



Series: The Great Pursuit

Date: September 29, 2024

Speaker: Scott Urbanek, Pastor of Sending

Text: Matthew 28:18-20

Title: Make Disciples Everywhere!

Good morning, Mercy Church! Last weekend was such an incredible time at Ovens Auditorium. Many people got to hear the gospel and many got to put their “yes” on the table and to pray the prayer of Isaiah, 6: “Here I am, send me.” For this entire series, we’re all committing to pray a prayer saying that we will go wherever he tells us to go and to do whatever he tells us to do. And, this morning we’re going to explore what this looks like in our lives. Today, we will be looking at a mountain top passage for Christians. The passage we will look at today is clear, compelling, and direct. There

aren’t multiple ways of interpreting it. There aren’t a bunch of commentators, theologians, or pastors that disagree on its meaning. It is a passage that Christians throughout church history have looked at time and time again to make sense and find direction for how to live their lives. And yet, it’s a command that many of us ignore or disobey.

I think about this all of the time when I go to the dentist. Yes, the dentist. What do you mean? Well, every 6 months I go and get a cleaning from my dentist and I wonder, “Have I flossed enough?” Every study out there shows us that flossing is important for the health of your gums and teeth. (Some of you are checking your teeth right now... and you don’t floss!) And some of you are in a panic every time you go to the dentist and then are surprised when you get plaque and gingivitis! You have an unhealthy mouth. You’re like, “What? No!! I floss every day.” The dentist knows you are a liar. What’s true is that all of us know that flossing is good for us and we should be doing it, yet... research shows us that only 20% of Americans floss daily.¹ As one of your pastors, please floss. But, also as one of your pastors, there is another statistic that actually does mess with me a bit. Only 25% of Christians will ever share their faith in their entire life. If that’s true, there is a massive disconnect between our understanding of what

¹ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6434526/>.

Christianity is, and what Jesus actually called us to do. Many Christians have believed throughout time that “getting saved” means that we now get to go to heaven, but that our lives aren’t really impacted by that decision. A true conversion and love for Jesus should set your heart on fire for him. A heart on fire for Jesus should always produce a flaming tongue for Jesus.² Like flossing, we all agree that we need to be making disciples, but most of us aren’t.

In this series, which we titled “The Great Pursuit,” we are looking at God’s great pursuit of us, and God’s pursuit of the world through us. In this series, we want to show you the gospel of Jesus. That Jesus has pursued each and every one of us by dying on the cross for our sins and rising from the dead so that we can be saved. But, it doesn’t stop there. We are also called to a glorious mission to make disciples around the world. You may have heard it this way, the gospel is not just the front door to the christian house, it’s the whole house! Believe it or not, the gospel has implications on your life. The gospel impacts every nook, cranny, and room in your house and today, we’re looking at one of the great implications of the gospel on our lives. The main idea of what this passage is going to show us is this: **Make disciples everywhere!**

² Charles Spurgeon.

A disciple is someone who has given their life to Jesus. It’s someone who has committed themselves to love God, love each other, and to love our world. It’s a full surrender to Jesus’ lordship. He rules, we don’t. This is what every single follower of Jesus was created for. We are to leverage our time, talent, and treasure to reach our families, our neighbors, and the nations for Christ. So, turn with me to Matthew 28:16-20. We are going to look at what many call “The Great Commission.” Let’s read:

16 The eleven disciples traveled to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had directed them. 17 When they saw him, they worshiped, but some doubted. 18 Jesus came near and said to them, “All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. 19 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, 20 teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

