

Core Values: Kingdom Advancement - Matthew 28:16-20; Acts 1:1-11

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning. It's good to see all of you. So glad that you decided to come and worship with us and behold Jesus together with us. We get the privilege of now turning to God's Word, seeing what it has to say for us. We've already seen a lot of what it has to say for us, but hopefully we'll get a little bit more even from what the Lord wants for us, His church.

This is the last installment of our series on our core values. We have marched through one through six of our core values, and finally we are at number seven. And number seven is kingdom advancement. And by some measure, all core values of any church that are biblical in nature or of Christ, we would like to believe that our first six core values are such, they all fall under the umbrella of number seven. This is the climactic end of all ministry. It is the goal of all church, and it is the objective of all that Jesus taught, commanded, and directed. It is kingdom advancement.

We have two passages this morning, and I see these passages as sort of sister passages. In other words, if you read the end of Matthew's gospel, or even Mark's gospel, and you read Jesus giving the great command or the great commission to go make disciples of all nations, he ascends to the Father right at this moment in Matthew, the end of the book, and immediately if you jump to the book of Acts, Luke picks up right from that moment. So they work together in tandem, as David just read.

I hope we're able to see some of the connections between the two passages. But I believe that both of these passages ultimately guide us toward this final end, that as Christians, as disciples, as the church, we are aiming for this final goal, that in all we do, the kingdom of God would be advanced here on earth.

So let's read our, I didn't put it on the slides, I don't think, but let me read to you this core value quickly. We believe that the local church is God's primary instrument in accomplishing the spread of the gospel throughout all places. All places entails reaching the local city of Spokane, the greater Pacific Northwest region, and global distant cultures, peoples, and nations with the light of the gospel. This is achieved through equipping, sending, and supporting church planters and missionaries, as well as engaging in local gospel partnerships with other like-minded and like-motivated churches.

[2 : 54] This sermon, naturally, is going to serve as a sort of part two to last week's sermon. So, if you were here last week, we talked about neighborly evangelism. So let me just quickly recap that message in case you need a refresher or you weren't here. Neighborly evangelism, as number six in our core values, gives us a look of the word gospel in the New Testament.

And the word gospel, as we saw last week, specifically means good news. It's a literal term saying there's good news that someone's coming and they're announcing it to you. That's what the word gospel means. You and I, as beneficiaries of the good news of Jesus Christ and his coming, dying, and raising, that our sins might be forgiven and our fellowship with God be restored. That is the basis by which we then go and share the good news. So last week, we learned to be an evangelist is to literally be a gospeler or to be a good news to others with Christ's good news. And we do this in many ways, but primarily we do it in relationship, loving others, showing them kindness like good neighbors, not like a state farm agent, but like a Samaritan that Jesus taught about who saw others with kindness.

That's what we learned last week. And this is sort of the part two of that. What does that look like on a church scale, on a kingdom scale? Well, we read consecutively in Matthew 28 and Acts 1 that these passages clearly show Jesus' final assignment left to his beloved church.

Maybe you've heard of the word great or the term great commission. Maybe you've heard a sermon preached from Matthew 28, 16 to 20. Maybe you yourself have read it and thought, wow, this sounds familiar. I've heard these things make disciples, baptize them, teach them all nations. There's a reason why the church has taken this text and has bracketed it for all of time. And it's not because it's a favorite pet verse of some theologian that decided this is important. The reason the church has highlighted this section of scripture is because it is the final authoritative command from Jesus Christ, the Messiah, to his church.

And we should receive that in the way that it was meant. So I want to ensure this morning that as we talk about kingdom advancement from this text, that by no means I intend to exhaustively cover the theme of the kingdom of God. We are going to talk about the kingdom of God at length this morning because that is at the heart of this command. But I want you to understand that this is an incredibly exhaustive theme throughout scripture that I could do not justice with in one Sunday. In fact, to teach extensively on the kingdom of God as a scriptural theme would take at a minimum three years because Jesus taught about the kingdom of God for three years non-stop and everything he did. But it would take a long time. So as we dive into the kingdom of God this morning, please understand there's a lot more to be said on this. But I want to just sort of give us a basis for the kingdom of God. Because ultimately what we see in Matthew 28 and in Acts 1 is Jesus giving a command that's directly connected with his kingdom. So what is the kingdom of God?

