

## Missions Month 2021: Cross-Culture, Across Town, The Gospel for All Cultures, 2/7/21

**(Title Slide)** Don't we love to share good news? Especially in a time like this when there seems to be lots of bad news. I remember when Shannan and I got engaged, before social media- but I think we called every person we knew, and even those we didn't know. Well, the gospel of Jesus Christ is the greatest news that has come to our weary, broken world. Shackled by our self-centeredness, sin and rebellion against our perfect and glorious creator, condemned to an eternity apart from Him in Hell, God sent Jesus to die in our place and free us for eternity with Him in the most glorious future we can imagine! Not only this, but this gospel is available for all people! Whether you live in America or in Siberia, no matter what religious heritage you have, no matter your color, your gender, whether you have a criminal past or are Charity church mouse... The gospel is good news for all people about what Jesus Christ has done to save sinners. The most important decision any human can make is to become a follower of Christ. And guess what, we get the privilege of sharing the greatest news in the world with others! Regular, flawed people. I am reminded of the Apostle Paul's amazement at this privilege in **2 Corinthians 4:7** *But we have this treasure [the Gospel] in jars of clay [Believers] to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.*

I just want to start there, **(Title Slide)** because too often we think of the Great Commission as a duty or burden that hangs over you as a Christian. But I want to remind us that it's not "we have to", it's "we get to." And the most purpose-filled, exhilarating and joyous experience you will have is leading someone to Christ and helping them follow him. I highly recommend it!

So with that be said, we're going to meditate on the great commission this morning for a few minutes. There is so much packed into the 3 verses in Matthew 28:18-20 that we could preach on it every week this year, but since this is missions month, today I want us to see **three truths about missions.**

### Matthew 28:18-20

*<sup>18</sup> Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup> 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,*

*<sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

### **Missions Truth #1 The church is sent not only sending**

I am so encouraged to be part of a church that is a sending church. We have over 2 dozen missionaries that we support representing over 30 countries around the world. Just this past year we began financially partnering with 3 new missionaries. Over 200k per year is budgeted toward missions and somewhere in the neighborhood of another 300k is given through special giving missions projects and supporting short-term missions trips that we send out each year. Praise God! We are called to be part of the great commission through sending missionaries both globally and locally.

But the church is not only sending, the Great Commission reminds us that we are all sent. The disciples were not the only ones on that mountain receiving the Great Commission...You know who else was on that mountain receiving this commission? Us- Names...**Verse 20- I am with you always even to the end of the age.** Who are the disciples reaching all nations at the end of the age? Certainly not the disciples! Most of them were martyred within a few decades and they didn't get to all nations. He's talking to all Christians between Christ's first coming and his second coming. We are the disciples who are sent.

**[Blank Slide]** I remember as a kid growing up in church and we would have missionaries come and speak to our class...Nancy and Betty Jo- they were the sweetest and strangest ladies I had ever met. They spoke Swahili, dressed weird, talked about living in huts, eating bugs and other foods that a 10 year old would say "ewww" about. And that was my image of missions. For some of us that image has stuck with us. We only think of supporting and sending money to those strange people with a very unique calling over...first of all, it's time for a refresh on who you think is a missionary- many missionaries today are bi-vocational- doctors, lawyers, translators, entrepreneurs, engineers, tech experts and teachers. But whether you go to another country or not, you are also sent on mission. Charles Spurgeon once said, "Every Christian is either a missionary or an imposter."<sup>1</sup> We are sent to our families, our workplace, our neighborhoods, our grocery stores, our cities. Like my friend Leo likes to say, "I'm a real estate broker, but that's just my cover. I'm actually an ambassador of Christ."

### **Missions Truth #2 We are called to make disciples of all peoples not only people.**

Now in English, we don't usually use the word peoples, it would be like saying sheeps or mooses<sup>2</sup>...Often we think about evangelism or making disciples as reaching as many individual people as well can...and in a sense we ought to do that. But look what the Great Commission says. **<sup>19</sup> Therefore go and make disciples of all nations.** It's not only about reaching as many individual people as we can. Greek is **pas ethnos**...translated all nations, but it's beyond nations- all peoples, ethnic groups. Do you know that in India alone there are over 2000 ethnic groups with 1600 languages? God's vision for missions is to redeem individuals from every people group. You say, well how do you know that's what Jesus had in mind? Because in Revelation we see that the Great Commission becomes the Great Accomplishment.

### **Revelation 7:9-10**

***After this I looked, and there was a vast multitude from every nation, tribe, people, and language, which no one could number, standing before the throne and before the Lamb.***

***They were robed in white with palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!"***

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<sup>1</sup> Charles H. Spurgeon, "A Sermon and a Reminiscence,"

<sup>2</sup> Heard John Piper say that once and laughed.

