

Telling others
Matthew 28:19-20
The Great Commission

SLIDE 1

If you have been here or listened to the services in the last three weeks you will know that we explored sharing our story in testimony and recognizing that God has a plan for your life. Today we are going to listen to him as he sets out the agenda for our lives. Your testimony is a vital part of that and living by faith in his roadmap is essential for living life to the full.

Jesus has died for our sins, he has risen from the dead. He appeared to his disciples. In today's reading he is about to ascend back into heaven to sit , forever, in the highest place of honour in the universe. So what were the disciples to do, once he had gone? Well, we know they had to wait in Jerusalem until they received the Holy Spirit but after that? Jesus gave them and us, what is called 'the Great Commission'. Lets read it.

READING Matthew 28:19-20

SLIDE 2 ¹⁶ *Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. ¹⁷ When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted.*

¹⁸ *Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.*

SLIDE 3 ¹⁹ *Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

SLIDE 4 To whom is this commission given?

Clearly to the 11 apostles. But it is quite clear that they were the core team of the church that Jesus was about to create by the power of the Holy Spirit. So the Commission is to the church. When the early church grew the Holy Spirit drove them out into an ever widening world. Beginning in Jerusalem then Judah, out into Samaria and then in every direction. Paul we know came as far as Rome, maybe Spain.

Thomas is believed to get as far as India. Every renewal of the church has been followed by expansion in mission, both in the local community and what we call missionary work. Today, there are few places in the world where the Good news has not been spread. The Bible has been translated into many languages and there are vibrant movements of the Holy Spirit in many parts of the world. But still the church has to reach every generation. Here in England the Good News has been ignored, forgotten, marginalized. The challenge is how this Commission is to be interpreted here, today. The answer has always been the same. Whom God calls he also equips and sends out. There is a fallacy that is easy to live with that there are some special breed of people who are suited to tell the Good news and the rest of us can keep quiet and get on with living. NOT TRUE! The Church is not the pastor, or the Leadership Team or the Alpha Course team. God calls ordinary people to tell his Good News. That means YOU. Whether you are a pastor, leader, church volunteer or just plain member, this commission is for you! So lets reflect on what Jesus call us to do and apply it to us in our situation, next week.

SLIDE 5 I, for the sake of clarity, am going to split the commission into three parts.

The reason for the commission:

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

The detail of the commission: of which there are three parts:

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

The resources of the commission:

And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

So lets look at each in turn.

SLIDE 6 The reason for the commission:

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

This is something worth grasping. Jesus has full authority in heaven and on earth. We can read about that in all sorts of places in Scripture. For example Hebrews 1:1-3
1 In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in

various ways,² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe.³ The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

We are not called to be a side show in world history , a minority party in the political world. Our Jesus is Lord of all creation. He is the Saviour of the world, he is the Way, the truth and the life. He is the world's only hope. We may compete with other religions and no religion in debate but our commission is absolute. Jesus is the one to follow.

Secondly, the commission comes from him. So if you have any questions to ask about it, talk to him! In fact prayer is the first step in our lives, because we live by faith. So sharing the Good News begins in prayer.

I am going to suggest we begin by looking at who you meet who is in need of Jesus. Make a list of those people you know who are not Christians and pray for them. Include family and

friends but also people you meet in all contexts. I mean anyone you work with, anyone in a club you belong, Neighbours, shop assistants and the like. If the list is long, pray over it and select, say, 5 of them to concentrate your prayer on. If you haven't got 5 non-Christian friends or family, consider joining a club or interest group so that you can meet non-Christians. Remember first and foremost you will be praying for them to become disciples of Jesus. In your prayers ask Jesus to show you how and when to talk about him to each one. The key here is that Jesus has been given all authority, so he needs to direct your actions and words.

Slide **SLIDE 7** So lets move on to

The detail of the commission:

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, Jesus repeatedly said to his disciples, "Follow me" that is what a disciple is meant to do. The primary call of our Lord is to go and make disciples. That is all about transforming lives from the ways of sin and death through grace, by faith, into a living relationship with Jesus. The constant criticism of the church is that we don't do what Jesus says. We live different lives

to the one Jesus mapped out for us in his teachings and through the teachings of the apostles which form the New Testament.

