

# Taking the Great Commission Seriously

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 06 October 2019

Preacher: Cedric Moss

[ 0 : 00 ] I want to begin this morning by asking you a question. It's a very serious question. It's a very sober question. And the question is this.

Is our Christianity biblical? By our Christianity, I mean in a primary way how we live our lives and how we serve God.

Primarily, that's what I mean. But in a secondary way, I mean the way we see Christianity lived out in the Western world. Is it biblical? No. Now, this message is not about whether you are a Christian or not, although I believe that for some of us, the implications of that will arise.

But instead, what it is about is whether the lives we live, as those who profess to be Christians, is consistent with what Scripture calls us to be and also to do.

Almost 2,000 years ago, Jesus left this earth. And right before he left the earth, he gave instructions to his disciples.

[ 1 : 17 ] And we find these instructions in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. John doesn't include these instructions because John had a different goal when he wrote his Gospel.

John wanted to portray Jesus Christ as the Savior of the world and as the only one who was the source of eternal life. But Matthew, Mark, and Luke took a different approach.

And one of the things that they did was they sought to capture the life and ministry of Jesus. And they also included, each of them, at the end of his ministry, instructions that he gave to his disciples that have come to us as the Great Commission.

And this morning, I want to be considering the Great Commission from the Gospel of Matthew, although I will also read the accounts of Mark and Luke.

So if you've not yet done so, please turn in your Bible to Matthew chapter 28. We'll be reading verses 18 through 20. Matthew 28, verses 18 through 20.

[ 2 : 31 ] Matthew 28, verses 18 through 20. And Jesus came and said to them, Now, I want to read, Mark's and Luke's account.

You don't need to turn there. It's going to be projected for you. Mark 16, verses 15 through 16. And he said to them, Go into all the world and proclaim the Gospel to the whole creation.

Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved. But whoever does not believe will be condemned. And then in Luke's account, chapter 24, verses 45 through 47.

Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures and said to them, Thus it is written that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead.

And that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations beginning at Jerusalem.

[ 4 : 03 ] Would you bow in prayer with me? Father, we are grateful this morning for the privilege we now have to sit under the preaching of your word.

Lord, you know, you know, you know. Lord, you know. Would you speak to our hearts, Lord? Lord, you know where each one of us is. You know. The deepest longings and needs of our hearts.

And I ask, oh Lord, that you would meet those longings. And would you do it even now as we hear your word preached.

I ask for your grace, for your help, that I may be faithful to proclaim your word as I should. And then, Lord, help us all to hear and then to heed all that is said.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. So what is the Great Commission? I believe that when we consider these three passages that we read just a while ago, we can faithfully summarize the Great Commission in this way.

[ 5 : 14 ] The Great Commission is the means by which Christ calls his followers into his mission to call others into his mission.

That's the Great Commission. It's not just some words that we memorize and we think about in a vacuum, but the Great Commission is Jesus Christ entrusting his mission into the hands of those who claim to follow him.

And essentially what they are called to do is they are called to call others into that mission. And so, brothers and sisters, this is serious business. When we consider that the Lord could have done this any number of ways.

He could have ensured that he himself proclaims the gospel to all people, but he didn't do that. He invited people like you and me, whose lives he would transform and change, and then he would entrust to us this good news, this gospel, which is the only way by which men, women, boys, and girls can pass from death to life, can pass from unforgiven to forgiven, can pass from being objects of wrath to being objects of God's mercy.

It is the way that God reconciles sinners to himself. When we consider the Great Commission, we consider these three commissions from the three gospels, I think we can reduce them to three activities, to three particular activities, proclaiming the gospel, baptizing believers, and discipling believers.

[ 7 : 11 ] And I want us to consider these this morning, because really, this is what we have been called to. This is what the Lord has called us to. This is what he's called us into.

And to put it very bluntly, if we're not doing this, we're not being faithful to the command of Jesus Christ as he was leaving the earth.