[6 : 30] Well, the term kingdom in the New Testament literally means a place with parameters, borders, people, and a ruler. That's the implication of this term. It's a realm that is ruled and has a purpose.

Like any kingdom in history, it's no different, except that this kingdom has a ruler who is unlike any other ruler. This kingdom has borders that go beyond any other borders.

This kingdom has people that are unlike any other citizens of any country, nation, or kingdom.

Literally, the kingdom of God can be rendered this way.

The cosmic reign of Jesus Christ over all things. And I'm even going to add one other word on there. Forever. Forever. Jesus Christ, the ruler of the universe. The one through whom all things were made. For whom all things were made. And by whom all things were made.

He is the right ruler of it all. But also, attached with this idea of the kingdom of God, you're going to see Jesus in the Gospels. He oftentimes will preach parables and he'll say, the kingdom of God is like.

[7 : 44] Or he'll say things like, the kingdom of God belongs to such as these children. Or he'll match the act of having faith with being a citizen of the kingdom of God.

In other words, we can take the cosmic reign of Christ over all things as a definition, but we also need to understand this. That Jesus came, not just to say, I'm the ruler of all things, but Jesus came as God's special Messiah, prophet, king, priest, to pronounce this message.

That the kingdom of God is where God dwells, but also where his redeemed people dwell. Meaning, we, you, I, sinners, can actually be a part of the kingdom of God.

How special is that? But additionally, we see this, the kingdom, God's kingdom, is made up of a king, specifically, Christ, and his loyal subjects, which are saints.

This kingdom isn't without a king, or without a ruler, it's not even without citizens, it actually has all of the markers of a normal kingdom. So let's read Revelation 1, 5 to 6 here, I think I have it on the screen, yeah.

[8 : 57] And from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, this is John writing his letter, Revelation, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth.

To whom? To him who loves us, and has freed us from our sins, by his blood, and made us a kingdom, priest to his God and Father.

To him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. A lot of things to focus on in that verse, but notice that he's the king of kings, that we're going to see, you will see later in Revelation, king of kings, lord of lords, but also this, that this king has made a people.

He didn't just say, yeah, let anyone in, and that's fine, just populate my kingdom. No, he intentionally, lovingly sought out each and every citizen that is going to make up the kingdom by dying for them.

Sins, by his blood it says, and he made them his people, to serve him as priests. But then not only that, to him be glory, and what's the word? Dominion. Forever and ever.

[9 : 58] Cosmic reign over all things. That's Jesus. But next, next fact here about the kingdom of God, the kingdom transcends worldly jurisdiction. Empires have risen, empires have fallen throughout human history.

Some of the most massive empires, the most grand empires that no one thought in the height of their day would ever fall, the Persians, the Byzantines, the Romans.

What about America? People often say, we're one of the greatest empires of all time. We need to be humble because look at all the other nations that did fall.

I pray that our nation would not, but here's what I want us to see. This kingdom is so different that it doesn't play by the rules of earthly kingdoms.

Because it's not ruled by an earthly ruler. The kingdom transcends all worldly jurisdiction. This is why Jesus told Pilate, my kingdom is not of this world.

[11 : 00] Listen to this. John 18, when Jesus is on trial, Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to him, are you the king of the Jews? And Jesus answered, do you say this of your own accord or did others say it to you about me?

And Pilate answered, am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done? Jesus answered, my kingdom is not of this world.

If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting that I might not be delivered over to the Jews, but my kingdom is not from the world. And I love this. Pilate said to him, so you're a king.

And Jesus answered, you say that I'm a king. For this purpose, I was born. For this purpose, I have come to the world to bear witness to the truth.

Jesus is the king and his kingdom is not of this world. The kingdom of God cannot be grasped or touched or possessed or put into a bottle.

[11 : 59] The kingdom of God transcends worldly jurisdiction. Next, the power and effects of God's kingdom can be experienced on earth. This is why in Luke 11, 20, it says this, Jesus said, if I cast out demons with the finger of God, and Jesus did a lot of miracles in his ministry, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you.

You can't bottle up the kingdom of God, but here's what Jesus just said, you can experience its effects and its power. John 3, 3 to 6, Jesus talking with a man named Nicodemus who's pondering the big questions of life, and here's what Jesus says to him, truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

It's not worldly, it's spiritual. Nicodemus said to him, how can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born? Jesus answered, truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

That which is born of flesh is flesh, that which is born of the spirit is spirit. In other words, Jesus is saying, you can experience the effects of my kingdom by being born again through repentance and faith.

