

The Great Commission

Matthew 28:18-20

Scripture: Matthew 5:14 “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden;”

Introduction:

I went to the “US Census Bureau” on the internet. There I found that the approximate world population is somewhere between 6 & 7 billion people. Now the State of Iowa is not that big, but according to a 2003 estimate has 2,944,062 people. And according to the Churches of Christ in the USA 2006 Edition there are 75 Churches of Christ in Iowa with approximately 3392 members.

Statically speaking the church represents 1/12 of one percent of our states population.

If I took a pie (Apple preferably) and cut it into a hundred pieces and took one of those ever so small slivers and cut it into 12 equal pieces the church would basically be a crumb.

What this means is that 99.8% of our states population are not members of the Lords church.

Transitional Statement:

Today I hope to remind us that God has created this vast population of people. They were not an unexpected pregnancy, but they were foreknown. They were all from the least to the greatest, created in His image, for His glory and His purpose. He loves them all and wants everyone of them saved, without exception.

So God has commissioned us, upon whom His favor rests, in regard to the people of this earth. That is He has dedicated and charged us with the responsibility of sharing His plan of salvation with those of this world.

It is my hope today that we realize that evangelism is not a planned activity, but a way of life.

READ: Matthew 28:18-20

18 And Jesus came up 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 the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Lesson:

I. The First thing Jesus does in this text is establish His authority.

- A. *“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.”*
- B. If I told you to go over to the big tree where the parsonage used to be, you know the one with the big branch hanging out, that has been the focal point of many pictures i.e. the one that bring back so many memories, and cut it down.
 - 1. And you actually cut it down.
 - 2. There would be a lot of people upset....why?
 - 3. For starters I personally checked my contract and there is no authority given to me concerning building and ground maintenance.
- C. Now, thinking about authority, I watched the presidential race this year, I watched as both Obama and McCain battled fiercely to become president of the United States. Now it is well known that the president really doesn't make that much money in comparison to industry standards for similar work. So I have to ask why they would want to go through all the heart aches of leading a nation. Not to judge their motives but in the past people accepted the office of the president as a way to contribute to the civic good of the society. But as I watched this battle for the White house. I had to wonder with the millions of dollars behind each campaign what it was all really about. Let me say that “I think” in many ways it was all about power. Each candidate while giving their stump speeches proclaimed to have great knowledge and the power to carry their ideas out. But there would only be one guy elected and the only power he would have would not come from himself, but would surround the authority given to him by the American public.
- D. Church it is my estimation we should never discuss politics from the pulpit, as seems to be a growing trend in our country, because as Christians we recognize a higher authority than that of the president or the congress or any other branch of government. As Christians we accept as the ultimate authority, that of Jesus our Lord understanding that God Himself gave it to Him.
- E. But, spiritually speaking, we must understand that the lasting value of Jesus' authority in our lives surrounds our willingness to submit to it.
- F. God has put Jesus in charge and Jesus says *“hey listen to me!”*
 - 1. There is a great urgency to listen closely because these are Jesus' last words before he ascends to heaven. He is honing in on what is really most important thing at hand.
 - 2. Isn't that what we do when we leave on a trip, the last few seconds we will remind each other of the real important things not to forget, and so it is here with Christ.

