

The Mission – Life After Easter: Our Mission Begins

April 3, 2016 - Pastor Randy Eliason

Life after Easter: Our Mission Begins! *In America, Easter tends to be a Sunday that draws great crowds to churches only to have them go back to life as usual the next day. After Jesus' resurrection, a scattered people became a gathered people united together and infused with all consuming mission.*

Matthew 28:18-20

Jesus came and told his disciples, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

This passage has come to be called the Great Commission. To Commission is to "send on a mission". Our mission, simply put, is to make disciples. Our church mission statement- Learn, Live and Share the Good News (Gospel) of Jesus - helps to highlight the three essential components of discipleship found in the great commission.

But before we get there I want to say something about Jesus introductory words: *"I have been given all authority...therefore go"*

A couple of years ago I read a book by Will Mancini that has influenced a change of terminology on my part. Will suggested that we not speak of this as the great *commission* but as the great *mandate*. What's the difference? The word *mandate* gives greater emphasis to the motivation behind the mission. We go, first and foremost, out of allegiance and obedience to Jesus – our King and Lord! We are mandated to go...

"...and make disciples". A disciple is a learner or follower. Not a learner in the narrow sense of having comprehended a set of truths or principles. Becoming a disciple encompasses more than gaining knowledge. It involves an application of information that results in life transformation. This is explained by what follows: *"...Baptizing them..."* (Share the Good News) *"...Teaching them..."* (Learn the Good News) *"...to obey..."* (Live the Good News)

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You might ask, "Why isn't it share, learn and live? Well because we already bought 150 t-shirts with Learn, Live and Share. No, not really! Jesus is giving this mandate to his disciples who are already learning and living and are ready to now share. For new disciples learning comes first. It is important to view these three components as building blocks and not steps. You add living and sharing to learning. You don't move on from learning to living to sharing. We Learn to both live and share.

1. What is the good news?

Since I came I have been declaring it to you. Let me summarize. The good news is that the OT hope is now fulfilled through Jesus Christ, the promised messiah.

A. Assurance of belonging to God. *"I'm forgiven and I belong to Him"*. (see Hebrews 8:10;12)

B. Experience of the presence and power of God. *"His presence is with me"* The promise of the Spirit coming to dwell in us (see Ezekiel 36 & 37) and empower us (Joel 2:28) is now fulfilled.

C. Experience of spiritual transformation. *"I am becoming a new person."* Many know Eph. 2:8,9. Few know vs. 10. We are His workmanship, created for good works!

D. Expectation of Eternal life. *"I get to live forever"*...in the new creation with God & without Satan, sin, suffering, sickness, and death. (See Revelation 21:1-4)

One more point needs to be made: Each of these three wonderful pieces of good news is meant to be experienced within the context of a community which we call the church. Jesus came to build His church, meaning a called out people.

A. You belong to God, forgiven of your sins. You ALSO now belong to His family!

B. You now experience the presence of God personally, but also corporately. The gathered people of God are now His temple.

C. Eternal life is not you on your own cloud with a harp! It is God dwelling among His people in new creation.

That is the good news! We need to learn it, live our lives in light of this reality, and, share it so that it can be good news for them as well as for us!

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Today we begin by our need to learn the good news. In order to make this happen we will devote ourselves to the teaching of the Bible and encourage you to be students of the bible. One of our core values is to be biblically faithful. That means that we will be true to what the scripture reveals about God and His will for our lives. We don't worship the Bible, but...

The study of the bible is critical for us because it is our only true reliable source of information about Jesus. God has chosen in His infinite wisdom to inspire the writings of scripture and insure their preservation for us.

Let me tell you a story that illustrates how critical it is to have God's revelation recorded for us. After king Solomon died the nation of Israel experienced internal conflict resulting in a divided kingdom. The southern kingdom of Judah was home to Jerusalem and the temple built during Solomon's reign. One of the darkest periods of Judah's history was the 57 years Judah was ruled by Manasseh and his son Amon. Manasseh -55 yrs., Amon 2 yrs. Manasseh is considered to be the most evil of all the Kings of Judah. He murdered to stay in power, he rebuilt the high places where idol worship was practiced. He encouraged the worship of pagan gods Molech and Baal. Child sacrifices were made to Moloch, and even Manasseh offered his own son. He practiced witchcraft, spiritism, and astrology. He repented at the end of his life, but died before he could reform the nation. His son Amon continued in his ways. Fortunately, Amon ruled only two yrs. After Amon's death his son, Josiah ascended to the throne at only 8 years of age. We are told Josiah began to seek the Lord and institute some reforms. One initiative was to repair the temple which had been turned into a place of idol worship and had been trashed. During the repairs the high priest, Hilkiah found "the book of the Law".