You can experience the heights of communion with God. And then next, I want us to take a quick look at how the kingdom advances through the citizens.

[13 : 33] Kingdom is advanced by kingdom citizens displaying the kingship of Christ in their lives. That's why in Luke 11, in the prayer that Jesus gives to the disciples, he says this, when you pray, say, Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come.

When we submit to the kingship of Jesus as his citizens, all of a sudden, we want his kingdom to go forward instead of ours. And then in Luke 9, you have a similar passage that Jesus deals with sending the disciples out to advance his kingdom in the world, and he sends them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal in verse 2 of Luke 9.

But in the New Testament, we see the clear theme of the kingdom of God coming upon mankind. And if we're going to talk this morning about how we advance that kingdom as a church, I think it's important again for us to see where and when did the kingdom of God come into existence, into the world, and into reality for the church.

Well, we know this that the kingdom of God is centered around the figure of the Messiah. And in many ways, the coming of the kingdom of God is the foundational theme of the entire New Testament.

Everything Jesus did, everything he taught, everything the apostles did and taught, it all is founded upon the kingdom of Jesus as established by the gospel. So here's some stages of the kingdom

manifesting.

[14:57] When we talk about the kingdom of God and what is this theology, this word that we're seeing all through Matthew to Revelation, even at times in the Old Testament, what is it that we're looking at?

Well, first, there's a stage here, if you will, pardon the term stage, no one else to term this, anticipation of this kingdom, that God has always promised, my kingdom will manifest on the earth and I will draw my people unto myself.

So the anticipation of the kingdom is the promise of the Messiah. Again, it all centers around the Messiah, but the anticipation is the promise. We see this in passages like 2 Samuel 7, where the Lord makes a covenant with his servant David and he tells his servant David the following things, your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me, your throne shall be established forever.

What he's saying to David is, I'm going to build a throne and a kingdom and I'm going to bring a king on the earth who will reign forever. David, you're going to die, but there's going to be someone that comes from you who will never die and his kingdom will last forever.

We see the anticipation in 2 Samuel 7. In Daniel, the book of Daniel has a lot of kingdom of God, imagery and prophecy. In Daniel chapter 2, there's a picture that Daniel interprets this amazing vision and dream of this statue that's made up of different materials and parts, but I want you to notice the last few verses of this.

[16:33] As you saw, verse 43, the iron mixed with the soft clay. So they will mix with one another in marriage but will not hold together just as iron does not mix with clay. And in the days of those kings, the God of heaven, speaking of the empire of Rome, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people or break in pieces.

It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end and it shall stand forever. And just as you saw that the stone was cut from the mountain by no human hand and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, the gold, a great God has made known to the king what shall be after this.

The dream is certain and its interpretation sure. Daniel's way of saying, Jesus is coming. The Messiah is coming. That kingdom that was promised to David, yeah, it's coming.

And it's going to come like a giant boulder that is not made of human hands, symbolizing the power and magnificence of God and all of his glory. And when that kingdom comes in that time of that empire, it will smash every other empire into pieces and it will never be moved.

There's the kingdom of God in the book of Daniel. And then again in Daniel 7, you see another picture of this amazing kingdom that's going to come. And in verse 14, it says this, to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom and all peoples and all nations and all languages would serve him.

[18:02] And his dominion, speaking of Messiah, is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away in his kingdom, one that shall never be destroyed. The anticipation of this eternal kingdom and an eternal king.

But in the second stage of the inauguration of the kingdom, which is the arrival of the Messiah, this man that is promised in 2 Samuel and in 2 Daniel prophesied, here's who it is, Jesus.

How do we know that the kingdom of God is inaugurated through his arrival? Well, Matthew 3, it says this, in those days, John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea. Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

All of a sudden, when we read that verse after looking at the promises in the Old Testament, the anticipation that's been building for a thousand, multiple thousand years, all of a sudden, when John comes on the scene and says, the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Hopefully, we can understand a little bit more how shocking that statement would have been.

What? Wait, the kingdom? Like, the kingdom kingdom, John? Or just like, another kingdom that's going to rule over us?

[19:10] This is what John's purpose was. And then in Mark 1, Jesus himself says this, the time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand, which means it's coming here present.