The first thing Jesus said to them in verse 18, in essence, was that we are to **1) Make disciples in God’s authority.** The clear command in verses 18-20 is that we are called by God to make disciples. In other words, we are called to share the gospel for the purpose of other people coming to know Jesus. But notice that Jesus starts by saying “All authority has been given to me in

heaven and on earth.” Before Jesus gives them and us a command, he makes a claim. The claim he makes is that he has authority over it all, over everything. In heaven, and on earth. Everything that we know was made by him and for him.³ That includes you! You may have heard people as they talk about their testimony by saying, “I decided to make Jesus my personal Lord and savior.”⁴ While there is some truth to this statement, you and I don’t *decide* to make him Lord; he is Lord regardless of what we think of him. Our personal affirmation of Jesus isn’t what makes him Lord over the universe. God’s nature is what makes him Lord of the universe. Jesus walked on water, he calmed storms with his words, he healed the lame and the blind, he has authority over sin and death, Jesus is God! And...catch this...He has authority over your life. This is the one that rubs many of us the wrong way. The first three, we’re like, “yes and amen.” Reading about Jesus’ authority over nature and disease and over our sin often brings us to our knees in worship. We’re like “Oh, thank you Jesus. We love you.” But Jesus having authority over you... “nope, i don’t like that.” The reality is that when we gave our lives to Jesus this is what we are submitting our lives toward. He is Lord of all or he isn’t Lord at all.

³ Colossians 1:16

⁴ Christ-Centered Exposition, pg. 370. Platt, Akin, Merida. I owe this example to them.

In the context of this passage, Jesus is telling them that all authority has been given to him and then he tells them to, “go”. He’s saying “Go, with my authority.” Jesus’ Great Commission to us only makes sense if Jesus has all authority. Jesus is telling them that his authority is now extended to you and his authority is what will fuel the mission he’s calling them to. So, with that... It can’t be stopped. Not even the devil himself can stop us! God’s authority is what fuels the mission.

Do you believe that? Do you, follower of Jesus, live, walk, and talk like you have the authority and power of God to make disciples? He will give you his power! Jesus having all authority should lead to an avalanche of hope-filled prayer for the lost, a torrent of hope-fueled evangelism to a lost and dying world. It’s God’s authority that fuels a people toward a mission to the whole world that cannot and will not fail. Jesus said, “This gospel of the kingdom *will* be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come” (Matthew 24:14). (next slide) “I *will* build my church, and the gates of hell *shall not* prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18). (next slide) “I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I *must* bring them also, and they *will* listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd” (John 10:16). This

mission will not fail!⁵ You have authority because his calling on your life to make disciples was the entire reason he came to earth. What would happen if you actually believed this? I fear that our lack of understanding here is what makes us spiritually soft, fearful, and makes us lack courage. If we believe that Jesus has given us his authority that means we will believe him at his word and take his gospel everywhere. Our families, neighborhoods, workplaces would be turned upside down. All because you believed in Jesus' words to you that his authority means your power to make disciples.

So we saw Jesus telling them to make disciples in His authority. He says "all authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth." 19 **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, 20 teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you.**

2) Make disciples of all nations by baptizing and teaching

We're going to camp for a while at this point because there are so many implications for us. So, we have seen

⁵<https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/all-authority-in-heaven-and-earth>. I owe this wording to John Piper.

that Jesus has extended his authority to us and in light of that it is "Therefore", "Go." In the original language, a better understanding of this would be translated to, "as you are going." The command in verse 19, isn't the word "Go." The command is to *make disciples*. The word "go" is simply communicating that "as we are going" or as we are living our lives, we are to make disciples. And watch this...the assumption here, and the command here, is that *as we are going and living our lives*, it WILL take us in the direction of *making disciples of all nations*. By nations, Jesus isn't saying, take the gospel to other geopolitical countries, although it includes countries. He's saying every tribe, language, every ethnolinguistic group.⁶ Jesus wants to save people from every people group on the planet. All of them! So...what are we to do with them once they give their lives to Jesus? It says we are to disciple them. How? By baptizing them and teaching them. Baptism is the first act of obedience we're called to take after giving our lives to Jesus. It's a public declaration of our faith to the church. We are baptized into membership of local churches and the members of that church are to come alongside and disciple them. How? By teaching them to observe (or obey) everything Jesus has commanded. Sometimes we can overcomplicate discipleship. Discipleship is simply helping someone learn the Word

⁶ JoshuaProject.com



of God so they walk in a relationship with God, and to obey what God's word says.