Here is what happened next. 2 Chronicles 34:31-33

Then the king called together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. He went up to the temple of the LORD with... all the people from the least to the greatest. He read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant, which had been found in the temple of the LORD. The king stood by his pillar and renewed the covenant in the presence of the LORD—to follow the LORD and keep his commands, statutes

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and decrees with all his heart and all his soul, and to obey the words of the covenant written in this book. Then he had everyone in Jerusalem and Benjamin pledge themselves to it.... Josiah removed all the detestable idols from all the territory belonging to the Israelites, and he had all who were present in Israel serve the LORD their God. As long as he lived, they did not fail to follow the LORD, the God of their ancestors.

The exciting part of this story is the amazing transformation that took place in a nation that was thoroughly immoral and idolatrous. (See VS. 33). The SAD part of this story is that a nation with such a rich history of God's power and blessing, could allow itself to turn away and reject God and his word so thoroughly and completely.

One of the most foolish mistakes we can make is to naively assume that we could never drift from remaining faithful to God's truth; that it is impossible for us to exchange that truth for the lies of the false belief systems of the world around us. Hebrews 2:1 - We must pay the most careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away.

We might not be in danger of removing Bibles from our churches, but many have neglected to faithfully teach from the Bible.

It doesn't have to be physically absent to have lost its influence in our lives!!! It does not have to be out of sight to be out of mind!

Americans love their Bibles. So much so that they keep them in pristine, unopened condition. Or, as George Gallup Jr. and Jim Castelli said in a widely quoted survey finding, "Americans revere the Bible but, by and large, they don't read it." Anecdotes abound. Time magazine observed in a 2007 cover story that only half of U.S. adults could name one of the four Gospels. Fewer than half could identify Genesis as the Bible's first book. Jay Leno and Stephen Colbert have made sport of Americans' inability to name the Ten Commandments—even among members of Congress who have pushed to have them posted publicly. – Collin Hansen Christianity Today (2010)

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Sometimes we treat our bibles like a software license agreement. We just scroll down and check “I agree” without reading what we agreed to.

This is a never-ending process. First of all, we need to keep learning because there is always more to learn. Second, we need to keep studying in order to re-learn because we forget. Even if we don't forget it all together, it gets pushed to the back of our mind when it needs to be in the forefront of our minds.

Now What? In light of the importance of renewing our minds on the truth contained in the Bible, the challenge today is to live like it is as valuable as we say it is. How can we demonstrate its value?

1. We devote time in our Sunday services to the faithful exposition of God's word.
2. We create opportunities to learn God's word in small groups. We encourage you to take those opportunities.
3. We encourage you to develop the habit of daily personal bible study. Our church “APP” has a bible reading plan you can follow. You can read or listen via the audio feature.

It is important to understand the big picture of the Bible in order to understand the various parts.

Here are two recommended resources:

The Bible 30-Day Experience Guidebook based on the TV miniseries, *The Bible*, produced by Mark Burnett and Roma Downey.

God's Big Picture: Tracing the Storyline of the Bible by Vaughn Roberts

In preparation for communion consider this testimony to the divine preservation of the Bible.

Prior to the discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls in 1947 the oldest manuscript we possessed of the OT was from about 900 AD. Among the Dead Sea scrolls a complete manuscript of Isaiah was discovered dated from around 125 BC. According to Josh McDowell in *Evidence that Demands a Verdict* (pg. 58), when comparing Isaiah 53 in the Isaiah scroll with the Massoretic text from 916 AD there is only one word in

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question – which has no bearing on the meaning of the passage. This means that after 1,000 years Isaiah 53 was preserved with an extraordinary degree of exactness. The chances of a document being preserved so accurately while being copied over a period of 1000 years staggers the imagination...unless God has been superintending the process!

Now go read read Isaiah 53!!