

Part 3: A Sending Church

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September 23rd, 2018

I just had KJ read for us the whole chapter of Matthew 28 to set the stage for our message today because I want us to understand the whole context in which we are to understand the passage we will look at today which is often called the great commission.

Artists are often commissioned by private parties to create works of art for a specific reasons. Builders are commissioned to construct buildings to the specifications of their clients. The idea of a commission is greater than a task because it implies two things: authority and an end goal. Today we are looking at Jesus' commission to his church, his charge to his followers.

This commission, this sending out of Jesus' disciples, is the great commission for a couple of reasons. The first is that this commission is very distinct in the life of the disciples, and we will talk about that more in a minute. All of these disciples had been called to Jesus during his ministry, they all saw Jesus as the Christ, and Jesus at various points in his ministry commissioned his disciples. He sent them to be aids in his ministry, to care for people, and to preach the gospel to people.

But this commission in Matthew 28 is the great commission because the disciples are now going out with the fullest picture of the gospel. They have seen so clearly the way in which Jesus is the Messiah: he died for their sins, and now he has risen again. This commission is very unique because they have a greater level of understanding of Jesus. They see the fullness of the gospel.

Secondly, it is the great commission in a comparative sense. There are actually two commissions given in this text. One by Jesus to his disciples, and one by the temple rulers to the guards. And only one of those commissions is great in the fullest sense of the word.

Notice the similarities and the differences between these two commissions in the book of Matthew: **Matthew 28:11-20.**

I'm guessing you began to see the subtle distinctions in this text, but what I hope you saw more in this text is someone who identifies with yourself. You see there are a number of experiences in this story: there are guards who are led by comfort, there are men openly opposed the Christ, there are disciples who are devoted and there are believers who still had some doubts.

In this building we have those who are deceived, those who doubt, and those who are devoted. Our goal this morning is to clearly communicate the commission of Jesus to his church and the wonderful reality which lies behind it. The truth is for each and every one of us we all face the call and commission of something. We are carried into our relationships and careers by the power of something. But behind the thousands of purposes upon which we craft our life, only one of them contains truth. Only one of them lasts for all eternity, and that is the commission which Jesus has called his church to give her life to.

We must learn to identify the primary motivations in our life so that we can look at our own life with the clarity that we see in this text. The guards were commissioned out into the world with a lie, and were promised that the lie would bring them protection from the authorities and financial stability.

The disciples were commissioned by Jesus with the truth, and Jesus promised that he was the authority. There is no greater authority except the authority God gave his son. And if you're at all familiar with the history and the present life of the global church, you will know that it does not come with the promise of earthy comfort. But Jesus promises that in the midst of what would be a hard work, he will be with his church every step of the way.

The church is therefore fundamentally people sent out with the authority of Christ as their Kingdom commitment and not the comforts of the kingdom of earth. One group left with money which would cover their temporary needs, the apostles left with the presence of God which covered their eternal needs.

So as we consider who we are as the church, we see in this text that the primary motivation of the life of believers is the authority of Jesus which compels us and commissions us, and the presence of Jesus which comforts us and captivates us.

At Sovereign Hope we are committed to this truth. The gospel of Jesus Christ is the good news that Jesus did everything required to save sinners and restore us to God. This truth is the truth because it is the very word of God. This truth is truth which is of greatest significance to our world because it makes sense of desire for joy and explains the problems of pain. This truth is the truth which is of greatest importance to us, because it transforms and reorients our lives around the purposes of God himself.

We have been going through the goals of our 50/50 Legacy. These are the pillars which we want to build our church around to support our church for the next 50 years. These pillars are a healthy church (growing in our understanding and application of the gospel), a Missoula church (seeking the good of our community for the sake of the gospel), and a sending church (which is supporting the local and global proclamation of the gospel).

But the truth is, these are not isolated silos. They are concentric circles which build off of one another. Jesus sent his disciples out as his followers at various times, but Jesus knew that the greatest sending out they would experience would only come as the gospel became explicitly clear to them in his resurrection. The more we understand the gospel as a healthy church, the greater our commission as Jesus' disciples become. Why? Because we are growingly compelled by the beauty of the gospel.

