

A Church on Mission

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Preacher: Mike Scrivani

[0 : 00] Matthew 28, beginning in verse 16, and going through the end of the book.

And when they saw him, they worshipped him, but some doubted.

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 and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

And behold, I am with you always to the end of the age. May God add a blessing to the reading of his word. You may be seated.

So this is Missions Month, and so I take for my text, you know, a great text that talks directly about mission. And here what I want to talk about this morning is the mission of the church.

[1 : 27] And so the title of this sermon is A Church on Mission. And so as I was studying and preparing for this sermon this week, there was a song that was stuck in my head all week long.

You know what song it was? Mission Impossible. You remember, I know the movies, but I'm talking about the old TV show ran in the late 60s, early 70s.

And the reason why I am familiar with it is because I like to watch the old Adam West Batman TV show. It came on reruns after school, and so I would watch it, and after Batman was over, Mission Impossible came on, and that is one of the greatest TV themes of all time.

Is it not? Dun, dun, dun, dun, dun, dun, right? And so if you remember that show, it's the Impossible Missions Force. And their job was to carry out impossible missions.

And they were great at it, because I don't think they ever failed in fulfilling one of those, quote-unquote, impossible missions. And I bring that up for you this morning, because I think that some Christians may not say that they think the Great Commission, this mission that we've been given from our Lord, is an impossible mission.

[2 : 47] But I think that if you dug down deeper, and if they thought about themselves, if they thought about their church, they would look at all that Jesus says for us to do, and in their heart of hearts, they would say, I don't think it's possible.

I don't think that I can do that. I don't think that my church can be a part of accomplishing something as awesome as that mission.

I used to, back in Kansas City, I used to meet for a time with a group of pastors. Back in Leavenworth, they were pastoring in Kansas City. And I had to stop going after a while, because I felt like every month I went and met with them, I was going to the funeral for the church.

All they talked about was how things were bad, how the numbers were down, how they were struggling to pay their bills. You know, they once had congregations in the hundreds, and now their congregations had dwindled down to the 50s, some even down into the 20s.

And there are these big, beautiful church buildings, and they can't get people to come to church.

And I remember one story, one pastor shared that, you know, we're going to have to cancel VBS this year, because we don't have enough kids in our church.

[4 : 04] And I knew where this pastor's church was, and I knew that it was right smack dab in the middle of a neighborhood full of kids. And so I said to them, well, you've got a lot of kids right there in your neighborhood.

Why don't you go out to them? And his comment to me was, well, they're bad kids. They're bad kids. And if we bring them in, you know, we're not going to be able to get them under control, and who knows what they're going to do.

And I just thought, this is crazy. There's your mission field. You don't want them to be bad kids, then tell them about Jesus Christ, right? Invite them to come to your VBS.

Yes. This mission is not impossible. It's our mission that Jesus has given to all of his church.

And when a church stays on its God-given mission, it will thrive. It will. Even when it faces persecution, even when it faces opposition from the world that wants to destroy it, not only will it survive in those circumstances, it will thrive.

[5 : 08] Look at the church in China. Look at the church in the persecuted areas of our world. That church is thriving as a result of that persecution because they are on mission.

A church on mission will thrive, while a church that is off mission will struggle to survive. The church of Jesus Christ should be characterized by light and life, not by darkness and death.

Our church buildings aren't museums where people talk about what God used to do there, but houses of worship where people are talking about what God is doing there.

After Peter confesses in Matthew 16, 16, that Jesus was Christ, was the Christ, this is Jesus' response. Let's look at it together. He said, and I tell you, you are Peter, which in the Greek is a small stone, Petros, you are a small stone, but on this rock, right, on your confession that I am Christ, on this rock, Petra, I will build my church.

And get this, the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. So I want to ask you this question. When we read that verse, who should stutter, who should shudder, excuse me, who should shudder at that statement?

[6 : 32] Not the church, not the church, not the followers of Jesus Christ, right, because gates are used for defense. They're not an offensive weapon, right?

