernatural combination of the Holy Spirit breaking a person's heart.

And it also says that we're to be convincing or persuading them in that moment through the compelling message of the gospel. And then fourthly, Tony Morita says, we share scripture from Jew to Gentile.

Jesus came to provide the opportunity for salvation for everyone. And so we should be prepared to share that with everyone.

[22 : 29] Paul appealed to the Jews by teaching to them from the Old Testament, but he also challenged them with the fact that we must repent and we must believe in King Jesus.

Paul made the most of his situation. He preached from the scripture and that leads us to our third example we see here. We need to ask God for boldness in our lives.

look back at verse 30 again. It says, he lived there for two years at his own expense and welcomed all who came to him proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.

Luke finishes this book of Acts by emphasizing that Paul continued to make the Lord Jesus the focus of his time in prison. I mean, that was Paul's M.O.

everywhere he went, right? King Jesus, the center of everything. In chapter 19 of Acts, we see that Paul preaches boldly in the synagogues and then when they kicked him out of there, what does he do?

[23 : 43] He goes to the hall of Tyrannus and he shares there. So what we see is this bold proclamation. It didn't start in Rome, but that's where it is now and he's been faithful the whole way and we know that this boldness can only come through the Holy Spirit and this was a huge priority in the life of Paul.

We know this because, as we said, he wrote four letters during this time. He wrote to the Ephesians, the Colossians, the Philippians and Philemon. And there was this constant emphasis, this constant drumbeat of boldness.

Lord, give me boldness that only he can provide. In Ephesians 6, he said this to the church. And also for me that the words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel for which I am an ambassador in chains that I may declare it boldly as I ought to speak.

Throughout the entire book of Acts, Luke emphasizes that the Holy Spirit empowered boldness is a character trait of the faithful witness.

Scripture teaches us that when we are saved, we are indwelt in that moment by the Holy Spirit. We receive the Holy Spirit in that moment. And the Holy Spirit is the one who gives us the boldness that's needed to proclaim.

[25 : 17] So therefore, boldness, proclaiming, evangelizing, a lot of times we kind of fall into the trap that this is some sort of mystical gift that we're going to be given.

But no, boldness is actually an act of obedience in the life of every believer because the Holy Spirit is inside of us. In Acts 4, it was boldness that caused Peter and John to make an impact when they testified before the council.

It wasn't their knowledge or their education. Let's read what it says about them. I'll read it to you. It says, Now, when they saw the boldness of Peter and John and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished and they recognized that they had been with Jesus.

Don't you want that said about you? Man, when I look at that guy, he's been with Jesus. When I look at that lady, I can just see it.

She's been in the presence of the Lord. Don't you want that said about you? I hope at some point that gets said about me. We need to pray for the Spirit to give us boldness.

[26 : 32] Paul used this time that he had, even in prison, to speak boldly. Verse 31 tells us that he also taught about the Lord Jesus Christ without hindrance.

What? He's chained to the wall. What do you mean without hindrance? He's under arrest. Well, it might refer to the fact that Paul doesn't seem to be in a formal prison, but I don't think that's it. I think that what Paul is saying is that although he was changed, the Word of God will not be bound. So that's our fourth thing.

Be confident in the Gospel. That's where our confidence comes from. It's like, well, Kylie, how can you confidently say that you know that's what Paul means?

I always want to be careful about presuming what someone means in Scripture. But the reason we can be confident in this case is because in 2 Timothy 2, Paul says this as he writes to Timothy, Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal.

[27 : 53] Listen, but the Word of God is not bound. The best rule of thumb when interpreting Scripture is to use all of Scripture.

One of the most common excuses that we give as Christians for not talking to people about our faith is that we don't have all the answers. Kylie, I don't know enough.

I don't have all the answers. Somebody's going to ask me something that I can't handle? You're right. You can't handle it. But that's just pride, right?

That's just me wanting to know enough to have all the answers. That's me wanting to be a little bit omniscient like the Creator God is. Right?

Let me tell you, if the gospel has changed you, you have a story to tell. And the Holy Spirit will accomplish His story, His purpose, even if you butcher it.

[29 : 08] Doesn't that make you go, praise the Lord. Get out there, butcher it, go deep in the Word, and trust the Spirit.

I mean, look at how it happens in the early church in Acts. Luke documents it for us. Listen to this. I'm going to just blast through several references all in the Word. It says, sorry, let me get my glasses on here.

Chapter 6, and the Word of God continued to increase and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith. Chapter 9, so the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up and walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.

Chapter 12, but the Word of God increased and multiplied. Chapter 6, so the churches were strengthened in faith and they increased in numbers daily. Chapter 19, so the Word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily.

Notice, not one time in each of these accounts does it mention anything about the skills of the person who shared the Word. Matter of fact, the writer in Hebrew says that the Word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, and of joints and marrow and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

[30 : 41] Brothers and sisters, be confident in the Gospel. And as we see this account of Paul's life, we realize that the Gospel has now made it to Rome as you start to think about, you know what, I just don't know that I could be effective for the Gospel.

