



**Sermon Notes: Steve Stanis,
“Go Make Disciples”**

07 April 2024

Readings: Matthew 28: 16-20, Isaiah 52:7-10, Romans 1:8-17



Introduction

If you want to be good at something, you have to practise. Knowing intellectually how to drive a car is helpful, but if we cannot execute the ideas, what is the point? This is true of any sport, (although most of us can be pretty vocal armchair critics), any music performers, in fact, any skill at all. Knowing the importance of practice, do we hold ourselves accountable to the hard work of practise?

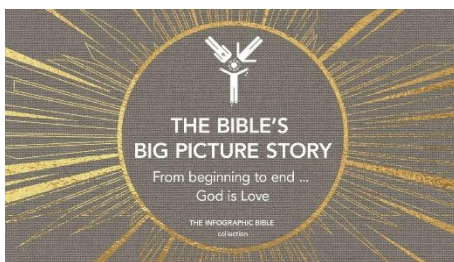
Do you think the same could be said for these verses today? We know the theology. We have been learning from the book of Matthew the last six or seven years and again this term. We spent the summer looking at evangelism. Have we held ourselves accountable to the hard work of practise? Of getting out and being like Christ, in word and deed, wherever He guides us?



We come to the end of our sermon series from Matthew. These final verses are compact, containing so much depth and insight. So simple and yet they have changed the world forever. These verses gather up the whole Gospel and pack it tight into this final meeting between Jesus and His followers.

We know them as the ‘Great Commission’. I think Matthew is intentionally making it clear that in Jesus; the promise of the very first chapter has been fulfilled. Jesus is the Emmanuel, the One in whom ‘God is with us’ (1:23). Now Jesus declares, **“I am with you always”**.

Matthew is declaring that those who believe in Jesus and His resurrection, are given the responsibility to go and make real the Kingdom in the world: the Kingdom that Jesus ushers in. And Jesus promises to sustain us in this task because He promises to be with us always. He is ‘Emmanuel’.



This has always been God’s plan: to restore all things under Christ. This mission of God shapes everything He plans, everything He does, and everything He is yet to do.

This is not something that God suddenly thought of after the earthly ministry of Jesus. When Jesus said ‘go and make disciples of all nations’ it wasn’t something new. When Israel was in Egypt, one of the functions of the plagues, and

Israel’s subsequent deliverance from Egypt, was that Pharaoh, then the most powerful man on earth by far, would know God.

Some 700 years later, at the dedication of the Temple, Solomon prayed that the Lord would hear the prayers, even of those who were not Israel. Why?

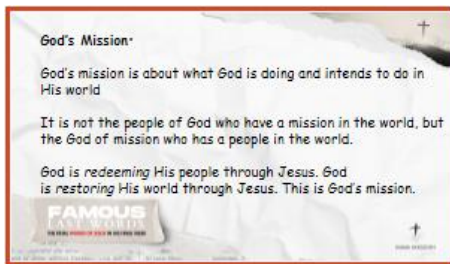
So the whole earth might know the Lord’s name and honour Him.

300 years after that, as Isaiah spoke of the Servant of the Lord, he defined God’s mission as his role.

“I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles,” (Isaiah 42:6, NIV)

A few hundred years after that, Nebuchadnezzar, the great King of Babylon, fell into delusions and insanity. The Lord God of Israel healed him, so the King announced the good news throughout his empire.

The clear reality throughout all Scripture, is that God loves His world and has a wonderful plan of restoration. He wants the whole earth to know about Jesus; His plan of redemption.



Firstly God’s Mission:

We need to be careful, and take time to understand what God’s mission is, and what it is not.

Mission is often understood as what we do.

Here at Kiama Anglican Churches we have a mission statement: “To glorify God, making Jesus known, as we love

and serve together”.

So, more often than not, when we talk of mission, we refer to what we do in order to work towards our desired future. This is fine. It’s good to be focused about what we do, and it’s good to use this statement to focus our direction.

But, we must also recognise that in the Scriptural sense, God’s mission is *not* primarily what we are about, or what we do.

God’s mission is about what *God* is doing and intends to do in His world.

It is not the people of God who have a mission in the world, but the God of mission who has a people in the world.

[Martin Robinson, Faith of the Unbeliever Conference, 2007]

God is *redeeming* His people through Jesus. God is *restoring* His world through Jesus. This is God’s mission. And in His sovereign grace and wisdom, He uses His people to pursue His mission.



Secondly: The Church’s role:

The church’s mission is everything God sends us into the world to do and to be.

