

## **SLIDE 1. ANCHORED: A Study of What We Believe and Why**

Teaching: **Article 7: Mission of the Church**

*Sunday February 4, 2023*

### **APPETIZER**

**SLIDE 2. What is the mission of the church?**

**SLIDE 3.**

**"The Church acts as a sort of embassy for the government of the King. It is an outpost of the Kingdom of God surrounded by the kingdom of darkness. Just as an embassy is meant to showcase the life of a nation to the surrounding people, so the Church is meant to manifest the life of the Kingdom of God to the people around it."** *What is the Mission of the Church?*—Kevin DeYoung

P R A Y E R

### **MAIN COURSE**

I think the mission of the Church is the call of the *Great Commission* and the *Great Commandment* combined.

**SLIDE 4.** *The Great Commission*

***Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing 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"***(Mt. 28:18-20).

**SLIDE 5.** *The Great Commandment*

***Jesus replied, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments"***(Mt. 22:37-40).

**SLIDE 6.** We might think of the mission of the church this way: that **the Great Commission is the WHAT** and the **Great Commandment is the HOW** of any **Christian church.**

Or we might think of it this way: that most churches have mission, vision, and values statements that are their attempts to describe the WHAT and HOW of WHY they exist.

The **mission statement** often being (and rightly so, I think) a contemporary and simple paraphrase of the *Great Commission*.

The **vision statement** being a specific application of the *Great Commandment* in the context of the gifts and giftedness of the church in the community and neighborhoods it lives, plays, and works.

The **values statements** then describe the aspirational and practical character and ways in which the church wants to go about its vision.

All of which - we'll talk more about this Spring!

For now – let's talk about the mission of the church.

Overall – as readers of the Bible – we can see an arc towards the *Great Commission* - the O.T. sets the stage for Christ's mission. The N.T. tells us about the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus – which leads us to the *Great Commission*. And the book of Acts and the Letters of Paul tell the story of how the early church implemented the *Great Commission*.

*"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me..."*

Jesus has just overcome the world of sin and death through his sacrificial death and resurrection.

The beginning of the *Great Commission* – then – is a kind of victory statement.

To the point - the *Great Commission* declares Christ as having full authority as King over Kingdoms – which – uniquely qualifies Him to give the mission assignment He does to the church that is His.

There is no other authority – in heaven or on earth - who could challenge Christ the King. He is the One and Only who calls and send us – the church - to announce and to embody the reality and the way of His kingdom.

*Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations...*

Who is Jesus talking to? His disciples, right?! Meaning – mission responsibility is assigned to ALL believers. Anyone who believes in and follows Jesus Christ – then - is a disciple who is expected to make disciples.

In an age of individualism and specialization – it is tempting to relegate this mission to those who have expertise or who are gifted – like evangelists or missionaries or pastors.

BUZZER SOUND!

This is not what the text says or implies. While the church acknowledges those who have expertise and giftedness – the call to mission is for everyone.

To *go and make disciples* is the end of our discipleship pathway here at SLC – which – to remind you - is – to KNOW God as Father, Son, and Spirit, to GROW in our relationship with God through bible study and prayer and community – to GIVE of our time, talents and treasure in service of God and the church, and to GO and make disciples.

### **SLIDE 7. KNOW. GROW. GIVE. GO.**

Which is to say this: that if we aren't disciples who are making disciples – then I think it might be as J.T. English says – that we have either *Great Commission* amnesia or we are being *Great Commission* disobedient."

The word GO – here – is properly understood as a verb in the ongoing present tense.

A decent paraphrase of this word – then - might be – "as you are *go-ing*" OR "while you *go* about your days." It is not, for instance, necessarily, an imperative to *go* somewhere else – though - I suppose – some might read it that way and feel called to be a "missionary" somewhere in the world – and we wouldn't begrudge them :)

To this point – it is a worldwide mission. All people everywhere are invited into the kingdom of God – no matter if they are Jew or Gentile (as in the day of Jesus), male or female, rich or poor, gay or straight, conservative or liberal, Canucks or Leafs fan.

*Make disciples* implies that you are one, of course. It is again to state the obvious – that we cannot lead people where we have not gone. The task is to make disciples who will disciple others. This is the goal and the measure of our success.

The *Great Commission* text gives us a clear sense of how to make disciples.

*...baptizing 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.*

That we would baptize people upon their confession of faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord – as the One and Only who forgives our sin – and to whom we commit our allegiance.

This is a visible sign which identifies people as believers among other believers.

Then it is our duty to teach each other all that Jesus commanded – to challenge and encourage one another as we commit to live a kingdom life.

*And surely, I am with you always to the very end of the age."*

Finally, the *Great Commission* promises Christ's partnership in this worldwide mission – until the very end (whenever that might be).

The assignment began with his authority to give it – and it ends with his presence among us to live it.

His presence in a world He created and sustains. His presence in a world where – through the Holy Spirit – He awakens and convicts people of their brokenness and sin and then – therefore - their need for healing and forgiveness – their need of Him. His presence in a world where He is looking for people whose hearts are seeking Him. His presence in a world where He has deposited His Spirit in those who believe in Him.

We are not alone on this mission!

Now – how do we “go about our days” as kingdom people?

By loving God and loving others as we would ourselves.

How do we love God?

Well – the Bible says - by keeping his commandments.

**SLIDE 8.** Jesus says this to his disciples at their last meal together: ***“If you love me, you will obey my commandments”*** (Jn. 14:15).

**SLIDE 9.** Then he repeats himself a little while later for emphasis: ***“Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them”*** (Jn, 14:21).

Neither of which should be taken to mean that God’s love for us is conditional upon our love for Him.