Repent and believe in the gospel. The inauguration of the kingdom through the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, which leads to the coronation of the king over that kingdom, the crucifixion of the Messiah.

And I want us to see this picture of Jesus as king because it really shapes everything we think about God's kingdom and our role in it.

Who is this king that thinks he can command the church, thinks he can say this great commission to his disciples and expect them to actually go into the ends of the earth?

Who is this guy? Well, here's who he is. He's coronated by his crucifixion. In John 19, I want you to notice the language here that's setting up the coronation of Jesus as king.

[20 : 20] Now it was that day the preparation of the Passover. It was about the sixth hour, John 19. And he said to the Jews, Behold your king. And they cried out, Away with him, crucify him.

Pilate said, Shall I crucify your king? And the chief frees the answer, We have no king but Caesar. So they delivered him over to be crucified. They took Jesus and he went out bearing his own cross to the place called the Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha.

And there they crucified him with two others, one on either side and Jesus between them. And Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross and it read, Jesus of Nazareth, king of the Jews.

And many of the Jews read the inscription for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city. And it was written in Aramaic, I love this, in Latin and in Greek. So the chief priest and the Jews said to Pilate, only in John's gospel, No, no, no.

Don't write the king of the Jews but rather said, Write, this guy said he was our king. He actually isn't our king, write that he said he was. And I love this, God's sovereignty in human history.

[21 : 21] Pilate answered, What I have written, I have written. In other words, he is the king. And in Mark 15, another parallel account of Jesus' passion, we see kingly images that are being used in mockery, but for this suffering servant, it actually served as a coronation.

You see the soldiers taking and putting a purple cloak on Jesus, which symbolizes divinity or royalty. And then they take a crown of thorns and they twist it in mockery of the king and they force it onto his head.

And then they say this right after this, Hail, king of the Jews, with sarcasm, not knowing that they are actually really persecuting persecuting and killing the real king of the universe.

And then when they crucified him, the robbers on either side said the following things, You, you can't even bring yourself down from this cross.

And the chief priests come by and they mock him and they say this, He saved others, can't save himself. Let the Christ, the king of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe.

[22 : 44] In Luke's account of the passion, one of the robbers repents of his sin and believes in Christ as Lord. And here's what he says, Remember me when you come into your kingdom recognizing that you're a king and you're about to go to your kingdom.

And I want to be a part of that. And he said to him, Truly you'll be with me in paradise. And finally, we have the last picture, if you will, of the coronation. Colossians 1, Paul says this, He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son in whom we have redemption and forgiveness of sins.

What Paul's doing is he's tying Jesus' coronation as the king to the act of delivering us from sin on the cross. The king is coronated. But it's not like every other king in history where everyone bows down, where everyone says, this king is so amazing.

That happened in Paul's Sunday. But what's the real coronation? The real coronation is Jesus going to the cross, stretching his arms out and saying, I will take the punishment for my people. And God crowns him king over his kingdom. And then with the resurrection, which we're about to celebrate in a few weeks here, we have the confirmation of the king. The resurrection shows the confirmation that this guy really was who he said he was, he really is God, and he really was the king of the universe.

[24 : 06] We know that it's a confirmation because at Luke 24, the disciples go to the tomb and they're astonished at what they see, that there's an angel there. I love this. It says this, why do you seek the living among the dead?

He's not here, he's risen. Remember how he told you while he was still in Galilee that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise. Remember that?

He said he was going to rise. It's a confirmation. confirmation. And then in Acts 2, when Peter preaches, he says this about Jesus. God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death because it was not possible for him to be held by it.

Jesus couldn't be held by death. And then in Romans 1, I want to read verses 4 here and 5. Paul says this about Jesus. He descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Through his resurrection from death, Jesus Christ is proclaimed in power, King, Lord, Christ. Resurrection serves as the confirmation of the King of the Kingdom.

[25 : 18] And finally, expansion of the Kingdom. This is where we find ourselves today in human history, where you and I as Christ followers seeking to love him and be part of his church, to seek his will.

In Acts chapter 1, as we've just read, the people come together, the disciples, and they ask a question. Will you restore the kingdom to Israel? And he says, it's not for you to know the times. But here's what Jesus does say. You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the end of the earth. And then in 1 Peter 2, Peter says this, you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness and into his marvelous light.

In other words, you are the citizens of the Kingdom of God now established on earth. And by preaching his gospel, you advance those borders. And then lastly, consummation of the Kingdom, which is the return of the Messiah.