Many of you, like me, when we first read this passage we were like, "Okay, make disciples. Got it." And let someone else be the missionary to the all nations part." No, no. The expectation is that we all take part in The Great Commission. Will all of you go live overseas to make disciples cross-culturally? No. But, some of you will. Whether you're called to go or stay, we're all called to make disciples of all nations. It's a group project.

Making disciples of all nations is not a side hustle of the church, it's why the church exists.

When the disciples heard this command, as the hearers, they would have known that Jesus was talking directly to each individual. If that's the case, it's for every one of you as well. So, I'd love to help us have some handles on what that could mean. We're all called to make disciples of all nations but there are two categories of people in terms of how we do it: **We are all senders or goers.** This idea isn't something Mercy invented. We see this in the church at Antioch in Acts 13. In Acts 13, the Holy Spirit set apart Barnabas and Paul for the work of planting churches in places where there were no churches. They were the goers. But, not everyone at the church in Antioch was called to go. Most would stay and would support Barnabas and Paul through prayer, encouragement, and through financial gifts. Some

were senders and some were goers. Paul took 4 missionary journeys and he would circle back to Antioch after each trip to get support and encouragement from his sending church.

For us it's similar. A sender is someone committed to making disciples of all nations by ensuring that the goers lack for nothing when they go overseas as missionaries. You send your money, you write them letters, you facetime, you send care packages, you pray for them, you go on a short-term trip to support and encourage them. We do these things to make sure that they feel all the support needed to stay on the field making disciples of all nations, long-term. You hold the rope here as they dangle in God's mission over there. An example of how we are doing that here is we have a missionary care team led by Kelsey and Alex Pirro. They lead a team of 12 Mercy members who care for our missionaries. They make sure that each missionary is healthy spiritually, emotionally, and relationally. We don't want any missionary that's ever sent from our church to ever feel like their sending church forgot them. But, just because you are a sender, it doesn't mean you are to stop making disciples of all nations here. You can do that by going on short-term trips, welcoming refugees and internationals to our city, and you can make friends with the thousands of international students that flood our college campuses



every year. And the vast majority of them are from people groups that have little to no access to the gospel. They think they are coming to get an education, but God is actually bringing them here so that they can come to know Jesus so that one day they can take the gospel back home! You are still called to make disciples of all nations here!

So, that's senders. Let's talk about goers. Last week, pastor Spence helped us roll out our 50 by 2030 initiative. We want to send 50 missionaries from our church by 2030. Some of you know that God is calling you and you should let me and our mobilization team know. But, some of you are feeling in your heart a tug from the Lord to go. And some of you are hardening your heart to even consider this call. If that is you... you're hardening your heart to God about this issue. How can we do that? Has God not saved you? Have you no gratitude in your heart for God's salvation? I know I'm speaking a little boldly to you, but you need to understand, I love you. I need to tell you the truth. Not all of us are called to go. But, If you sit there hardening your heart to God you could be hardening yourself to the biggest means of Joy that God could ever give you. I beg you, don't do that. Open your heart to God. Opening your heart to him doesn't automatically mean he will call you. But for some of you it will mean that,

and it will be the most fulfilling thing you could ever do. Why? Because he called you to it.

Let me show you some reasons as to why you should consider going. In the United States, we have the privilege of being a nation that has a lot of access to the gospel. There are a lot of churches and a lot of Christians. Imagine growing up in a people group where you will be born and you live your entire life without ever meeting a Christian. There are many people groups that, legitimately, have never heard of Jesus' name. And if they have, they have no one to explain to them of who he is and why it matters. There are roughly 17,000 people groups in our world. A people group is an ethnolinguistic group with a common self-identity that is shared by language, history, customs, ethnicity, caste, occupation, etc.⁷ Of those 17,000, roughly 7,000 of them (Roughly 3 Billion people) are considered an unreached people group. Unreached means that there is no local community of believing Christians able to engage the people group with the gospel by church planting. This means that there is no one there to tell them the hope of Jesus. And while we hear this there are times objections that boil up in our hearts and we say, "wait a minute, there are unreached people here in the U.S. I have unreached neighbors and coworkers." Lovingly, you don't. They aren't unreached.