I've heard it said that some of the most important words that we will ever speak or people ever speak on their dying beds are the last words that they share right before they would pass from life to death.

And Jesus was not passing from life to death, but he was passing from earth to heaven. And so these final words of his are very important words, words that we need to all heed this morning. So let's consider the first of these three activities, proclaiming the gospel. Proclaiming the gospel is sharing the gospel with all people everywhere.

[ 8 : 28 ] Sharing the gospel with all people everywhere. And that sharing of the gospel is calling people to repent and to believe the good news.

The good news that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. The good news that sinners can receive forgiveness through Jesus Christ and through his finished work on the cross.

And of course, that good news is not really good news unless it is understood in the context of bad news. And the bad news is that every single one of us is born, as the Bible says, in sin.

We have been shaped in iniquity and every single one of us is born as an object of the wrath of God. And that is because Adam being our head, when he fell into sin, he brought the whole world into sin with him.

And we are objects of the wrath of God, away from God. It doesn't matter how nice we are. It matters not how many awards we win and how people would proclaim how wonderful it is to know us.

[ 9 : 42 ] Deep in our hearts, deep to our core, we are sinners. And we are rebels against God. And the only just response of God to that kind of posture in us is wrath because he's a holy God.

If he responded in any other way, he would be less than holy. And so, the good news is that sinners can move from that position of being an object of God's wrath to being an object of his mercy.

And that's the good news that we, who have received that and experienced that, are called to share with others. They're called to say to them that they can be reconciled to God.

Now, proclaiming the gospel is more than what I'm doing this morning. Proclaiming the gospel is more than a preacher preaching. Proclaiming the gospel has many different ways. It is sharing the gospel as we are called to do in a personal way.

It's the gospel written. It's the gospel spoken. There are many ways that we can share the gospel. But, what is important is to remember that the gospel has objective content.

[ 10 : 54 ] The gospel, as we heard in the Children's Church presentation, it is about Jesus Christ. It is about what he has done. It is about what it means to follow him and to commit our lives to him.

The gospel is not moralism. And this is the danger for many of us. The danger for many of us is to believe that the gospel is moralism in terms of you stop doing this and that and the other bad thing and then you start doing some good things.

Some good things like reading your Bible or attending church. And certainly Christians do those things but those things don't make us Christians. Those things don't transfer us from death to life. The gospel is more than turning over a new leaf and being a better person. Jesus made it very clear there will be many good people who will go to hell. He said to the Pharisees, he said, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you, meaning that they weren't going.

And so the gospel is not moralism and it is a danger. It is a substitute that many people fall for. [12:17] The gospel is proclaiming the good news, the good news that we don't have to be objects of the wrath of God. We don't have to stay in unrepentance. We can be reconciled to God.

We can be forgiven of our sins. And we can be accepted by a holy God through Jesus Christ. Now this, brothers and sisters, is the foundation of the Great Commission.

If we lose this, we have no Great Commission. If we lose this, it matters not that we baptize people or that we teach people things. If we lose the gospel, if we don't have this gospel, then everything else really doesn't matter.

And so my question to you this morning, those of us who have put our faith in Jesus Christ, those of us who would profess to follow Jesus Christ, do you take this call to proclaim the gospel seriously? Do you understand what is at stake in it? I mean, this is God's way. God has chosen that he would save people through what Paul says, the foolishness of preaching, the foolishness of sharing the gospel of this crucified Savior that we sang about this morning.

[13:37] Are we taking this gospel seriously? Are we, for example, when we think of the relationships that we have, are we aware that the highest good that we can provide in our relationships with people who don't know Christ is to be a bearer of the good news to them?

It is the most important role that we can fulfill in our relationship with all the people in our circle of relationships.

So are we embracing the opportunities that God gives us to share the gospel with people? And if you would say, I don't see the opportunities, are you praying about those opportunities?

