

## **SERIES: The Mission – Joining God in His Work**

“We Go with Christ” – Matthew 28:16-20

### **INTRODUCTION**

On September 12, 1962, President John F. Kennedy delivered a landmark speech at Rice University in Houston, during which he reminded his listeners about the American goal to land a man on the moon and return him safely. Here’s part of what the president said:

We choose to go to the moon. We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard – because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills, because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone, and one which we intend to win. It is for these reasons that I regard the decision last year to shift our efforts in space from low to high gear as among the most important decisions that will be made during my incumbency in the office of the presidency.

This decision to go to the moon required enormous sacrifice, hard work, and courage. At its peak, the Apollo program employed hundreds of thousands of people and required the support of thousands more industrial firms and universities. In financial terms, it cost the U.S. government more than \$25.4 billion to land the first astronauts on the moon.

And it worked. On July 20, 1969, the mission was completed when Neil Armstrong stepped off the lunar lander and announced, “That’s one small step for man...one giant leap for mankind.” The mission motivated and guided a nation to accomplish something that is still amazing even by today’s standards.

The right mission can inspire people in amazing ways and motivate them to go above and beyond in completing whatever tasks they receive. President Kennedy’s mission sparked the imagination and the perspiration of an entire country. Yet, even that remarkable achievement of human effort pales in comparison to the mission Jesus has given His disciples.

### **KNOW THE STORY**

The Bible records Jesus’ mission in several passages. In each case, it’s clear that Jesus’ mission offers a worthy and inspirational vision for his followers – one that will require enormous sacrifice, hard work, and courage on our part.

The most famous expression of Jesus’ mission can be found at the end of Matthew’s Gospel in one of Jesus’ final words to his disciples. It’s called by many, “The Great Commission”:

“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

This was the mission statement that guided a group of ordinary, untrained men as they launched the church and laid a foundation for success from which we still benefit today. Yet, this mission wasn’t delivered only to the disciples of Jesus’ day. The above verses also describe our primary mission as followers of Christ within the modern church. In other words, these verses are a critical summary of your mission as an individual disciple of Jesus Christ.

## **JESUS' MISSION IS ACCOMPLISHED**

We have seen in this series that Jesus began His public ministry by announcing the major points of His mission for the world. Jesus shocked the people of His hometown by proclaiming Himself as the Messiah and promising good news and freedom from suffering to all who needed it.

There is a sense, then, in which Jesus' mission for the world has already been accomplished. In obedience to the Father, Jesus came into our world not only to preach the good news and teach people about the kingdom of heaven, but ultimately to offer Himself as a sacrifice for the atonement of our sins.

That mission is over. On the cross, Jesus finished what He came to do. In John 19:30 it is recorded: When Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" Then bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.

Yet there is also a sense in which Jesus' mission is still ongoing. There is still work to be done – still are people across the world yearning for freedom and release from suffering. More importantly, there are still people who need to hear the good news of the gospel, understand that news, and take action to accept the gift of forgiveness offered to them.

That's where we come in. In John 20:21 Jesus said: "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you."

## **OUR CONTINUING MISSION IS CRITICAL**

When we explore the Great Commission verse-by-verse, we find three important truths that guide our mission as followers of Christ:

- 1. Our mission is to make disciples.** Don't miss the primary command in Jesus' commission: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations..." (Matt.28:19). Our first step in making disciples is to "go" and engage the world, rather than sitting back and waiting for the world to come to church. There are no set rules for what it means to "make disciples," but the process does involve proclaiming the Gospel, baptizing those who follow Christ, and continually teaching them what it means to live as His disciples.
- 2. Our mission is based on Jesus' authority.** Jesus' first declaration to His disciples was critical: "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (v.18). We don't make disciples because it is the right thing to do, or even because we want people to go to heaven. Instead, we make disciples because Jesus – the Lord, Master, and King of all the universe – has commanded us to do so.
- 3. Our mission includes Jesus' presence.** Many people overlook verse 20 when they reference the Great Commission, but Jesus' final words are crucial: "And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." Not only do we engage our mission under Christ's authority, but also within His presence. We are not called to go it alone or left to figure things out for ourselves. Instead, we have the privilege of daily encounters with Jesus even as we work to achieve the mission He gave us.

**God can use you to make disciples:**

The next time you feel like GOD can't use you, just remember...

Noah got drunk,

Abraham was too old,

Isaac was a daydreamer,

Jacob was a liar,

Joseph was abused,

Moses had a stuttering problem,

Gideon was afraid,

Rahab was a prostitute,

Jeremiah and Timothy were too young,

David had an affair and was a murderer ,

Jonah ran from God,

Naomi was a widow,

Peter denied Christ.

The disciples fell asleep while praying,

Martha worried too much ,

Zaccheus was too small,

Paul was too religious,

..AND

Lazarus was dead!

Now! No more excuses!

God can use you to your full potential.

Besides you aren't the message, you are just the messenger!

In Matthew 28 and throughout the New Testament, our mission is clear. We are called to make disciples of Jesus Christ – to play a part in developing people who think like Jesus, act like Jesus, and love like Jesus. This is our great work in the world, even as we strive to think, act, and love like Jesus in our lives. In Jesus. Amen.