The commission, then is not first and foremost to teach but to bring about change. To direct people to follow Jesus. So success in carrying out the commission is not a well versed student but an imitator of Jesus. And to do that the disciple must have a personal experience of Jesus. To have turned from sin and turned to God. To receive forgiveness and new life and in doing so cast away sin and live for God. That is impossible without the power of the Holy Spirit entering and transforming the disciple. But this commission has the authority of Jesus to go and make disciples. As you go, the Holy Spirit goes with you. As you tell the Good News the Holy Spirit brings about repentance and faith.

baptizing them *in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,*

Ritually we do precisely that. We immerse each disciple in water using these words. We baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. But that is only a ritual. Without receiving the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, without being immersed in the Holy Spirit or filled there is no transformation,

obedience is a rule based religion without life and without the sustaining power of the Holy Spirit. It is doomed to fail.

and teaching them *to obey everything I have commanded you.*

We tend to jump to this because we can measure our part in it. This church as many others has been careful to teach, over a period of time, the fullest gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ as we are able. One of the reasons we took on Alpha is because it gives the enquirer a wide experience of the teaching of Jesus.

But what does that say to you, in the family setting. First, you must live the life to demonstrate what being a disciple is like. Secondly you must be immersed in Father , Son and Holy Spirit. Thirdly, you need to share what Jesus has done in your life and what he says. I believe there is some value in rehearsing your story, and that can be done when we have opportunities to give testimony in church. There is great value in regularly reading God's word because God can and does, by his Holy Spirit use those thoughts and words you have received to share with others.

So let's stop and think of the key elements of the message we have to tell.

We will base it on some familiar verses.

SLIDE 8 **God loves me.**

John 3:16

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Very familiar words to us but many have yet to realise that God actually loves them. The common perception is that, if there is a God, he is remote, if not rather unpleasant and vindictive. You have a message that God loves me and you, not just some vague idea that he loves the world.

Our good news is that God not only loves us but out of that love gives us his Son and offers us eternal life. We know God for what he does, and its good!

SLIDE 9 **I messed up.**

Romans 3:23-24

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

I used the term messed up because 'sin' is a misunderstood term. In fact our neighbours have a very vague idea of sin, if they think about it at all. But they and we know that we mess up relationships by our words and our actions all the time. And in essence, sin is messing up our relationship with God. And in doing so, we mess up our relationships with others, and spoil the glory of God which we were created for.

The next bit of the verse also uses unfamiliar terms. 'Justified' in our day means finding an excuse for our behaviour. Here it means putting right our relationship with God. That we can't do, but God does by making Jesus the redemption for our sins. That is a hard concept in this day and age. That sin needs a big solution, even Jesus' death on a cross. Also the word 'grace' is not familiar. We have a message that says that God offers salvation freely to those who believe and accept it.

SLIDE 10 Jesus died for me.
Romans 5:8

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

This brings together the parts of God's plan. God loves me so much that Jesus died for me 2000 years ago. That's advance planning!

Finally

SLIDE 11 I have a choice

On the Day of Pentecost Peter's preached and people reacted.

Acts 2:37-38

37 When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" 38 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Essentially they were offered a choice. To repent, be baptized and receive the Holy Spirit or go their own way. Our own way ends in eternal separation from God, which is Hell. That is the choice our Good News leaves us with. A way of life or a way of death.

You will have many other verses that spell out the Good News. Memorize them so you can recall them when asked questions about Jesus.

SLIDE 12 Finally Jesus speaks of

The resources of the commission:

And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

The great commission is sandwiched between 2 declarations. Jesus says – “All authority is given to me” and, “I am with you always.” Never forget that. God does not call you to go it alone. He promises to be there every step of the way. He shares your pain of rejection and the joy of reception. He makes sense of your stumbling words and he is at work before you even get round to speaking up. Salvation is God’s work, we simply assist by being his ambassadors, telling the message “the kingdom of God is here”. You want to be filled with the Holy Spirit? Of course you do! Then get about the Great Commission in your home, in your workplace, in your road and you will be filled. Jesus promises that.

The outcome of the commission for us is this:

SLIDE 13 So we need to pray because **Jesus is the authority**. Sort out with him to whom and how you tell the Good News.

Secondly, *But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always **be prepared** to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,* 1Peter 3:15

Thirdly, Remember the objective **is to make disciples of Jesus**, not converts.

Fourthly, **we baptize converts in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit** a sign that this is a work of God, not us.

Fifthly, **we teach everything Jesus taught!** So along with your praying, get stuck into reading the Bible.

Finally, we know that the **Jesus is with us** by his Holy Spirit. That is always the best place to be.