You don't see people marching into battle with gates. Well, they might have shields, but they don't have gates, right? They have weapons. They have swords. They have spears. Guns. Offensive weapons. We are going on the attack.

A church on mission is a church that thrives and takes ground from the enemy. We aren't supposed to hide behind walls of our church buildings.

No, we are to storm the gates of hell down with the gospel of Jesus Christ, with the declaration that Jesus Christ is Lord of Lords.

He is King of Kings. We are to declare to the world that death, the greatest weapon of Satan, has now been overpowered by Christ.

[7 : 32] Christ and His church declares that our Lord reigns victorious, not only over death, but over Satan himself.

Matthew 28, verses 16 through 20, commands, or records the command that Jesus gives to His church. While this is the last command that Jesus issues to His church, His intention in giving it was that it would always be the church's first priority.

Last command is always the church's first priority. So to thrive as a church, we must be on mission. And how are we going to do that?

Well, that's the purpose of this morning's message. to answer that question, the question of what must a church do to stay on mission?

And so the first thing we see from verse 18 is that a church on mission trusts in the authority of Jesus Christ. It trusts in the authority of Jesus Christ.

[8 : 42] Let's look again at verse 18. And Jesus came and said to them, all authority on heaven and on earth has been given to me. Now to better understand the importance of what Jesus is saying, I want you to turn in your Bibles back to Matthew 26.

And I'll have it up on the screen for you as well. Matthew 26, and let's begin in verse 30. This was moments before Jesus was arrested and led to the cross.

And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. Then Jesus said to them, you will all fall away because of me this night. For it is written, I will strike the shepherd and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.

But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee. Peter answered him, though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away.

Jesus said to him, truly I tell you, this very night before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times. Peter said to him, even if I must die with you, I will not deny you.

[9 : 58] And all the other disciples said the same thing. Even if we must die, we will not deny you. The disciples in this moment right here in Matthew 26, they are very self-confident.

They're talking tough, right? Like a bunch of rambunctious teenagers. We're tough guys. We'll get them, Jesus. Just let them try to get you. Don't worry.

We've got your back, right? If they're going to get to you, they're going to have to go through us first. And they don't want to mess with us. Right? Over our dead bodies will they get to you. Then when the guards show up to arrest Jesus, guess what happens? Pow! Scattering like chickens, right? They're out of there. Just as Jesus said they would do. The disciples would ultimately become great men of faith. They would unflinchingly endure every hardship and persecution for the Lord. But at this moment, they were relying upon their own strength.

[11:07] They were relying upon their own understanding and what they thought Christ's mission should be. As Jesus was preparing to die for the sins of the world, he needed to teach his disciples here another lesson about their need to die to themselves, to die to their self-reliance, to die to their self-confidence, their selfishness, selfishness, and instead rely fully upon him and him alone.

We see, Jesus knows what's happening here. He knows what's going to happen. He wasn't blindsided by any of this. He told them exactly what was going to happen. I'm going to die and you guys are going to run away.

But guess what? Then I'm going to be resurrected from the grave and I will meet you in Galilee after all of this has happened. When I read that, it's very assuring to me. Matthew 26, Matthew 28, it's very assuring to me because here we see this ragtag group of cowards, these deserters, and God uses these weak, finite people to build his church.

Have you ever betrayed someone before? I remember a time as a kid, I think the first time I really betrayed someone.

We were playing cops and robbers in our neighborhood. And my little gang was my best friend who lived across the street and then his cousin who was a girl down the street.

[12:50] We were tight. We were a close-knit unit growing up. And our job was to be the robbers, right? Well, the big kids in the neighborhood were the cops. We'd ride around on our bicycles pretending like we stole stuff, you know, not actually stealing anything but just being kids.

And we had one guy, the jail was in his garage and he, man, he was a tough cop. And I got arrested. I don't remember what happened. I wasn't a very good thief, which I guess is good for you, right?