The consummation of the Kingdom speaks of Jesus returning. The King whom we believe in now, we worship now, we sing to now, we pray to now, that very King of Kings and Lord of Lords, Jesus Christ, crucified, resurrected, and sitting at the right hand of the Father.

[26 : 44] That King will come back. And he will not just bring the spiritual Kingdom of God back to earth. as we are fighting in this world to advance to the power of the Gospel, but that King of Kings and Lord of Lords will enact once and for all the final, earthly, complete Kingdom.

Right here. When he makes this earth new. And in that consummation, when that Messiah returns, we see this. In Revelation 21, here's the reality of the Kingdom of God come back on earth fully, completely, in consummation.

Revelation 21, I saw no temple in the city, for its temple was the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light and its lamp is the Lamb.

And by its light, the nations will walk. Notice nations, kingdom, all nations now. And the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. There's only one king.

We're not, we have no power. That's the king. We're going to him. And its gates will never be shut by day. There will be no night there and they will bring into it glory and honor of the nations, but nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

[28 : 07] Here's what I want us to notice with that description of the Kingdom of God fully come to earth. That description is a perfect, 100% match with every single parable that Jesus taught.

Anytime you read a parable, compare it to that section of scripture and you'll see, this is what Jesus was talking about. So a few questions for us this morning as we think about our role in kingdom advancement as a church, but also as believers, and on.

The question first is who advances God's kingdom on the earth? We looked at God's kingdom, we know, have a better understanding of the kingdom of God and the king who reigns over it and even that we're his citizens, but who advances God's kingdom on earth?

Well, look at Matthew 28 with me. In verse 16 and 17 it says this, Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them.

In verse 17, And when they saw him, they worshipped him, but some doubted, and Jesus came and said to them. Meaning that Jesus is giving this great commission not just to anybody, but he's giving it to his disciples.

[29 : 25] If you are one who has been washed by the blood of Christ and have followed him and committed to following him for a lifetime in obedience, you are the one whom Jesus looks and says, advance my kingdom.

And Acts 1 is the sister passage that we're looking at. Again, you see the same picture of the apostles whom he had chosen as the language in that passage. He speaks to them.

In other words, according to Jesus, his disciples, namely his bride, the church, has been given the task to advance the kingdom. I want you to look again with me at Matthew 28.

There's something interesting going on at the next section of this. Look at 18 and 20. This is the actual command. I'm going to read it all together here. And Jesus came and said to them, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations. Baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

[30 : 31] And behold, I am with you always to the end of the age. Here's what's fascinating about Jesus' commission that maybe we've overlooked. All of the elements of a church are in Matthew 28, 18 to 20.

Was the church fully formed at this time? No. Were the disciples taking the ordinances? Not really. Was there a church budget at this time? No. Was there a building that they could meet in? No. But here's what I want us to notice. Jesus is setting up his great commission to be fulfilled by the very church that's about to be established in a mere matter of days.

And he does it this way. Here's what the elements of the church. Go, first of all. As a church, we are ones who go with the gospel. That's an essential definition of what it means to be the church.

We don't just sit here on Sunday. We don't just sit in a building if you have a building. We go with the gospel. But then he says this, make disciples. There possibly there possibly is no better mission statement or definition of any church, period, than that.

[31 : 47] Disciple makers. That's what the church is called to. But then there's this, baptize, which is Jesus hinting at the ordinances being taken. He established, hey, you're going to be taking the Lord's Supper because I instituted it just before this, before I died.

But now he says, baptize those people that you make disciples. So the ordinances are observed by this group, the disciples. And then he says, teach the words of Christ. There's a whole lot of teaching going on in churches.

That's one of our main obligations is to preach and teach God's word. Growing in obedience together. Teach people to obey what I have commanded. And then finally, and most importantly, what is the essential definition of what makes a church a church?

I am with you always. God's presence among us and with us. The church is in Matthew 28. And in the age of individualism, I want to encourage us to be wary of reading.

passages like the Great Commission as Jesus' personal command to you. Is Jesus commanding disciples individually with this text?

[32 : 53] Yes, of course. We need to be careful here. This command is given to all of the disciples at one time, namely the first church. The apostles who would, in a matter of days, gather in the upper room and be met with the power of the Holy Spirit established once and for all as the church.