Asking God to provide opportunities to share the gospel. As a church, we gather week by week and in the bulletin we would foreshadow the sermon for the next week and we would encourage, invite family, invite friends.

Brothers and sisters, if we have, and I shouldn't even say we have, I know that we all have, we all have people either who we're related to or who we work with or who we live by or who we interact with in some way who don't know Jesus Christ.

[15:06] And we have this precious gospel that we have received for ourselves. We have passed from death to life. We are not taking the gospel seriously, the call to proclaim the gospel seriously if we're not sharing it with those who don't know Jesus Christ and who according to scripture is on their way to an eternity away from God.

And sometimes I think we have to really consider, has this gone deep in our hearts to really believe that this is what happens to people who don't know Jesus Christ? and to realize that we have that message to share with them.

And again, only God saves. Only God is able to convince a heart. But he has decided that the way he will do that is by enlisting men and women whom he saves into his mission to reach out to others.

Right now, Christiane, the Explored is running. We are entering into our fourth week. And each time that we have Christianity Explored, we would give out invitation cards, make them available, the brochures, we would announce it week by week and we would encourage everyone to invite.

In this Christianity Explored course, we have 13 persons who are participating in it. And do you know that the 13 persons have been invited by three persons? Three persons in the church.

[16:42] brothers and sisters, if this call, see, and now what we're talking about is not just our individual responsibility is to share the gospel.

We're now talking about this role that we have to partner together. God has joined us in this church and we are joined in this church primarily for one purpose. That is for the furtherance of the Great Commission.

And so when we hear these opportunities for us to partner and to say, let's invite friends. Let's extend the invitation. Let's pray for someone. Brothers and sisters, if that's going through one air and out of the next and we're not being responsive to that, I'm saying to us that we don't fully

understand the Great Commission, how it is supposed to work and what the Lord has called us to do.

Because minimum, we can be extending invitations. We can be praying. And again, if we are absent-minded in our relationships and we're not aware of the souls of people who we are relating to who are going to hell, friends, we have to awaken from the dead.

We have to awaken from that lack of awareness and we have to extend those invitations and then trust the Lord to use them as He chooses.

[18:12] And I hope you don't misunderstand what I'm saying this morning. I'm not trying to heap guilt on anyone. I'm just reminding us that when Christ saved us, He didn't just save us to breathe a sigh of relief that, oh, I'm not going to go to hell.

No, that's not the main reason He saved us. He saved us so that we may involve ourselves in His mission, whatever we do, and we do all kinds of different things.

We're involved in different ways and different endeavors and we all have different and unique opportunities where to be extending this gospel that we have received to others.

Listen to the way the Apostle Paul puts it in 2 Corinthians chapter 5 verses 14 through 15. He writes, for the love of Christ controls us because we have concluded this that one has died for all, therefore all have died and He died for all that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for Him who for their sake died and was raised.

This is what Paul says, very last part, Christ died for us that we may no longer live for ourselves. but we would instead live for the one who died for us and living for the one who died for us entails keeping to the forefront of our minds the reality that there are men, women, boys, and girls who are on the same path that we were on and who need to hear the same gospel that we heard to bring us off of that path.

[19:57] Paul goes on, listen to what he says in verses 17 through 21, therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, the old has passed away, behold, the new has come.

All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to Himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation. That is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them and entrusting to us the ministry of reconciliation.

And he concludes in verse 20 and says this, therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ. God, making His appeal through us, we implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

For our sake, He made Him to be sin who knew no sin so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God. If you've been saved by Jesus Christ, you've been made an ambassador for Jesus Christ.

And being an ambassador, He gives you a message. He gives you a message to proclaim to all those who are outside of the kingdom of God. And that message is be reconciled to God.

[21:21] That message is a way has now been made possible for you to be forgiven of your sins and for you to be reconciled to God as one of His own children.

We're ambassadors. And we are called to proclaim the gospel to all people as we have opportunity, whoever they are, whatever they've done, it matters not.