Because, you know, I eventually became a pastor. But I was arrested and I saw, man, it's cool to be a cop. Look at all these things they have, right? They get the handcuffs and this is fun.

I want to be a cop. But I had some information. I knew where the robbers were hiding out. And so I traded it. I will be a cop and I'll tell you where they're hiding. Done deal, right?

And I marched them to the hideout and my two robber buddies looked at me with disdain in their eyes. And I remember the girl, I can see her face today, just red-faced, so angry, and looking at me and pointing her finger and said, you are a Benedict Arnold.

[14:03] And then she turned around and she stormed back to her house. I don't know who Benedict Arnold is, right? And so all I could think is, all I could think to say is no, you're a Benedict Arnold. I went home and I found out later who Benedict Arnold was.

I betrayed her and she didn't talk to me for weeks after that. But here Jesus has been betrayed in a much greater way. Maybe you've been betrayed by somebody, right?

And you just wanted nothing to do with that person. These guys have deserted him. But he loves them anyways. He says, I have plans for you anyways.

Despite the fact that you guys are cowards, I have plans for you. You're going to have to learn how foolish it is to trust in your own understanding.

But after that, I'll see you again. And I'll meet you in Galilee. Then chapter 27 of Matthew is one of the darkest chapters in all of the Bible.

[15:05] There we see Jesus is betrayed by his friends. He's innocent. He's sinless. The Pharisees and the Sadducees drum up false charges against him.

They slap him. They mock him. They take him to Pilate. Pilate does the same, right? He hands him over to the soldiers. Jesus is flogged.

He's beaten. He's scourged. They make a crown of thorns for him. They place it on his head. They put a robe around him and they mock worship him as king of the Jews.

Then they hand him his cross. And they force him to bear it all the way to the place where he'll be crucified. Simon of Cyrene steps in to help him out because Jesus is just so physically weak at this point after all the beating.

And then God's righteous son is nailed to a cross. And there, suspended between heaven and earth, the wrath of God towards our sins is unleashed upon him in all its fullness.

[16:17] And he dies. And he's buried. But chapter 28 is one of the most beautiful and encouraging passages of Scripture.

It's characterized by resurrection and restoration and reassurance from Jesus as he is resurrected from the tomb. The women receive instruction when they see that the rock has been rolled away, that Jesus' body is gone, the angel is there, and tells them what Jesus told them already, right? Go to Galilee and Jesus will meet you there. So when we get to verse 16 of chapter 28, there is a lot of tension in this moment.

Look again. Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee to the mountain to which Jesus had directed him. And when they saw him, they worshipped. But some doubted.

Why is there so much tension here? Well, remember, the last time they were all together with Jesus on a mountain was back in chapter 26 on the Mount of Olives. And there, at that place, they deserted him.

[17:22] Now they're back on another mountain. And Jesus is walking towards them. And so they drop in prostration on the ground and they're worshipping him.

But Matthew includes that some of them were doubting. Do you see the parallelism here between chapter 26 and chapter 28? The Mount of Olives, that first place where the disciples are selfish. Jesus, we won't let you do this. The disciples are self-assured, telling Jesus that they won't betray him. No, we'll never do that. We'll always be by your side.

The disciples are self-confident. If they come and take you, Lord, then we, they're going to have to take us too, even if we die as a result.

But the shepherd is stricken and the flock scatters. Now they're back on another mountain. The stricken shepherd has come back to life.

[18:25] And he's gathered that flock that's scattered back to that one place. The disciples were self-confident, they were self-assured, but now that self-confidence and that self-assurance has been replaced by what?

Doubt. Doubt. They realized how selfish their attempts were to keep Christ from the cross and so now they bowed down to him in a selfless act of worship.

Can you feel the tension of this moment? Right? It's like, uh-oh, daddy's home. We've been bad and dad's home. Right? The garage door has gone up. He's about to come through that door. What's he going to say? What's he going to do? I think of some of those old Clint Eastwood movies, right, where the town is deserted and Clint Eastwood marches into town with that scowl and everybody's running and hiding.