Let me give you an example. I have a friend who started roasting coffee as a hobby. Soon, as he began to be more devoted to it, his friends began asking him to roast coffee for them. As he began to roast more coffee, he grew a greater level of understanding and expertise and now not only did his friends want what he had, but he wanted other people to taste his coffee as well. Soon, within a few years he started his own roastery. He didn't start out one day wanting to have a business of roasting coffee, instead the business came as a natural result of his fascination with coffee. Other people wanted it, and he wanted other people to see it.

The same is true with how we view being a healthy church. The more committed we are to growing in the gospel in terms of our relationships, life circumstances and trials, the more we experience the beauty of the gospel. The more we experience the beauty of the gospel, the more people in our city

notice it. And the more we begin to enjoy it and the more people begin to notice it, the more we want other people to see it.

As we talk about being a sending church today, we are ultimately talking about the natural response of people who have learned to see and savor the beauty of the gospel. It is to allow the natural winds of salvation to fill the sails of our life and carry us to places we would never expect. What I want to do today is define for us the flight path of Jesus' church by looking at the legacy we ought to participate in, and then providing three ways we want to participate in that as a church.

We are talking about and planning our ministry around this 50/50 Legacy because we want to leave a legacy as a church. But what should that legacy be? Is that legacy a building? Is that legacy a community which cares for one another? Is that legacy our impact in our city?

In Psalm chapter 6, King David is pleading for the Lord to deliver him from his enemies. But what's interesting is to note the grounds on which he asks God to deliver him. Look with me at **Psalm 6:4-5**. How many of you have prayed for security or safety before? Have you ever asked yourself why? Why would God want to spare us?

Our answers to these questions often reveal the commission around which we construct our lives. Most of our answers rotate around the fear of loss, the feeling of missing out, or even the anxiety that no one will care for your family. While all those are real, did you notice David's reasoning: **Psalm 6:4-5**?

Why does he want to be delivered: because for the sake of God's steadfast love he wishes to praise God more in this life. For David the primary motivating factor in his life, and his goals so long as he is living is to make much of Christ while he is still alive. Would God be glorified and good even if David wasn't delivered? Absolutely.

But David wants to glorify God distinctly by offering praises with his life. He asks to be delivered because there is still so much praise to be offered in this world. What is the legacy believers ought to give their lives to? **The greatest legacy a Christian can leave is a legacy of worship.**

Why do we want God to preserve this church for another 50 years? Because we want to participate in the public worship of God through the life of this church. We want to endure for more years because we want to advance the gospel through salvation and holiness. We feel we have work left to do for the kingdom of God, and we want to make serious attempts to make an impact for the glory of God. Our goal isn't to be a comfortable church, or a debt free church. Our goal is to be a church which contributes joyfully to a legacy of worship in Missoula.

There is a quote you've probably seen a lot around town. It's actually a quote adapted from a book written the conservationist and poet Wendell Berry. It goes something like this: "We do not inherit the earth from our fathers, we borrow it from our children."

The point of this in the realm of conservation is that we ought to make great strides to protect our open lands and steward them well so that we may return them to our children in a better condition than when we received them.

In being a sending church we want to have this same thought with our witness and our worship. We want to labor for the generation that comes after us so that they might also live to praise the Lord. Jesus

sent out his disciples into the nations so that worship might grow among those who do not yet worship, and our goal at Sovereign Hope is the same.

Why is this an important goal? Because just like we saw in Matthew we cannot escape a commission. We are either deceived into following the powers of this world hoping it can solve our problem, or by the grace of Jesus we are commissioned to serve him because he has solved our greatest problem.

Jesus has sent his believers out into the world to make disciples, we want to be a church who is committed to sending out people who see the significance of that commission. The legacy we want to leave as a church is one which does as much as possible to help promote the mission of Jesus.

We want to accomplish much for the Kingdom of God, not because we are mighty but because God is magnificent and deserves to be seen as such.

So how do we as a church seek to build a legacy of supporting God's goal to be glorified in the salvation of more and more people? Well, all of this starts with being a healthy church. As we care for each other, as we lead our families we are laboring to this end. We must not forget that.