The disciples who, in that moment of being filled with the Spirit, were, as Acts says, together in one place. Corporate gathering, the first worship service, happens in Acts 2.

They were together in one place and the Spirit indwelt them. And then here's what happens in Acts 2. A sermon is preached. People get saved. People get baptized. People praise God together.

People share their possessions with one another. They share meals. Sounds like a church in Acts 2. Because it is. You and I are not called to make disciples outside of the context of Christ's beloved bride.

We make disciples any chance we get. But I want to encourage us. The concept of lone wolf Christianity or lone wolf mission doesn't exist in any form in the New Testament.

[34 : 07] Next question. How does the church advance God's kingdom? If this is our mission and our goal, how do we do this? Well, I want to look again at the Great Commission and say look at the four main operative verbs.

This is very intentional by Jesus and in the original language it's right on display. Verb, verb, verb, verb. Jesus is doing this progression on purpose. And here's the progression. Go, make, baptize, teach.

In other words, how do you define these? What is Jesus getting after with these four things that we are practically to be doing as the church? Go means embrace sinners and proclaim the good news of the gospel.

This means that we live lifestyles amongst the lost and we pursue them. And Jesus then says make. And this refers to make winning sinners to Christ with the grace of the gospel. We go and we teach them about Christ. We show them the grace of the gospel. Baptize means incorporating them into the church in the power of the gospel. And then finally teach, instructing saints in holiness in accordance with the gospel.

[35 : 10] The means of making disciples follows this trend that Jesus himself practiced. Jesus himself and all the gospels went, made, baptized, and taught.

This is his progression. It's what Jesus did. Matthew 9, 35. Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction.

That's Jesus. It's his mission statement that he's given to the church. Next question. Where does the church advance God's kingdom? This is where I want to turn to Acts 1. In Matthew 28, we see that Jesus says all nations, which is important, but now let's go to Acts 1.

We see a little bit more of a specific descriptor of where kingdom advancement happens. Verse 8 of Acts chapter 1. You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in where?

Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the end of the earth. Jesus has given us a whole lot of descriptive instruction and help in doing this.

[36 : 26] First, we have to notice that Jesus has a clear emphasis on the gospel advancing, his kingdom advancing, to the end of the earth or all nations. The end goal of this kingdom is that every group of people, culture, place, wherever they may be, they will hear of Christ and his love.

But also, I am thankful that Jesus gives some clear handles for where the church is to be about advancing his kingdom. I want to break these down because I think this is what Jesus is getting after here.

First, let's start with Jerusalem. You're going to see that Jesus gives these regions starting from in and working their way out. This is intentional. It's meant to be a philosophy of where to do kingdom advancement.

First, Jerusalem. And what Jesus means by Jerusalem is he said, Paul says that salvation is first to the Jew and then to the Greek. And the idea here is that God's very own people, Jerusalem, the close place, right where they're already at.

That's where the gospel goes first. So the first two, Jerusalem, Judea, I'm going to describe as local. But then Samaria and the ends of the earth are distant. Jesus is working his way out.

[37 : 39] So Jerusalem, local. For us, I'm going to say this is like an immediate city. So for us, Jerusalem would be probably the Moran Prairie is really specific.

Then you could say South Hill Church. We're trying to reach the South Hill. That's probably our Jerusalem, if you will, as Jesus most likely meant it. So geographically, we would define, hey, our kingdom advancement, we need to start thinking about here, now, and what we're doing in this neighborhood.

This is why we're doing targeted outreaches and events to draw people in that they might see the love of Christ, like Trunk or Treat in our Easter event that's coming up on the 19th. Consider serving. There's some flyers on the table.

But also spiritually, I think we can apply, I want to encourage us, to apply spiritually these regional descriptions as well. What I mean by that is this. Jerusalem implies local, close, immediate. Maybe for you in this room, being a part of the church and reaching our neighborhood, that's awesome. Be a part of that. But also, I want to give some individual instruction here. Maybe the Jerusalem spiritually for us is a lost family member.

[38 : 46] Someone whom you're very close to, who's near to you, that needs Christ. How can you reach them? Let's move to Judea.

Also local. Judea would be the region just outside or encompassing Jerusalem. So now we're going to work our way out. This refers to more to a region. So geographically, for us as a church, this is like Spokane.