What's he going to do, right? This guy means business. What's Jesus going to say to us? What's he going to do?

[19:32] Hey, hey, he gets there and he says, hey guys, you know what? You really, man, you blew it. I mean, I had this great plan for you guys. I told you all about it.

I told you I was going to die. I told you that I was going to come back to life. I had great plans for you. You guys were going to build my church. But I don't see how I can do that now. I don't see how I can trust you guys anymore.

You weren't there for me when you said that you would be. You know, it's like this breakup. You know, when people break up, sometimes they say, it isn't you, it's me. Right?

But I can see Jesus saying here, you know what? It isn't me. It's all you guys. I'm breaking up with you because you guys are the ones with the problem. I'm going to go find some new disciples. I'm going to go find some new people who I can trust with this mission.

No, he doesn't do that. He takes this group of failures and he entrusts them with his mission. How crazy is this? This seems like a church planning effort that is doomed to fail, doesn't it?

[20:35] These guys have proven themselves to be cowards. They have no money. They have no building. They don't have a cool new vision statement and a great logo to match it, right?

They use these guys. But Jesus knew what he was doing. He knew what he was doing. And as Acts 17 reveals, he took this group of nobodies and he used them to turn the world upside down.

So instead of scolding the disciples and pointing out all the reasons why they were unable and undeserving of this mission that he was going to give them, he takes their focus off of their inability and he redirects it upon himself and his ability to accomplish this mission through them.

And so he says to them, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Notice the scope of Jesus' authority, right? What does he say?

Some authority. I got some authority, right? You know, in this world, but maybe Mars, I don't know. I don't know who the God of Mars is. I mean, I can't tell you I don't have authority there. No, he says I have all authority in heaven and on earth, right?

[22 : 00] All of it. You see it, even the things you can't see, those tiny little particles and atoms, those are mine too. I have authority over all of it. He truly was the master, is the master of the universe.

My mom wouldn't let me watch He-Man as a kid because He-Man said that he was the master of the universe. I don't know if she was right or wrong, but I realize now that He-Man, obviously, I don't think I thought of it as a kid, is just a dope in a loincloth with a big sword, right?

He is not the master of the universe, but Jesus is. Why does He tell them this? He's telling them if you're going to accomplish this mission, then you're going to have to rely upon my power to do it. Not yours. My power to do it. So a church on mission is a church that believes that Jesus has authority. Jesus declares that the Heavenly Father has given Him power of attorney to execute divine sovereignty at His personal discretion.

So whatever Jesus calls us to do, He will accomplish it. We can be as sure of that. If He calls us to make disciples, then the outcome will be that we will make disciples when we go.

[23 : 20] Not because of our ability, but because of His ability, because of His authority, because of His power working through us. How can we be sure that Jesus has this authority?

Well, He was alive to make the claim after being dead in the grave for three days. Right? How much more proof do you need that He has the authority that He claims to have?

But I'll be honest with you, there are some times where I am tempted to doubt. In fact, just last week, last Saturday, as I was thinking about Engage, and you know, man, praying, God, I hope that they sign up.

You know, our goal was to have 20 or 30 people sign up, you know, and you have those thoughts, what if only 10 people sign up, right? What if nobody, I'll at least sign up, right? I know my wife will sign up, she's kind of forced to, so at least there's two, but I had these doubts and these fears and I didn't really sleep all that well last night.

And then, we've had more today, we're going to have well over 50, I think, by the end of the day. Praise God for that. What a fool, right?

[24 : 30] And again, I'm pointing to myself. You know, don't doubt the faithfulness and the ability and the power of God. If your church we've been called on this mission, he will accomplish it despite how foolish and doubtful we might be at times.

By his authority, we are sent. And by his authority, we will accomplish the mission. A church on mission trusts in the authority of Jesus Christ.