⁷ <https://joshuaproject.net/>



They are unsaved, but they aren't unreached. You want to know why? They have you. They have access to you. God's plan for them to hear the gospel is you. It's for you to share with your neighbors, it's for you to share with your employees, roommate, or the person in the cubicle next to you. They have you! Unreached people groups don't have anyone to tell them. Mercy Church, this can't sit well with us! This is why we need people who will say, "here I am, send me." We need people who will go to North Africa to reach the 25 million Moroccan Arabs. To go to India where there is the largest concentration of an unreached people group on the planet. To go down the rivers of the Amazon in Ecuador, Brazil, and parts of Mexico to people groups that don't even realize that there are civilizations outside of the other tribes they meet deep in the forest. And... If you are in the marketplace, catch this. Your expertise in your work opens all kinds of doors to the gospel. Nations that have the unreached are willing to pay nurses, doctors, engineers, and teachers to come work there. What would it look like if a city like Charlotte flooded the mission field with marketplace workers who will go and get a job and partner with local churches and missionaries to make disciples in places with no access to believers. And you don't even need to commit to doing it forever. If you are a young family, young professional, or a college student, listen

here. There are two year assignments all over the world that you could take on.

Mercy Church, do you hear the Isaiah 6 call? "Who will go for us? Who will we send?." I can't help but to believe that there are some of the 50 that we want to send in the room right now. If that's you, listen to me. The enemy is going to want to snatch this seed from going deep in your hearts. If you want to go, I will help you. My team will train you. We have legit, world-class training, led by our mobilization team. Do not leave service today without coming up to me and giving me your name. Church, it's going to take all of us to see 50 missionaries go by 2030. It will take senders and goers to make this happen. Here is the one big "next step" I want all of you to take. In your seat is a card with a QR code to the mission of God class. We plan to train all of you in this class on what it means to be a sender and a goer.

Let's look at the 3rd thing Jesus wants us to see here: **19 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, 20 teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."**

3) Make disciples with God's presence.

Jesus ends his commission to his disciples by telling them that he will always be with them! One of the largest factors of people not wanting to go overseas is fear. Which makes sense. Taking the gospel to hard places around the world is hard. But, Jesus said, “I am with you, always.” What a promise! Going through difficulties is always easier when you have someone to do it with. Except with this, Jesus is sending the Holy Spirit to be with you. In John 17, Jesus promised that he’d send us a helper, the Person of the Holy Spirit. In Acts 2, we see the Holy Spirit indwell believers for the first time and Peter, a fearful follower of Jesus turned into a bold preacher for the sake of Christ and thousands started following Jesus. Y’all, that can happen in our day. Jesus promising his presence means that if he calls you to go, he will make it the most joyful experience you could ever have.

As I close, I want to share a story that convicted me this week. Recently, I came across a youtube video that was trending on social media and it was a 17 year old Mormon girl who was opening a letter that would tell her where she would spend the next two years on her Mormon mission. Picture the scene... her whole family is all around. Everyone waited in anticipation for her to open her letter to find out where she’d spend the next two years. When she opens it they all erupt with cheer. All of them cheering for a false gospel. Church, where is

that in our midst? Where is the commitment to make disciples all over? Listen, the last thing I want to do this morning is to guilt you into going. Guilt is a terrible motivator. What I do want to do is to kick up the dirt, to challenge, to encourage to plead with our church that this is worth your life! I want all of us to give our lives to see Revelation 7:9 happen. People from every tribe, tongue and nation, worshiping King Jesus. There is no greater motivator than that! God give us your presence.