Some of you may have heard or followed the story about the police office in Dallas who murdered a man going into the wrong apartment thinking that she was in the right apartment.

And you may have seen the video about what happened in the courtroom and so forth. And as we were praying this morning, you know, Shambi just mentioned that we should pray that she would really come to know Christ.

And see, this is one of the things that we sometimes forget. Sometimes we could easily think subtly that there's some people who just don't deserve salvation. but it matters not who they are. It matters not what they've done.

[22:47] Christ receives sinners. And his grace is more than sufficient. No matter what the sin. Well, that's the first activity.

The second activity of the Great Commission is the call to baptize believers. Those who believe the gospel are commanded to be baptized.

We see this in scripture. We see that in scripture, water baptism is an expression of genuine faith in Jesus Christ. And it is the believer's first act of obedience.

It is the first act that he's called to do, to carry out. And if we start the journey by disobedience, then that doesn't all go well for the rest of the journey.

In Acts chapter 2, the very first account that we have of the gospel being preached and people responding to the gospel, in Acts chapter 2, verse 41, we read these words.

[ 23 : 57 ] So those who received his word, Peter's word, were baptized. And there were added that day about 3,000 souls. When you read that, you realize right away that more than 3,000 souls heard Peter preached.

There were more than 3,000. We know historically there would have been considerably more, up to almost a million people would have been present in Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost.

But only 3,000 were baptized because only 3,000 received the word. And so if you showed up there on that day and you were to say, or you were asked who received the word, the answer would be, well, all those who got baptized.

If somebody came to you dry as chip and says to you, well, I received the word as well, you say, no, you didn't. Because if you truly received the word, you would have been baptized. That's the evidence that we have truly received the word, that we would take that step forward and we would be baptized.

Baptism is not optional. And sadly though, in terms of how it is practiced, it comes across as being optional.

[ 25 : 18 ] What Jesus says in Matthew 28 verse 19 is that the Great Commission includes baptizing people in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

And notice we don't put them on some kind of probation. Peter didn't put the people on probation on the day of Pentecost to say, well, I'm not too sure, but let me give you a month, give you three months and then we'll check it out.

No, those who profess faith, those who believed, they were baptized. There are two important lessons I want to quickly draw your attention to about what about baptism to show, one, its importance and then its urgency.

And you can make a note of these. I'm not going to turn to them, but the first one is in Acts chapter 8 verses 34 through 39. And this is the account of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch.

And this eunuch is sitting in his chariot. He's reading from Isaiah. The Spirit of the Lord tells Philip, go and join yourself to him. Philip goes and he asks Philip, who's the prophet talking about?

[ 26 : 31 ] Is he talking about himself or somebody else? And the Bible says in verse 35, it says Philip, beginning in that verse, right where he was in Isaiah, opened his mouth and beginning with that scripture, he told him the good news about Jesus from Isaiah.

He told him the good news about Jesus. Jesus. And then we read that the Ethiopian said to Philip, well, they were driving along and he saw water and he said to Philip, there's water, what prevents you from being baptized?

And when you read the account, you notice that Philip never talks to him about baptism, at least not the record that we have. This is not recorded, but obviously we can conclude that he must have told him about baptism in his presentation of the gospel.

That the man would in this desert-like area all of a sudden see water and then says, hey, there's water, I want to be baptized. And he goes and he is baptized.

The second is in Acts chapter 16 verses 25 through 33, and this is the account of Paul and Silas with the Philippian jailer. Paul and Silas had been beaten.

[ 27 : 51 ] The Bible says they were singing songs, they were praising God at midnight, and as they did, their chains fell off, and the prison opened up, and the jailer thought he was going to lose his life because his prisoners were escaped, and Paul told him, don't do yourself any harm, we're all here.

And that man, no doubt, affected by the singing that he heard, and perhaps he had heard about Jesus before, he fell on his knees to Paul and Silas and says, what must we do, what must I do to be saved?