Yes, you can. There's reason to believe that this ragtag bunch of apostles! It's not even that the Gospel couldn't either. At that time, the Roman Empire was really, effectively, the whole world as they knew it.

And we kind of always think in our Christian worldview, we kind of always assume that Jerusalem was the epicenter, like it was just the center of the world at that time, right? But that's not the case. It was on the very eastern edge or the fringe of the Roman Empire and really almost constituted small-town life as compared to Rome.

It was not the center of everything that was happening. I mean, even in this, it says, in the words, it says, the fact that not only did this sect, as the Jewish leaders call it, survive Jerusalem, it is changing lives all over the known world and it's now even reached the center with these uneducated men and women.

[32 : 00] I mean, even Jesus' own followers were shocked this plan was working, right? What did Nathaniel say? What good can come from Nazareth? Jesus, this will never work, right?

But Philip said, what did Philip say? He said, come and see. Come and see. And we're supposed to do the same thing with the people that God puts in our lives. Just simply tell them to come and see. Boldly share Scripture with them and then be confident in the Gospel to do what the Gospel does. Finally, as we watch Paul's example, I want to encourage you, live for Jesus until the time that you see Him.

Live for King Jesus until you see Him face to face. According to church history and Scripture, we know that even though Paul stayed under this arrest for two years, this was not the end for him. Paul continued on his next task where it's believed that he wrote 1 Timothy and Titus before being arrested in Rome again and then for the second time writing 2 Timothy just before he was executed and martyred for his faith.

[33 : 12] It was only at this point when the emperor gave the order that Paul was to be executed that in his writings we see Paul's words change a bit.

His tone doesn't change. His confidence doesn't change. But his words change ever so slightly. He was just as passionate as he's always been. Not sad but he was bold when he said these words for I am already being poured out as a drink offering and the time of my departure has come.

I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. I have kept the faith. Henceforth There is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord the righteous judge will award to me on that day and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.

At my first defense no one came to stand by me. They all deserted me. May it not be charged against them but the Lord stood by me and strengthened me so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it.

So I was rescued from the lion's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom to be with him in his glory forever and ever.

[34 : 38] Amen. I hope that you know this King Jesus that Paul is talking about here. But let me just tell you if you don't please don't leave here today without talking to one of us one of the elders Pastor Scott someone I hope that you understand that everything that is written here everything from the beginning to the end is God's word and that it communicates to us his desire to offer forgiveness to us that it communicates who Jesus was the reality that he was the Christ that he suffered and died and was resurrected for the forgiveness of sin and that you can respond to that by repenting you can turn away from the sin that has sustained our lives and turn toward Christ and just like Paul in the impossibility of his situation in the impossibility of your situation you can be confident that you can be forgiven and you can be confident that he will never leave you nor forsake you you can be in his presence for eternity as we said when you see him face to face so this morning

I do want to remind us from the example of Paul's life make the most of your situation God may call you to go somewhere one day but as long as he has you here and as long as you claim the name of Christ make the most of that situation then teach people from scripture and we cannot share what we do not possess so be in his word share his word with everyone that you come into contact with and then be on your knees asking for boldness that when you rise he will give you the words that he will give you the things to share the goodness of the gospel with everyone whether it's at your work at your school wherever you go each and every day then be confident that God's word will do the work honestly for me that is like the greatest release ever is to know it's not up to me because I have failed so many more times than I care to remember in so many ways be confident in the gospel and then finally just live for

King Jesus until you see him face to face whether you are taken from this world or he returns live for him I hope that you know him and if you do know him I hope that you just like me needed this little bit of encouragement this morning to remind us of what living a life of faithfulness is supposed to look like right here where you live where you go to school where you work and if you don't know him don't leave here today without that knowledge without understanding who he is and that he has made a way for you Paul had so much hope even while wearing his chains and for those of us who know him let our lives be poured out just like Paul until the very end of our days let's pray together Father in heaven holy is your name and Father in the end that is that is really all that we have to stand on to rely on is who you are your goodness your holiness your righteousness but Father also your justice that your promises are true that one day you will judge sin as a righteous judge but that

we can stand before you clothed in the righteousness of Jesus Christ forgiven of our sins and given a hope for eternity in your presence so Father today for my friends for my brothers and sisters Father that they would be praying diligently that you would send them to accomplish the task that you have given to each and every one of us as believers to be bold in our proclamation of the gospel God I pray that you would raise up some here who would be called to leave who would be called to go but Father we are all called to be disciple makers to be ambassadors for the goodness of the gospel Father as the church help us to be the means of mission that will carry the gospel so that people can be rescued from their sin and Father help us to be about the business of seeing that the church is the end of mission that churches are planted that the word is shared that leaders are raised up and that lives are changed by the power of the gospel through the Holy Spirit so Father that is our prayer this morning we pray trusting in the truth of your word we pray all this for the sake of your church and the glory of your name amen