God's mission has always been about the redemption of representatives from all peoples. All throughout the Old Testament we see the mission of God to redeem people groups. Israel was called to live in such a way that the nations would come to Jerusalem. God's blessing of Israel, was designed to be like a city on the hill, that the surrounding people groups would see the blessing and therefore encounter the blesser. But in the Great Commission, Jesus says there is a new strategy, he actually reversed the mission. Instead of all peoples coming to us, we are sent to all peoples.

And so while we ought to reach people, the global church must also be strategic and mindful about reaching all people groups with the gospel, especially those least reached. According to the Joshua Project, there are an estimated 7400 unreached people groups (UPGs)- less than 2% of the population are Christians. Of those, about 3000 are UUPGs (Unengaged Unreached People Groups). No churches, no believers, no missionaries. 95% of them live in the 10/40 window [Picture of Map]. About 3% of all missionary work is going to reach these people groups. Therefore, as the global church, and our Church and as individual Christians we must look to move the needle in this direction.

### **Missions Truth #3 The Mission field is Here Not Only over there.**

*Therefore go...probably better translated, while going...make disciples.* We don't wait until we get on a plane to Yemen, that plane probably isn't coming. While we go...In the commission in Acts 1:8 Jesus says *you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.* But increasingly, the mission field is in our Jerusalem. Cross-cultural missions opportunities are here in America, in our cities and in our town. In 2017, 50 million immigrants were living in the United States—20 percent of the world's migrant population.<sup>3</sup> There are estimated to be 584 unengaged, unreached people groups in North America right now living in neighborhoods and our cities.<sup>4</sup> One in 11 Delaware residents is an immigrant. In the 95 corridor between Philly and Wilmington ¼ of the population are immigrants or US born with immigrant parents<sup>5</sup>. At UD- students from 106 countries, from places like Mauritius, Burkina Faso, Palestinian Territories, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal and Yemen.<sup>6</sup>

In our ESL ministry last year we had 106 international students enrolled representing 30 countries, the majority of whom have had little to no prior exposure to the gospel or Christianity. True of our preschool. These peoples represent a wide spectrum of socio-economics, religious backgrounds and education.

[Blank Slide] And unlike the immigrants of decades ago, most internationals today are "transnational"- far more connected to their families of origin, homelands and people groups through the ease of technology, social media, transportation and mobility of the workplace.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>3</sup> United Nations, 'International Migration Report', 2019

<sup>4</sup> Ed Stetzer, Desiring God 2011 National Conference.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/fact-sheets/2019/04/the-state-of-immigrants-in-philadelphia-2019>

<sup>6</sup> [www.1udel.edu/oiss/resources/statistics.html](http://www.1udel.edu/oiss/resources/statistics.html)

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.lausanne.org/content/lga/2020-11/the-worlds-least-reached-are-on-our-streets>

And here's what that means, reaching one person with the Gospel of Jesus Christ from a country like Yemen (considered UPGs), opens up a gateway of opportunity to reach dozens and even hundreds of others for Christ.

Meet Gurung, who was a student I met at George Mason University in DC while teaching at our campus ministry. Gurung is from Mustang, Nepal. This region is remote and unreached, an inhospitable high-altitude desert located on the border of Nepal and China. Somehow, an individual from an isolated Tibetan Buddhist village made their way to the US for school, possibly the first from his village. While studying mathematics, Gurung was befriended by Josh and Eric, two Christian students in his dorm and part of the campus ministry. They made Gurung, who felt terribly lonely and isolated feel like family. They helped him ease into American culture by teaching him things like how use the Metro Trains and order a fancy coffee at Starbucks. In turn, Gurung taught them all about his culture, his family, his religion and also helped tutor them in several subjects...at the end of the year they invited him a campus ministry board game tournament and he met lots of other nice people who also invited him to a Bible study. Gurung started studying the Bible and asking lots of questions. He was so fascinated with Jesus, who seemed like the greatest guru He ever read about and talked about God is such a personal way. Gurung became a Christian and they had the privilege of baptizing Him. Now Gurung is back in Mustang, Nepal. He's the equivalent of principle in a school he started, and he quietly leads seeker Bible studies for some of his students. His parents have heard the gospel and his mother told him privately that she is now a Christian and is praying about how to tell her husband.<sup>8</sup>

### **Summary:**

**Sent not only Sending**

**All Peoples not only People**

**Here not only over there**

### **How can we be more effective reaching internationals for Christ?**

-Catch the vision of the great commission accomplished.

-Believe in the power of the gospel for all peoples.

-Pray for and seek out opportunities- eat at authentically ethnic restaurants, playground, visit a house of worship.

-About People not Projects, Serving and Being Served

-Practice hospitality: House exchange students, invite for dinner, listen and learn,

-Invite them to church

-Serve in international ministry: Campus Ministry, ESL, GMO.

-Be equipped to share the gospel in a culturally mindful way. (Next two weeks)

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<sup>8</sup> The details and names in this story have been changed for protection.