

# “RECLAIM OUR MISSION”

Rev. Matt Anderson

Text: Matthew 28:16-20

God’s Word: Ephesians 4:11-16

## *Matthew 28:16-20 NLT*

*16 Then the eleven disciples left for Galilee, going to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. 17 When they saw him, they worshiped him—but some of them doubted! 18 Jesus came and told his disciples, “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. 19 Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. 20 Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”*

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In 1961, 38 men gathered to begin a new journey. They were ready for this moment since they were last together, they always thought of what could have been. They were heartbroken over the past few months as they had lost the lead late in the championship game. In walked their fearless leader, each of them expecting to pick up where they left off, eager to improve on what they had accomplished, ready to start working on the details so they could win a championship this year. Yet, their fearless leader, Vince Lombardi, held out a worn ball and said, "Gentlemen, this is a football."

Author David Maraniss explained what happened when Lombardi walked into training camp in the summer of 1961. "He took nothing for granted. He began a tradition of starting from scratch, assuming that the players were blank slates who carried over no knowledge from the year before... He began with the most elemental statement of all. "Gentlemen," he said, holding a pigskin in his right hand, "this is a football." The fundamentals were important to Lombardi who went on to win the NFL championship that year along with 4 others, and never finished with a losing season thereafter. He believed that before you could worry about the details, you had to know the fundamentals.

In this sermon series, "Reclaim. Revive. Renew." our goal to re-focus on the fundamentals of our faith so we don't get distracted by the outside forces trying to hinder us. Pastor Becky had us reclaim our identity last week, we are beloved, and nothing can change that. As followers of Jesus, we are beloved children of God--those in whom God is well-pleased, we are God's children and co-heirs of the kingdom of God with Jesus. This is who we are and whose we are!

But what are we supposed to do as God's children? What is our purpose? Jesus gives it to us in the famous passage we've just read this morning. Jesus gives us the Great Commission. This is our grace-filled response to God's Reign in the world announced by Jesus. It is our response to God's grace in our lives but also throughout history, from the Old Testament covenants, through Jesus' life, death, resurrection, and experienced in the ongoing creation of new people by the Holy Spirit.

As it was with Moses and the burning bush, knowledge is not the only purpose. The purpose is to live out the call to make disciples for the transformation of the world. We do this by our church motto: "We serve Jesus, when we share Jesus, and we share Jesus, when we show Jesus." We share Jesus when we talk about God's word, seek out others who don't know about God, sharing the Good News with people wherever they are at, asking them, inviting them, and gathering persons into a growing relationship with Jesus. This isn't only with words but with our actions and the relationships we develop.

We share Jesus when we nurture people in living out that growing relationship with Jesus every day. As the local church we do this through our worship, communion, bible study, small groups, and much more. We serve Jesus when we as his followers heal the sick, feed the hungry, care for the stranger, free the oppressed, being and becoming a compassionate and having genuine care of others while working to bring God's kingdom a reality in our time. In short, we put God's love into Action!

Yet, as our bulletin says on the front, we are "a perfectly imperfect church filled with perfectly imperfect people who worship our perfect Lord." Did you catch what it said in the scripture this morning? First, there were eleven disciples, remember Judas

betrayed Jesus. A reminder that the disciples who walked and talked with the living and breathing Jesus for three plus years ended up messing it up. They were perfectly imperfect people like us, ordinary fishermen who followed Jesus and even though they had the God-man Jesus physically with them. The eleven on the mountaintop worshipped there on the mountainside when they saw the resurrected Jesus. Even though they didn't have it all together they worshipped! And some doubted amid that worship. They didn't have all the answers, didn't understand all that was happening, and yet they saw the worthiness and otherness of Jesus!

Friends we don't have to have it all together or even know all the answers either because Jesus says, "all authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations." "These disciples whom he tells to "go" are in no position to make themselves the object of faith." Since they don't have it all together, have all the answers, the object of this call to follow is not to themselves but the one who does, Jesus Christ. "No one can make anyone follow Jesus. What the disciples have is the word from the living Christ that continues beckoning them to follow," as they are following Jesus. The invitation to go make disciples is an invitation to follow Jesus as I follow Jesus, as we follow Jesus.

And Jesus promises that He will be with us to the very end of the age. How many of us have stories that, as the song says, "prove him o'er and o'er?" In this journey we are all on to follow Jesus every day and show others Jesus, Jesus promises to be with us. We have the promised Holy Spirit to guide us and direct us on this journey. We have each other to encourage and equip one another along the way. The way you follow Jesus inspires me to know Him better!

And to continue this mission of Jesus Christ it takes all of us. Each of us is uniquely gifted to share in the work of Jesus Christ. Each of us has our special part to play in this mission and this work. As part of the church, we are charged "faithfully participate in the life and ministries of this church through our prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness." This mission takes all of us and all our gifts. Just like our miraculous bodies God created, "each (person) does its own special work, helps the other persons grow, so that the whole body of believers is healthy and growing and full of love." In turn we overflow with God's grace sharing Jesus with all we encounter.

“Did you know that the word “Christian” comes from the Greek word Christians, meaning “little Christ”? And that the accusers of Jesus’s disciples used it as an insult...? “Check it out, there’s the ‘little Christs,’” they would say... The believers’ lifestyle was so clear and unmistakable that this name was assigned to them. Because they put into practice what they had learned from Jesus, they completely achieved the mission that was given to them (and to us): to represent Christ and make Him known!” Too often we as the church have been caught in the weeds in the business of the church and have lost sight of the mission Jesus gave us. Somewhere along the way, we’ve been too preoccupied making ourselves or the church itself the object of our faith instead of Jesus. Friends we are imperfect people who worship a perfect Lord, not the doctrine, the structure, the building, but Jesus himself. And it is Jesus who gave us our purpose, to make other followers of Him. The founding documents of our Methodist Church says, "Whenever United Methodism has had a clear sense of mission, God has used our Church to save persons, heal relationships, transform social structures, and spread scriptural holiness, thereby changing the world. In order to be truly alive, we embrace Jesus' mandate to love God and to love our neighbor and to make disciples of all peoples."

Like Vince Lombardi said, “this is a football,” This is our mission. As the people of God, it’s time to get foundation of our faith and our purpose: to make disciples of Jesus Christ.” It’s time to reclaim our mission and purpose knowing that it takes all of us "to claim Bucyrus and beyond for Jesus Christ through the transforming power of God's love. To fulfill this mission, we have put God's Love in Action!" May it be so.

Amen.