Instead – keeping his commands is a sign and a test of our love for Him – which opens us to His love for us. We can only receive God’s love when our hearts are turned towards Him.

Analogously – I can’t walk through an open door if I’m not turned towards it.

John later reinforces this connection between love and obedience when he says -

**SLIDE 10. *This is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome*** (1 Jn. 5:3).

This make sense, doesn’t it? We express our love for someone else when we trust them. There’s more to it than this, of course, but I think this might be where it starts.

“Do you trust me?” asks our Lord? Then – “Come follow me,” he says.

And why wouldn’t we?

Jesus is the bread of life, the light of the world, the door to eternal life, the good shepherd, the resurrection and the life, the way and the truth and the life, and the one who strengthens us as we abide in him.

Following him is to follow the One who loves us.

And so - being loved – and being secure in that love – because it is without condition - we can love others.

The mission of the church is to be a witness of the kingdom of God to a watching world. This begins and ends with love.

It begins and ends with loving our neighbors by being kind and generous and offering practical help – in our immediate communities of Ferndale and Brookwood – in our own literal neighborhoods – and wherever we run into people.

In this neighborhood - it is opening the spaces of this church for our neighbors to use. The playground out front. The parking lot out back. Ball hockey players. Pickleballers. And soccer players. Indoors. Girl Guides. Ukraine School. Pony Club.

It is to host a preschool and daycare to meet the needs of our community. It is to host day camps at March Break when many families need fun and safe childcare. It is to host before and after school care.

It is to offer multiple points of connection – whether it be through Youth or Young Adult ministry – or Men’s or Women’s or Senior’s Ministry – to our neighbors – many of whom feel disconnected, isolated, alone, and lonely – longing for meaningful relationships.

It is to be a good neighbor by keeping our property clean and well maintained – to not be an eyesore – to not hurt the property values of our neighbors on the Cres.

In our own neighborhoods - it is knowing our neighbor’s names. It’s knowing their children’s names – their pets’ names. It’s inviting them into our homes. It’s listening. It’s praying for and with our neighbors. It’s sharing our testimonies of faith.

It is to bring them meals when they are sick. It’s to bake them muffins - just because. It’s to drop off a card or flowers. It’s to shovel their driveways or mow their lawn or tend to their garden or pick up their garbage pails when they can’t.

It is to have their house key because they trust you. It’s for them to have your house key because you trust them. It’s knowing the right gift card to get them and get them that gift card – just because. It’s letting them play basketball on your hoop (even though their ball hits your car once-in-a-while). It’s giving them something they need that you aren’t using anymore instead of listing it on Facebook.

And then wherever you are – there is your neighbor. This, of course, is what we learn from the Parable of the Good Samaritan: that wherever we are – we can be kind and generous and offer practical help to whomever – no matter if they are Jew or Gentile (as in the day of Jesus), male or female, rich or poor, gay or straight, conservative or liberal, Chiefs or 49ers fan.

The Great Commission begins and ends with love.

Let's practice it here!

May we be a people who commit to loving God by keeping His commandments. May we be a people who gather every Sunday to worship God together. May we be a people whose lives are different because we make choices in our lives based on our relationship with God.

And may we be a people who one another one another.

There's a pile of "one another" admonitions in the N.T.

**SLIDE 11.** I won't dare list them all – I'll just give you a sampler.

**Carry each other's burdens** (Gal. 6:2).

**Build each other up** (1 Thess. 5:11).

**Be at peace with one another** (Mk. 9:50).

When we practice these kinds of things more often than not – when we become a people characterized by one anothering one another – we become a powerful witness of the kingdom of God to a watching world.

As the church functions in unity and love – it reflects the image of God.

Jesus prayed: *May they (believers, v. 20) be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me* (Jn. 12:23).

Jesus made it clear that love and unity among believers acts as some kind of pointer to Him and to the Father's love for all humanity.

Conversely, when we don't act in love and unity – when we are better known for leaving the church or our quarrels over theology – we don't reflect the image of God.

So, let's love our neighbors – and may it begin here.

Let's help each other when it gets overwhelming. Let's check in with one another. Offer help. Or – just help!

Let's build each other up by *showing up* and *speaking up* – by being present to support one another and to say good and true things to one another.

Let's agree that none of us always gets it right. Let's give each other the benefit-of-the-doubt. Let's assume that we have the plank in our eye, not the other guy.

A disruptive or disunited church has little to offer a watching world. A church characterized by love and unity – on the other hand – has a mysterious evangelistic power to it - just as Jesus prayed.

The mission of the church is to announce and embody the victorious work of Jesus Christ – beginning and ending with love.

## **TAKE OUT**

**SLIDE 12.** You are the light of the world! Let your light shine, so that all people might see it and praise your Father in heaven.

**SLIDE 13. God, we love You and live for You. Help us to love our neighbors as ourselves, sharing the good news with boldness, showing the good news with deeds of limitless love. We are not ashamed of this good news: it is your power for salvation, to everyone who believes.**

**SLIDE 14.** All authority in heaven and earth is given to our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, go and summon all nations to follow Him, baptizing them and teaching them to observe all that He commanded.

**SLIDE 15. Let the nations praise You, O God, let all the nations praise You!**

**SLIDE 16.** Spirit of God, fill us with power to be your witness.

**SLIDE 17. We offer ourselves to the Lord of the Harvest. As ambassadors for Christ, purify us and use us to proclaim His salvation. We commit ourselves to spread the good news of peace with God to those who are near and to those who are far off.**

**SLIDE 18. Strengthen us to work with joy as we look forward to the Day of Harvest, when the redeemed will gather in God's presence to celebrate forever the boundless riches of Jesus Christ our Lord.**