There are two aspects to the Churches role in God’s mission:

First: make disciples. We recall the words of Jesus as he ascended to heaven:

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:18–20, NIV)

We could sum this up in one word: **announce**.

Announce: Spread the good news!

Announce: Let people know about God’s plan, His glorious big picture!

We are a people called by God to announce His good news!

The **second** aspect of God’s mission to the church is that we are called to **anticipate**.

Anticipate, in the sense of *foreshadow*. God calls us, gives us life in Christ, lives in us through his Spirit, empowering us to show what is coming, foreshadowing His final restoration. We anticipate the future life of the new heavens and the new earth in our here and now.

As we pray in the prayer the Lord taught his followers, our task is to do His will on earth, as it is done in heaven. This is daunting and demanding, but it is also humbling and empowering because He is with us. **“I am with you always”**.

This is the second aspect of God’s mission to his church: to *anticipate* God’s restored world. The first aspect, announcing, is about proclamation. This second aspect is about *transformation*. It is not so much about us **saying** something, but about us **being** something: Light of the world, and salt of the earth.

So, as God’s people, we live under the Lordship of Jesus.

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God — this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s wills — his good, pleasing and perfect will.” (Romans 12:1–2, NIV)

The church is the people of God.

“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.” (1 Peter 2:9, NIV)

We anticipate, we foreshadow, we show what the new heavens and the new earth will look like. We do this by living the life of new creation now.

Anticipation and foreshadowing are moving pieces of a puzzle as we love and serve together. A church is a community that is growing, seeking the best for others and not self-serving or self-interested. Rather, as we pray that the Spirit of God transforms us to be more like Christ, we should be drawn together in unity. People who are not part of our community, should see this difference in us.

Is the church full of hypocrites? Yes, we all have inconsistencies, but God draws us on in His mission, revealing our blind spots, if we have ears to hear.

So, the mission of God for the church is to *announce His good news* and to *anticipate the restoration* and rest He has prepared.



Thirdly: God’s Heart

We need to acknowledge we have not been good at pursuing God’s mission. The church in general has not been that good at it. We have not understood well God’s mission, we have not pursued it well. And it’s worth thinking about why that might be the case.

Perhaps there are many reasons:

- We are comfortable people in a peaceful country.
- We are doing OK.
- We enjoy our life and our comforts.
- We don’t want anything much to interfere with them

...even if it’s God’s call.

We can talk about life pressures,

- about being time poor,
- about resistance and unbelief in the world,
- about the individualism which infects our culture,
- so that our world revolves around what we think,
- about how our future is directed toward what we want.

In our culture, the idol of self will neutralise any zeal we might have for God's mission. But there is another reason why we have not understood or pursued God's mission well. And I think it is because we have not well understood the gracious, loving heart of God.

How do we see God's loving heart? It is captured most perfectly in the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Think about that: God loved the world so much that He sent His one and only Son.

The important question for us is; do we ever look at the behaviour of people in our world with the eyes of the Father? Do we allow ourselves to sense the brokenness, to be burdened with the hopelessness, to see the reality of the lostness of those around us who are far from God? We need to look with the eyes and heart of God.

Isn't it time we asked whether the things that are important to Jesus are important to us?

If it was so important to God to send Jesus into a lost world, and if it was so important to Jesus to find the lost, isn't it time we asked whether the things that are important to Jesus are important to us?

Whether the things that burn within the heart of Jesus, burn within ours?

Whether the things that matter to God matter to us?

As Tim Keller said:

If the preaching of our ministers and the practice of our parishioners do not have the same effect on people that Jesus had, then we must not be declaring the same message that Jesus did.

How is that for you?

God's mission for the church, His church here in Kiama and Minnamurra, is to announce His good news in Jesus and to anticipate His restoration in Jesus.

We will only step into God's mission and make it our own when we allow ourselves:

- 1) to see the brokenness of our world, and
- 2) to have God's heart of love and compassion



Come back next week to re-evaluate evangelism with Wayne and the brothers and sisters at Berkely Life Centre, to learn, listen and serve as Jesus called us, sharing our faith together and beyond!

So, let us repent of our self-centred pre-occupation with maintaining and perpetuating our own comforts.

Let us embrace, in the Spirit of Christ and through the Spirit of Christ, God's mission in our world.

By the power of God that raised Jesus from the dead, accepting Christ as Lord and trusting that His Spirit remains with us forever, let us rise to the calling that Jesus Himself is praying for us to embrace: To be one with Him and with one another in His work, so all the world may know that He has been sent by the Father (see John 17:20-21).

Let us be people who announce his good news and who anticipate his restoration and rest! We will never be alone in Christ, as He said "***I am surely with you!***"

What better life is there?