II. After the establishment of authority, Jesus gives the charge **GO** !

- A. Go seems basic enough but people somehow have bought into the idea that if God wants us to talk with someone He will bring them to our front door step. Where they will ring the door bell and say hey, I hear there is a Jesus and I need to know about him for salvation could you please teach me the gospel.
 - 1. Well I'm sure you can agree that this is not practical by any stretch of the imagination
- B. To "Go" here indicates a search
 - 1. That is an urgency to find that which is lost.
 - 2. Do you remember the parables of Luke chapter 15 ? The lost sheep, the lost coin and the lost son...and the great urgency and expectation for them to be found.
- C. Let me bring this whole thought right here to our doorsteps this morning. If God were asked of us here at the Cedarloo Church of Christ, would He say we are urgently seeking the lost?
 - 1. I wonder if part of the lack of urgency here doesn't come down to us from Cain's way of thinking. After Cain had killed Able God came to Cain and asked where his brother was and Cain answered "*Am I my brothers keeper*". This type of thought is standard issue in our western world today. I'll take care of me and you take care of you.
 - 2. Is the salvation of others really my responsibility?
 - 3. All I can answer isJesus says it was !
- D. I would like for you to think about the word "go" here. I believe the idea is not primarily that of some coordinated effort concerning evangelism, although I certainly don't see anything wrong with that, but the idea here, as I see it, is that "*as we are going*" in-other-words as we are living out our lives every day we should be continually sharing the gospel with people.
- E. Perhaps a question of greater concern here would be why would we not want to share what is some important to us?
 - 1. Maybe here in lies the answer itself for those not sharing Jesus with the world, maybe this salvation has lost its importance to us.

III. Then in our text Jesus says to **Make Disciples of All the Nations.**

- A. What does it mean to make disciples of someone?
 - 1. It means basically to make people followers of Christ
 - 2. Teach them to walk in His steps

3. To live a He lived
 4. i.e. to take their lead from Him.
 5. To seek eagerly to fulfill his plan and purpose.
 6. To create a thirst in them for God.
- B. Church, would it be accurate to say that any lack of desire to make disciples all the nations would stem from problems in our own discipleship?
1. Giving great thought to this idea has caused me to rethink what following Christ means in my life.
 2. Something I believe that we should all do
- C. Now, the Greek word for disciple here is and active, and imperative
1. Again pointing to a critical urgency.
- D. So following Jesus is something we must first get right in our lives and then try to help others to do the same.
- E. Jesus is a gift that is meant to be shared.

IV. Then Jesus says to Baptize them

- A. That is to bring them to the point of faithful obedience
1. Washing away their sins. Acts 22:16
 2. Uniting them with Christ Romans 6
 3. Adding them to the Lord's Church Acts 2:47
 4. Ultimately reconciling them with God.
- B. Into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit
1. "Into the name of" in the Greek has to do with authority
 2. So here in baptism we are also directing people to a willing submission to God's supreme authority in their lives.
 3. Something that should be well remembered in our own lives.

V. Then Jesus says to teach them.

- A. It's not enough to help them become Christians
1. We must mentor them, take them under our wings

2. According to the commands of Christ

B. 2 Timothy 2:2 “The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”

C. Brethren all the evangelism in the world without follow up teaching is useless!

Conclusion:

I would like to share a story with you from Max Lucado’s book “God Came Near”

A few nights ago a peculiar thing happened. An electrical storm caused a blackout in our neighborhood. When the lights went out, I felt my way through the darkness into the storage closet where we keep the candles for nights like this. Through the glow of a lit match I looked up on the shelf where the candles were stored. There they were, already positioned in their stands, melted to various degrees by previous missions. I took my match and lit four of them.

How they illuminated the storage room! What had been a veil of blackness suddenly radiated with soft, golden light! I could see the freezer I had just bumped with my knee. And I could see my tools that needed to be straightened.

“How great it is to have light!” I said out loud, and then spoke to the candles. “If you do such a good job here in the storage closet, just wait till I get you out where you’re really needed! I’ll put one of you on the table so we can eat. I’ll put one of you on my desk so I can read. I’ll give one of you to Denalyn so she can cross-stitch. And I’ll set you,” I took down the largest one, “in the living room where you can light up the whole area.” (I felt a bit foolish talking to candles—but what do you do when the lights go out?)

I was turning to leave with the large candle in my hand when I heard a voice, “Now, hold it right there.”

I stopped. Somebody’s in here! I thought. Then I relaxed. It’s just Denalyn, teasing me for talking to the candles.

“OK, honey, cut the kidding,” I said in the semidarkness. No answer. Hmm, maybe it was the wind. I took another step.

“Hold it, I said!” There was that voice again. My hands began to sweat.

“Who said that?”

“I did.” The voice was near my hand.

“Who are you? What are you?”