But specifically, as a church we want to be committed to sending out three types of people. We want to send out Kingdom-first believers, we want to send out gospel-centered churches, and we want to send out cross-cultural missionaries.

So in the time we have left together, let's begin by looking our first goal as a sending church: **We send out Kingdom-first believers.**

What do I mean when I say Kingdom-first believers? We want to send our everyday, ordinary, Bible-believing Christians who see the importance their life has in the Kingdom of God.

KJ told me a story the other day about a counseling appointment he sat in on. This man came and sat down with the pastor and the first thing the pastor asked him was, "What do you hope to accomplish for the Kingdom of God?"

If you want to see how blank a blank stare can get, go home today and ask your roommate or your spouse that same question. When it comes to assessing which commission we are following, our answers, or lack of answers here are a grace from God to correct our view of our whole life.

Let's just look at two passages we have seen in Matthew thus far in our series: **Matthew 6:33, Matthew 16:24-25**. Biblically speaking we have no higher allegiance of thought than Kingdom-minded thought. As a church, and these are really the sustainable keys to being a healthy and a Missoula church, we want to churn out believers who think Kingdom first thoughts.

One of the bitter-sweet joys we partake of in our congregational meetings is sending our members who are moving away from Missoula. We want the members who leave our church to be a blessing to the churches they join in wherever the Lord is leading them.

In the past we have been blessed by receiving men and women from other churches who immediately add value to our church through their passion for the gospel and the way in which that shapes their life. We want churches to be blessed by those whom God calls away from Missoula.

One of the ways we do this is by trying to fulfill Paul's commission in **Ephesians 4:11-12**. One of the goals of a healthy church is to equip the saints, the ordinary believer, for ministry. We are all called to gospel ministry. We want to equip you to be fruitful in whatever capacity that is.

In a couple weeks our Jr. High and High School Bible Study is going to start, and the primary goal of our efforts with youth is to prepare them to leave Missoula. We want them to leave their families already being familiar with discipleship and having a passion to invest in the Kingdom of God at their future church.

The truth is the majority of you in here will never take a paycheck from a church, and never cross an ocean to reach an unreached people. But all of you are called to minister in the workplace, in the family and in the social circle that God has given you.

Is the way in which you spend your free time contributing to God's kingdom? If it's not how can it be? How can you invite non-believers to participate in it? How can you invite believers in and help them follow Christ better through it? What priorities do your spending patterns show? What does your family schedule model as of greatest importance? These are all ways in which we can begin to maximize the worship of God by thinking in terms of his Kingdom. We want Kingdom-first believers to be a legacy of this church.

Secondly, a goal of being a sending church: **We support gospel-centered churches.**

As Kingdom-minded believers share the gospel with their families and in their communities, we trust the gospel will bear fruit. And as more people come to know Jesus through the efforts of our church, we want to have more churches dedicated to taking growing those people and furthering the proclamation of the gospel in new communities.

I remember a phase in my life where I thought churches to be the opposite of evangelistic efforts. There were people who wanted to see the mission of God grow and they shared the gospel, and there were people who didn't want to do that and they went to church.

There cannot be anything more opposite than what the Bible says about the church. Yes, the church cares for and grows those who are already Christian, but local churches were also the essential means of missions in the New Testament.

While Paul is leading the missionary movement in Europe, he reminds Timothy of the role churches play in this: **Titus 1:5**. Paul left Titus in Crete so that he would set up elders to lead local churches. The mission of God goes forward as people are saved and gather together as his church.

How essential are church plants in reaching non-believers? Well biblically speaking, Paul rebukes the church in Corinth for the ways in which it is neglecting non-believers in its midst. Statistically, studies show that new church plants reach 3-6 times more non-believers than established churches of the same size.

Therefore we want to support gospel centered churches in two real ways. The first is that we want to strengthen churches by providing resources. In Romans 12, Paul encourages us to contribute to the needs of the saints, and we want to do that by helping out other churches wherever we can.

This is why we have, and in the future want to be more tactical with putting out blogs, sermons, and videos which other churches can use to bless their church. Jonny and our musicians write songs because they want to bless our church, but also because they want to contribute to other churches through providing gospel-centered music as well.