The second thing we see here is that a church on mission makes disciples. In verses 19 through 20, Jesus says, go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And so here we see Jesus clearly say that every disciple is called to make disciples. If you call yourself a disciple of Jesus Christ, then guess what?

This is your mission, to make more disciples. A church on mission realizes that as a disciple of Jesus Christ, they are commanded to be his instruments through which other disciples are made by him.

[25 : 55] How did you become a disciple? How did you become a disciple? Do you remember? I'm sure that involves somebody else sharing the gospel with you, right?

Somebody told you about Jesus Christ. Some other disciple of Jesus Christ disciplined you, shared the gospel with you, and then he used, I'm sure, other disciples of his to disciple you as you grew up, as you matured in the faith.

Let's look at Romans 10, 14 through 15. There it says, How then will they call on him who they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him who they have not heard?

And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? But as it is written, how beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news.

As I think back over my life, I think of many people who God has used, and to me their feet are beautiful. I couldn't imagine anybody saying anything poorly against them because, man, God used

them in mighty ways to help mold and to help shape me more like his son.

[27 : 07] One woman that constantly comes to mind is my Sunday school teacher back when I was in grade school. Her name was Elma Ross. Elma was a farm girl. And she was a really neat lady.

I mean, she had the missing finger to prove that she grew up on the farm, right? And we were all as boys like, wow, that is awesome. And we were rowdy, and we were misbehaving, but she loved us. And she taught us the Bible. And we learned from her teaching. And she helped shape us. Now, I don't know how far her education was.

She was in her 60s or 70s at the time. But I can tell you that it doesn't matter. You don't have to go to seminary for God to be able to use you to disciple somebody.

You know what I mean? We're all called to do this. So how do we make disciples? Well, first we see there that we make disciples by going. And this is our vision statement.

[28 : 05] It's all about us engaging, engaging people with the Word of God, enlightening people with the Word of God, right? New converts and those who are already here. We are coming and gathering together for the sermon, for worship, for Bible studies throughout the week, for Sunday school to be enlightened by the Word of God and to also be encouraged by the Word of God, right?

Life is hard, especially as a Christian. Jesus never said it was easy. You have to deny yourself, pick up your cross and follow me. And we need that encouragement from our brothers and sisters in Christ to do that and our equipping, again, from God's Word to go back out into our community and engage them.

And it goes around and around and that's how we are going to make disciples for Jesus Christ. And that's my prayer for this church. Not only that we will be a church that God uses to make disciples, but my prayer is that God will use us as a church to send out missionaries and pastors and church planners, right?

That we are having our young ones being brought up and trained up and God's calling them to go out into the world and to be ministers of the gospel.

And all of us are called to be ministers of the gospel. So we make disciples by going. We make disciples of all people, we see. Who do we go to? Who do we make disciples of?

[29 : 26] Well, all people, right? We're a church. We don't have a niche market that we're trying to reach, right? The church is a place for all people of all ages, of all backgrounds.

And again, that's my prayer also for this church is that we will be a diverse church. That our congregation will be a reflection of the congregation that will meet in heaven in Revelations 7, 9 through 10.

Let's look at it. After this I looked and behold a great multitude so that no one could number from every nation, from all tribes and all people and all languages standing before the throne.

Before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, crying out with a loud voice, salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb. I pray that our congregation here would match and better reflect that congregation where we will one day be a part of in heaven, where we see that God is in the business of saving all people from all nations, from all tribes, from all different backgrounds.

Third, we see that we make disciples by baptizing. Once disciples are made, they must be marked. Baptism is one of the first acts of obedience that a new believer is called to make.

[30 : 47] And through it, we declare to the world that we identify with Jesus Christ. And that's why we have people go under immersion, go all the way in, because there's no other way to better symbolize what it means to be in Christ, that we are dead to sin, right?

We have died with Christ, we have been raised to new life, out of the grave, right? One day we will be resurrected like him. So we baptize to mark those disciples.

And I want to say this too, just as a caveat on this point. A church that grows by stealing the sheep of other flocks is not on mission. You hear me?