“I’m a candle.” I looked at the candle I was holding. It was burning a strong golden flame. It was red and sat on a heavy wooden candle holder that had a firm handle.

I looked around once more to see if the voice could be coming from another source. “There’s no one here but you, me, and the rest of us candles,” the voice informed me.

I lifted up the candle to take a closer look. You won’t believe what I saw. There was a tiny face in the wax. (I told you, you wouldn’t believe me.) Not just a wax face that someone had carved, but a moving, functioning, flesh-like face full of expression and life.

“Don’t take me out of here!”

“What?”

“I said, Don’t take me out of this room.”

“What do you mean? I have to take you out.

You’re a candle. Your job is to give light. It’s dark out there. People are stubbing their toes and walking into walls. You have to come out and light up the place!”

“But you can’t take me out. I’m not ready,” the candle explained with pleading eyes. “I need more preparation.”

I couldn’t believe my ears. “More preparation?” “Yeah, I’ve decided I need to research this job of light-giving so I won’t go out and make a bunch of mistakes. You’d be surprised how distorted the glow of an untrained candle can be. So I’m doing some studying. I just finished a book on wind resistance. I’m in the middle of a great series of tapes on wick build-up and conservation—and I’m reading a new bestseller on flame display.

“Have you heard of it?”

“No,” I answered.

“You might like it. It’s called Waxing Eloquently.”

“That really sounds inter—“ I caught myself. What am I doing? I’m here conversing with a candle while my wife and daughters are out there in the darkness!

“All right then,” I said, “You’re not the only candle on the shelf. I’ll blow you out and take the other!”

But just as I got my cheeks full of air, I heard other voices. “We aren’t going either!”

It was a conspiracy. I turned around and looked at the three other candles; each with flames dancing above a miniature face

I was beyond feeling awkward about talking to candles. I was getting miffed.

“You are candles and your job is to light dark place!” “Well that might be what you think,” said the candle on the far left—a long, thin fellow with a goatee and a British accent. “You may think we have to go, but I’m busy.”

“Busy”

“Yes, I’m meditating.”

“What? A candle that meditates?”

“Yes. I’m meditating on the importance of light....

It’s really enlightening.”

I decided to reason with the. “Listen, I appreciate what you guys are doing. I’m all for meditation time. And everyone to study and research; but for goodness’ sake, you guys have been in here for weeks! Haven’t you had enough time to get your wick on straight?”

“And you other two,” I asked, “are you going to stay I here as well?”

A short, fat, purple candle with plump cheeks that reminded me of Santa Claus spoke up. “I’m waiting to get my life together. I’m not stable enough. I lose my temper easily. I guess you could say that I’m a hothead.”

The last candle had a female voice, very pleasant to the ear. “I’d like to help,” she explained, “but lighting the darkness is not my gift.”

All this was sounding too familiar. “Not your gift? What do you mean?”

“Well, I’m a singer. I sing to other candles to encourage them to burn more brightly.” Without asking my permission, she began a rendition of “This little light of mine.” (I have to admit, she had a good voice.)

The other three joined in, filling the storage room with singing.

“Hey,” I shouted above the music, “I don’t mind if you sing while you work! In fact we could use a little music out there!”

They didn’t hear me. They were singing too loudly. I yelled louder.

“Come on, you guys. There’s plenty of time for this latter. We’ve got a crisis on our hands.”

They wouldn’t stop. I put the big candle on the shelf and took a step back and considered the absurdity of it all. Four perfectly healthy candles singing to each other about light but refusing to come out of the closet. I had all I could take. One by one I blew them out. They kept singing to the end. The last one to flicker was the female. I snuffed her out right in the “puff” pare of “Won’t let Satan puff me out.”

I stuck my hands in my pocket and walked back out in the darkness. I bumped my knew on the same freezer. Then I bumped into my wife.

“Where are the candles?” she asked

“They don’tthey won’t work. Where did you buy those candles anyway?”

“Oh, there church candles. Remember the church that closed down across town?
I bought them there.”

I understood.

So the question is are you a light of the world?