

Missions Sunday

October 2, 2005

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The Great Commission

Mark 16:14-20 (NKJV)

Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen. [15] And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. [16] He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. [17] And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; [18] they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."

[19] So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. [20] And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen.

Verse 16 of Mark 16 is what we call "**The Great Commission**". It was the final words of Jesus to His disciples before He was received up to heaven and sat down at the right hand of His Father.

Another version of "**The Great Commission**" is found in Matthew 28.

Matthew 28:18-20 (NKJV)

And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. [19] Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20] teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.

We are given another version in Acts 1:8,9:

Acts 1:8-9 (NKJV)

But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

[9] Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.

The final words of Jesus were for His followers to preach the gospel around the world... "in Jerusalem (the city they were in), in Judea (the state they were in), in Samaria (the region they were in), and to the end of the earth.

Today is Missions Sunday at Elim. The day we set aside each year to ask you to help us spread the gospel around the world. Listen to the words of the greatest missionary who ever lived.....the Apostle Paul.

Romans 10:8-15 (NKJV)

But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach): [9] that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. [10] For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. [11] For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame." [12] For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. [13] For "whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

[14] How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? [15] And how shall they preach unless they are sent?

Paul makes it very clear that if anyone will call on the Name of the Lord and confess with his mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in his heart that God raised Jesus from the dead, that person will be saved!

He said, "It doesn't matter who it is. It doesn't matter what color his skin is. It doesn't matter what his nationality is because there is no distinction between people as for as God is concerned.

But Paul says, “How can anyone call on Jesus if he has never heard about Him?” The answer is, “He can’t”.

Then he says, “How can anyone hear without a preacher?” (Without someone who is willing to go and preach the gospel to him?)” The answer is, “He can’t”.

And then, Paul asked the final question, “How can someone go and preach the gospel to people in various places around the world unless he is sent. In other words, unless someone gives the money needed to support that person, he can’t go.

For missions to be successful, there must be preachers, prayers and payers.

The good news is there are people who are willing to go. They want to go. They can’t wait to go. But they are waiting to be sent. They are waiting for someone to step up and say, “I will support you.”

You couldn’t pay me enough money to go to Mexico and live out in the bushes without any air-conditioning and with no Wal-Mart, etc.

But Sherrell can’t wait to go. She’s ready!

You and I will share the reward that Sherrell is going to receive by sending her. And it’s not just Sherrell. We are supporting almost sixty missionaries in countries all around the world who are doing a great job in preaching the gospel. We will share in their reward too.

We have some of God’s choicest servants right here at Elim. There is no one in Texas who preaches to more prisoners than Jean Russell. She’s on the go all the time. I don’t know of another ministry in Houston that does more to help drug addicts recover than the Harbor. Brother Kurien has faithfully traveled around the globe for over twenty years preaching the gospel and establishing churches and building hospitals and supporting Bible schools etc. Jerry and Sandy Owens are two of the finest missionaries on earth. What a privilege to share in their ministry!

We must not get weary in well doing. We must not do less than we have been doing. We need to do more. I ask you to make a pledge today. Make the best pledge that you can.

- \$ 5 a week
- \$ 10 a week
- \$ 15 a week
- \$ 20 a week
- \$ 30 a week
- \$ 50 a week
- \$ 50 a month
- \$ 100 a month
- \$ 500 a month
- \$ 1000 a month

Do whatever you can do.

And then I want you to prayerfully consider what you can do to help Sherrell get the ministry started in Mexico. Look at the list of things that are needed and give her the money to buy them. Choose one or two or three or whatever you can. God will bless you for it!

Together we can make a difference.

And then I want to encourage all of you to be a witness to those you meet right here at home.

Think about this for a moment. Jesus told the twelve to go into all the world and preach the gospel. They were just ordinary men. They had virtually no money, no social position, no prestige, no extraordinary talent: but they took the Lord at His word. When He said, "Go," they went! They literally gave their lives preaching the gospel. Tradition tells us that Peter died in Rome. John died in Ephesus, Andrew in Greece, and Thomas in India. All of the disciples gave their lives carrying the gospel to the ends of the earth. They were all missionaries. Before the First Century ended, there were Christians in the Middle East, Asia Minor, Macedonia, Greece, Italy, Spain, Egypt and Africa.

From the twelve, the group grew to 120 by Ascension Day. A little over a week later, on the Day of Pentecost, it increased to over 3,000. By the time the last of the twelve had died, there were an estimated half-million followers of Jesus Christ. By the end of the third century, all heathen temples were destroyed or converted into church sanctuaries. By the close of the ninth century, there were over 100 million Christians. Today the number has grown to well over one billion around the world.

None of this growth would have happened had Christians not been excited and supportive of missions or prayed to “the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.”

There is much left to be done. There are well over four billion people living on the earth today. That means there are over three billion people who are not Christians. That seems like a great number left to evangelize. And it is.

But think about this. If each professing Christian were to reach only three people for Christ, then the great commission of Christ would be fulfilled in one generation. We could do it in a week or a day if each and every one of us would reach just three people. Wow!

You say, “That will never happen. Some Christians will never win another person to Christ.” That may be true. But listen to this. The fact is that if only one percent of all Christians would take the great commission seriously, then the entire world would be evangelized in ten years.

We must do what God has commissioned us to do. Will you help us to send missionaries to places we can't go? And will you become a witness right here in Pasadena, South Houston and Houston or where ever you live?

We don't have to go to Mexico. Mexico has come to us! People from all over the world live all around us. Let's reach them with the gospel!

Give invitation.