A church that is on mission is not a church that looks to steal sheep from others' flocks. And if there ever comes a day where that's the case here, then I give you the permission and I expect it that you rebuke me.

Pastor Mike, you said that church isn't supposed to be about stealing other people's sheep, and yet I've noticed that a lot more people are here. Praise God. But you haven't baptized anybody!

[31 : 55] What's going on? We could be deceived into thinking that we're on mission because we're drawing a crowd. But if we're not making disciples, if they're not being baptized, then we're

not on mission.

We're fooling ourselves. Fourthly, we make disciples by teaching them all that Jesus has commanded. Disciple making requires faithful, biblical preaching, and teaching to help that disciple grow.

And notice that Jesus says this about his teaching. What does he want us to teach? All of it. I want you to teach all of my commandments. I want you to teach all of God's word.

And I want you to understand as a part of this too, we don't have editorial authority over the Bible. We're not in that position where we can disagree with what God's word says.

When it comes to our opinions, if they don't match with God's word says, then guess what's right and guess who's wrong? God's word is right. My opinion is wrong. Charles Spurgeon said, the word of God is the anvil upon which the opinions of men are smashed.

[33 : 08] That's why I preach expositional sermons and not topical, right? Just a couple weeks ago, the sermon was about what? Complaining. Complaining. That's not a popular message to hear.

That's not a popular message to preach, right? If we're trying to draw a crowd, then we're not going to talk to them about how bad it is to complain. But here's the deal. We need to hear what God's word says.

That's what we need to hear. We need to hear all of it, especially the difficult parts, especially the parts that we struggle to be obedient to. Jesus expects that we teach all of his word and that when we do that, we don't sugarcoat his word.

We don't twist parts of it around that we don't like or disagree with to try to make it say something else. That's not our job. We don't have that authority. Look at 2 Timothy 3, 16 through 17.

All scripture is breathed out and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

[34 : 13] So we must hear all of God's word. And so again, another instance, if you come to me and say, you know, Pastor Mike, I'm having problems with my marriage.

I feel like my marriage is falling apart. What I'm not going to say to you is this. You know what? I heard a really, I watched a really good episode of Dr. Phil the other day. And you know, he said something really good and I think I've DVR'd it.

And if you want to come to my house and we can watch it together, I think it would really help you. I'm not going to do that. Right? And we aren't going to do that. We're going to point people instead to God's word.

This is what God's word says about your marriage. This is what God's word says about your role as a husband or wife. Are you fulfilling that role? And so we see a church on mission makes disciples. And then thirdly, we see that a church on mission stays on mission. The rest of verse 20. And behold, Jesus says, I am with you always to the end of the age.

[35 : 14] And here we have a beautiful verse that acts as a closing bracket to Matthew 1.23 where it says there, Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel.

Which means what? God with us. God is with us. God will always be with us. And so we have this assurance from Jesus that he is with us now.

He'll be with us on March 31st when we go out and engage in our community. and he will be with us always. And when we die, we will be with him face to face forever.

The Lord isn't just on our side, he's by our side. So we can carry out his mission both by his power and with his presence.

And so again, before we go out on March 31st, we have this assurance promise from our Lord that he's already going to be there. And I pray that he would lead people to us who are in desperate need of hearing the gospel.

[36 : 26] So, my invitation to you this morning is to be involved with what's going on. You might be afraid.

I don't know what to say, Pastor Mike. You know, I've gone through the three circles or I haven't gone through it. I just don't think I can do it. And like Nathan, Pastor Nathan, my friend said last week, my encourage to you is to do this.

Do it anyways. Do it anyways. Put your name on that paper. Show up on that day. Be willing to be used by the Lord and my promise to you is this. He will.

And it may not happen that first time that we go out but eventually, I believe, as we do it more and more, as we are using the gospel debt more and more to reach out into our community, we're going to make disciples.

And God will be glorified. And I can't wait. God bless you.

[37 : 33] God bless you.