We want to support churches by strengthening them in whatever areas God has gifted us. But we also want to support gospel-centered churches by planting churches.

In 1 Corinthians Paul reminds believers that as part of the church each individual is part of a body, and different parts of the body are needed to make the body whole. The same is true with the larger body of Christ. We need more gospel-centered churches in Missoula so that the body of Christ can be healthier in this area.

I was talking to another pastor the other day, and he said that there was a church here in Missoula that had three final candidates they were considering for their senior pastor opening. However after two of them visited Missoula they withdrew their names because Missoula was too weird of a town for them.

It is a wonderfully weird town, and we want to raise up men who want to engage it with the message of Jesus Christ. And to plant churches here we know we must raise up leaders here. We want to equip men and women with theological training and ministry experience so that we can plant churches which preach the gospel and care for people with a historically faithful gospel in our ever changing town.

This is part of the reason we offer internships through GCF, we want to provide believers the opportunity to cut their teeth in ministry and receiving training in the hopes that we might be able to produce more preaching pastors, women's teachers, biblical counselors and ministry leaders to fill many more churches in Missoula.

If you look on the back of you bulletin you will notice a building fund. We know that to get into a permanent home we are looking at needing a down payment of anywhere between 500K-1M dollars. But what we are really excited about when we think about our future building, is to think of it as a basecamp for church planting.

We want this building to be our last and final building because we don't want to outgrow it. We want to create a pattern of seeing lost people being saved, and coming to our church, and then getting big enough to where we need to plant a new church. We aren't interested in opening new services, we want to plant new churches.

Lastly, as part of being a sending church, **We send out cross-cultural missionaries.** Meaning we want to participate in God's goals not only in Missoula, but to increase his worship across the globe. This was part of the great commission itself, but prior to that had always been a goal of God: **Psalm 67:4-5**

Right now we support a number of missionaries across the globe. But long term we want to send out long term missionaries from our body. We want to pursue healthy families because we want our children to grow up with a desire to go to places where the gospel is not.

While not all of us are going to be sent, we want those who are not sent to be ready to support financially the work that God is doing through our church across the globe.

The commission Jesus gave his disciples was to go out to all the nations, and we are not exempt from supporting that call. We are a product of missions, so we want to contribute to missions as well.

I'm going to spend far less time talking about missions right now because on October 7th we have a missionary from the Middle East joining us to continue to cast a vision for mission. If you've noticed we have actually had three missionaries speak in our church since last April, and we do these things because we want to plant seeds in our body in hopes that they will grow and carry some of us off to other countries.

We want to send out our members, we want to send out church planters, and we want to send out missionaries. I imagine that no one in here sees these things and thinks that they are bad or disagreeable. We love these ideas. But to embrace the ideas is to embrace the cost of these ideas.

If we want to be a sending church as Jesus has called us to be our prayers are going to become increasingly dangerous. Dangerous because a commitment to this lifestyle will provoke any of the lies that we may subconsciously build our lives around. Dangerous because in praying for us to be better kingdom witnesses, God is going to bring us opportunities to minister in our specific contexts.

Dangerous because in praying to plant churches, God might be calling you and your family to leave this church and your community here to sacrificially give your lives to the start of a new church.

Dangerous because in praying for cross-cultural missions God might call you to serve the gospel by laboring in a country far removed from our own.

Jesus was the one who was perfectly sent to us. He embodied the Kingdom so that we might see the goodness of our King. He planted the church because he himself was the seed which died so that it might bear fruit. He overcame the obstacles of sin and death so that the church might work fearlessly. And he ascended not because he wanted to remove himself from his work, but because he wanted to empower his church in all places to carry his name to the nations.

We won't leave a legacy of worship merely by trying harder. We will only leave a legacy of worship by seeing that the good Jesus brought us in our salvation is proof that the gospel-work inside of salvation is of greater comfort than the lies we tend to build our lives around.

We have gained heaven itself through the work of Jesus, and he has commissioned us to join in his joy by offering that to others by building our lives around that mission.