Spokane is our Judea. We're going to think about kingdom advancement not just in our neighborhood, that's where we're going to start, but then we're going to move out towards Spokane as much as we can. still a familiar and place of relative comfort, but it's a little bit more out, a little broader.

Spiritually speaking, the application might be someone like a co-worker. Not my family member, but a neighbor, somebody you are an acquaintance with. Then there's Samaria, and Jesus with Samaria starts getting into the distant definition.

So now Samaria is going to be far north. It's going to be not just distant in geography, it's also going to be distant in comfort. I want you to go to the Samaritans.

[39 : 53] Go up to them and share the gospel. This is going to cost a lot more, both in terms of time, money, and energy, but it's also going to cost a lot of pride to go to people whom we normally would not have gone.

That's what Jesus is doing here. So for us, geographically, what does that look like? Maybe cities, regions, places in this country that don't have good gospel access. This is where, as churches that want to plant churches, I just talked with a pastor last week that's thinking of planting a church, and they are thinking about Samaria.

They're thinking about, they're doing a demographic study of the U.S. to say which place in this country is in desperate need of the gospel. That's a Samaria sort of location.

This also might be Samaria distant, countries with diminishing Christian presence or negative church planting margin, meaning more churches are dying every year than are being planted every year.

You guys want to know the rate of America right now? It's close to one in three or one in four. Every year, American churches, four die for a statistic and one is planted.

[41 : 05] This is a staggering stat looked up today. 32,000 missionaries are being sent to the United States from other countries that believe we are in need of the gospel.

We don't just send them out. We send missionaries out. Countries are saying, America is in need of the gospel, so we're going to, there are Samaria. Samaria. We're sending them there.

We need Christ in all places and I praise God for the people that have looked at our country and said, we love you and we want you to be our Samaria.

Who's our Samaria? Who are the places that need churches, that need the gospel, that are a little bit more out of our comfort zone? Next, the last ends of the earth.

This is where Jesus is going to define distant again, but now really distant. I believe Jesus means the ends of the earth. He wants them to make disciples in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and then it's almost as if Jesus is saying, and then once you've done all of that, just keep walking, just keep going out and out until you find more people and once you find them, go out again.

[42 : 16] It's a continual command. Keep going and going until there's literally not a foot on this earth that hasn't been stepped on with the gospel. So for us, that's unreached. Places.

Spiritually speaking, this is probably strangers. Some of you have no idea who they are. This would be your ends of the earth application individually. But as a church, geographically, unreached and unengaged people groups.

The unreached is a term I want to encourage us with. Unreached, there's a difference between these terms and missions. Unreached is referring to nations or people groups that have limited gospel access, meaning there's a limited Christian presence, maybe a small church that is having a hard time keeping it sustained, or the gospel hasn't really penetrated very deeply.

That would be an unreached group. They need Christ. They need the gospel. But then there's unengaged. It's a whole different term. Unengaged people groups are those who have no gospel access.

That means that no one in human history has ever told anyone in that group about Jesus. There are thousands and thousands of unengaged people groups on the earth today.

[43 : 38] And these people don't have Bibles, they don't have missionaries, they don't have Jesus. And it's ministries across the world that are starting to target more and more.

There's a sort of awakening that's happening in missions, there's a revival that's happening, where people are starting to look and say, we have to, at all costs, begin to target those unengaged groups.

And it starts in the front line with things like Bible translation. People going hard at the text who are way smarter than me. People like David, who we love, who look at God's word and say, how can this be translated into this language that very few people know so that they could maybe, maybe just have a copy of the Gospel of Mark.

We'll get to the Bible at some point, the whole Bible. But what if they just had Mark? I believe that's one of the books that is usually translated first because of its simplicity. So thank you, David and family, for what you do and for the work that you are putting in to see people come to Christ. Next question, and finally, I want to be part of Kingdom Advancement. I'm moved by this. I see the Kingdom of God. I want to do this. What do I do? Well, first, witness to Jesus near and far.

[44 : 56] He calls his disciples in John 1, you will be my witnesses. Meaning this, Jesus did not say you may be my witnesses. If you'd like to be, you could.

He says, you will be. Christians, disciples of Christ, we are the witnesses of Jesus. It is the role of all of us to create gospel bridges of relationship where we live, work, play, in order that the Kingdom might advance.