And Paul said to him, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you and your household will be saved. And here's the part that I don't want us to miss. This was midnight, this was late at night, they had been beaten, and the Bible says at that very hour of the night, the jailer washed their wounds, and Paul and Silas baptized him and his family.

What it shows us is the urgency of baptism. It shows us that baptism is not something that we just put aside, and we are casual and flippant about.

There is an urgency about it, because it expresses our commitment to obey the Lord Jesus Christ. And I want to say to you this morning, if there's anybody present, if you would say that you have committed your life to Jesus Christ, but you have not obeyed in water baptism, I want to say to you, approach it with urgency, talk with me, and we would do our very best to try to ensure that you are afforded the opportunity to be baptized as soon as possible.

[ 29 : 39 ] But this is a command, and it is not optional. And third and finally, the Great Commission entails discipling believers.

Now if you would turn back to, well you didn't turn, I didn't have you to turn, in Matthew 28, if you just look there again, verse 19 says, go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son of the Holy Spirit.

sometimes when you observe church life in general, you would think that what Jesus said is, go into all the world and get decisions. Go into all the world and get people to repeat prayers.

That's not what he said. He said, you go into all the world and you make disciples. And see, it's very easy to herd thousands of people together and say, repeat after me, they repeat after you, and then you say, you are saved.

That's easy. But that's not the Great Commission. The Great Commission is that we are called to disciple people. And that takes time, brothers and sisters.

[ 30 : 52 ] That takes time. It takes time. It takes investment. It's not a quick fix. It takes time.

And Jesus was content to come to this earth and for three years, invests himself into twelve men, eleven of whom passed, one failed.

And when he died, ascended to heaven, and he said to those who followed him, I want you to go to Jerusalem and wait for the promise of the Father. Of the thousands who followed him, as a matter of fact, you think about it, Jesus fed nine thousand people miraculously.

I mean, just nine thousand miraculously. That's not all the ones he healed and cast demons out of and all the other people he touched. But scripture says in Acts chapter one, there were 120 in the upper room.

Of all those people, 120. And I think it helps us to see the nature of what we are called to do. The nature of what we are called to do is exactly that.

[ 32 : 04 ] It's not a quick fix. It's not instant discipleship. It takes time. Of the countless thousands the Lord affected, only 120 showed up in the upper room.

For those of us who are adults this morning and we have children, one of the goals I know we all share for our children is that one day they will grow up. One day they will mature and Lord willing get married and they will have children and make us grand.

parents. It is expected. It is expected that we all mature and become fruitful. But you know we lose sight of that in the Christian life. We tend not to approach the Christian life with the same kind of determination and desire and goal to mature and to grow and to be productive.

And one of the ways we do that is we get involved in the great commission. Being a disciple, maturing, and then inviting others into Christ's mission and helping as best we can to disciple them. I must confess to you that I am growing in awareness that I'm getting older. I know I'm getting older, but I am growing in awareness that I'm getting older.

[ 33 : 35 ] There were many years as I led this church, I never thought in terms of succession and stepping off the scene. But more and more I'm thinking about that, more and more, because that is the reality.

And the more I think about that, the more I'm finding myself wanting to come back to these basic things, to come back to are we doing what the Lord has called us to do?

And I recognize that so much of the deficiency that we see in church life, where we are more about, busy about many things, as opposed to being busy about the Great Commission, most of it falls on the shoulders of people like myself, those who lead.

But not all of it. because we are called to equip the saints for the work of the ministry, and one of the ways that we do that is through the various ministries that we have here at the church, very thoughtful, whether it's our discipleship groups, whether it is corporate prayers we're going to have tomorrow, but we will only grow, you will only grow as you embrace those opportunities, as you embrace those particular ministries that enable you to grow in discipleship, to be involved in Christ's mission, so that you can invite others to do likewise.