But then secondly, church planning, near and far. Local churches are the best method to accomplishing Jesus' Great Commission. There's many methods, but I believe it's the best method. If we want to go and make disciples, baptize them, teach them God's Word, equip them for ministry, then the church is Christ's strategy.

But don't churches break, divide, and splinter? Yes. Don't churches hurt people? I've been hurt.

Yes. Doesn't my local church fall short in a lot of areas?

Yes. We fall short here at Lamsden too. But doesn't the church fail all the time? A lot of the time, yes.

[46 : 11] But here's what I want to encourage us with. Jesus doesn't fail. Never. And He loves His church. His bride. And if Jesus doesn't give up on the church, neither should we. Church planning was the missional strategy of the apostles.

They lived and died to see churches planted across the world in unreached, unengaged people groups. And if they believed in planning churches, I want to encourage us to consider it at some point in our future Lamsden. To this end, we've even allocated a portion of our budget each year that will be set aside to accumulate in a savings account for when we are ready to send out our very own church plant.

Who knows where? Near or far? Let the Lord direct that. But shouldn't we focus on ourselves first? I've gotten that feedback on that one. But I want to encourage us a church that doesn't have a vision for seeing other churches planted is lacking the very vision of Jesus and the apostles.

Disciples make disciples. Churches plant churches. Churches. This is the biblical model. This is the way of the kingdom. And by God's grace, I pray we plant a church someday in an area of need. Whether it's Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, or ends of the earth. It is a work of the whole body and we all have to sacrifice to make it happen. And then three, supporting kingdom missions. Near and far, we're a part of the Inland Northwest Cooperative, which is all about reaching our Judea, which is Spokane, but then also far.

[47 : 32] Many of you know Moody Aviation is right here in Spokane and is a training ground for modern missions that meet aviation needs all across the globe to increase access to the gospel in distant, hard-to-reach places.

I've known so many aviation students and praise God for this wonderful ministry. But here at Lambstrand, we are blessed with a plethora, I want to encourage us, a plethora of young men and women who are actively planning to spend their lives advancing God's kingdom domestically, internationally, and beyond.

And if you get a chance this morning or in the coming weeks, I encourage you, get coffee with these young people, learn more about their call to mission, and see how you can encourage and support them because they are in need of encouragement and support.

Colin and Daisy Ruup, Bryce and Emmy Lamar, Matthew and Emily Mansfield, Lucas Nelson, and Paige Anderson, soon to be Paige Nelson. Each of them and more are currently training and equipping to be sent to one of those regions.

And I pray as a church, I look forward as a church to the many opportunities ahead for how we can support these young couples and send them out in the power of the gospel. And then finally, number four, discover your role.

[48 : 51] Some people are goers. We're all goers. We're all called to go and preach the gospel.

Some of us are called to go vocationally. Those are what those people are trying to do. Some of us are senders.

Some of us are equippers, training up others to be ready for the mission. Some of us are supporters, setting aside funds beyond your normal offering to give to others who are doing this work.

Now me and my wife have been doing that recently, and it's been a blessing to give beyond and to give extra in order that people might have access to go. Maybe you're a prayer partner.

Get on someone's newsletter. Start praying over somebody. I guarantee you ask somebody, hey, do you have a newsletter who's looking to do missions? They will say, yes, and here, what's your email? And all of a sudden, you've got a great way to support and pray.

Maybe your role is being a discipler, helping others follow Jesus more closely because it's a precursor to all missions and all kingdom advancement. Whether the person you were discipling ends up in Lincoln Heights or Lithuania.

[49 : 54] Disciples are disciples. Make disciples and trust that the Lord will move in their hearts to advance His kingdom. And finally, number five, the last one. Death by a million cross-references this morning.

Sorry about that. Number five. Trust in the King and His unshakable kingdom. I'm going to leave you with this verse.

Hebrews 12, 28 to 29. Therefore, let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken. Cannot be shaken. Lord, we thank You for this morning. We thank You for Your kingdom which advances, Lord. Whether You use us or not, it would advance, but You choose to use us.

So, Lord, I pray this morning for every person in here, would You help them discover their role in kingdom advancement. I pray that each and every one of us would be called to this mission, Lord, that we would feel compelled to see Your kingdom go forward, the borders of Your marvelous love to expand, that we might see Your glory by people coming to Christ, by people, sinners becoming saints, and by those who are far off being brought near.

[51 : 22] Do this by Your power through Your unshakable kingdom, you may pray. Amen. Amen.