

GO: The Verb of Christianity

Video

Intro –

A couple weeks ago I noticed a post that started a Bi-Vocational vs. full time ministry Facebook conversation between some pastors. It all started with my mentor and former Youth Pastor soliciting answers on the topic: “Hey believers, what are your thoughts on bi-vocational models for church leadership?” Not too long after posting, I saw it and started to follow the comments from others. Answers came in from all over but, the one thing that became clear is many Christians feel that there is no longer a compassionate and outward focused urgency surrounding faith. Another way to say this is that Christian’s, especially those involved in church are becoming more inward focused and more and more out of touch with culture. While feeling defensive at first, I agree with the assessment but want to make something clear. It is my personal belief that inward focused churches are a direct result of inward focused parishioners. The people that make up a church will ultimately dictate its outward perception by their actions.

Therefore, if the general public feels this way about the church, we must ask ourselves the question: “Have American Christians lost their urgency to **GO**?” The verb to “**GO**” means to move from point to another. It was also a word common to the vocabulary and life of Jesus. He was always telling people to **GO** somewhere or to “**GO**” do something. It is with this in mind that we look at our question for today: “Have we as a church in America forgotten what Jesus originally asked of his followers? Or worse yet, are we just choosing to ignore what he asked of his followers?” because he asked them to “**GO**.” As we ponder these questions together, let’s take a look at a conversation Jesus has with his disciples in the Gospel of Matthew.

Scripture

Matthew 10:5-8

Interpretation

Matthew was written somewhere around 70 AD to a largely Jewish audience with the purpose of showing the deity of Christ through the fulfillment of Jewish prophecy and the messianic identity of Christ. There is also a special focus on Jesus teaching and ministry in his adult life.

In our passage today, Jesus is speaking to the disciples; he commissions them for service and gives them direction for ministry. Up until this point Jesus has been running the show, he has been the active minister of the gospel. But now, Jesus is saying, “Alright guys, it’s time to “**GO**.” You’ve seen me do it, now you need to do it.” That thought I so prominent that Jesus uses the word **GO** four times in this three verse section. Jesus gave them an example, he provided directions, and now he is asking them to “get after it.” From this little experience we see there are three observations we should make to help us to answer the question, “Have we as a church in America forgotten what Jesus originally asked of his disciples? Or worse are we just ignoring it?”

1. Stay Close (Vs. 6) – Jesus advises his followers to stay close. He tells them to avoid outsiders such as the Gentiles and Samaritans. This isn't nationalism, racism, or anything of the sort, it's actually a logical end to the fulfillment of God's prophecy that the messiah would come from the Jews and first preach to the Jews. He is also telling his disciples that they don't need to travel far and wide to be messengers of the kingdom; their work can start right where they are. That is a truth that we often forget. You don't have to flee to Africa to make an impact in the world; you probably just have to look next door.
2. Start with Service (Vs. 8) – While Jesus does tell them to pronounce the coming of his kingdom, he also calls them to serve their communities with physical miracles and active representations of the power of God. The idea of whether or not God works miracles in our modern world is up for debate, but the reality of impactful service is not. Few things will change someone's perspective quicker than a random act of kindness. The reality is that service often presents opportunities to present the message of God's kingdom to others. Service opens the door.
3. Share the Kingdom (Vs. 7) – Jesus gives his disciples strict instructions on what to preach as well. He tells them to pronounce the kingdom of heaven. He does not include a message of eternal damnation and sin, but rather a coming of a new era, new perspective, and a new relationship centered focus. Jesus is establishing the fact that he has defeated sin and evil. The kingdom says that no matter how great the darkness, light prevails and Jesus has conquered evil and restored humanity to its rightful relationship with God. We just have to believe that he did so. The kingdom focuses on love not condemnation. The kingdom is about God, not us.

Application

Stay Close, Start with Service, and Share the Kingdom. What in the world does that mean? They are short phrases, but they are broad phrases and they could easily be misunderstood. The hardest thing that we have to do is make our faith practical, to take what we learn from sermons, scripture, prayer, and small groups and make it REAL. This, my friends, is our challenge. The beautiful thing is this, we can do it. Let's take a look at this passage, but maybe from a different context.

"Jesus sent his twelve harvest hands out with this charge: 'Don't begin by traveling to some far-off place to convert unbelievers. And don't try to be dramatic by tackling some public enemy. Go to the lost, confused people right here in the neighborhood. Tell them that the kingdom is here. Bring health to the sick. Raise the dead. Touch the untouchables. Kick out the demons. You have been treated generously, so live generously.'"

Matthew 10:5-8 (MSG)

1. **GO to your neighborhood** – Do you know those closest to you by name?

Neighboring seems to be a lost art in our time. It's even changed in the 28 years that I have been alive. I remember growing up and playing with the other kids in my neighborhood at both my parents and grandparents house. I also remember knowing most of my neighbors by names. In our world today, this isn't as much of a reality. People tend to be more private and keep to themselves and their smaller circle of influence. Sometimes it seems like neighborhood connections and block parties are a thing of the past, but the reality is that our neighborhoods still provide us with the best mission field available. The proximity of these people to us and the fact that we see them multiple times a week allows to establish connectivity and if we look for it, opportunities to share the message of the kingdom.

2. **Believe in and GO use the Power God has given you** – Pray the simple prayers. Meet the Basic needs. It's hard to believe sometimes, but a pie or cookies can have a dramatic effect on a relationship. While these things are very possible, God may not be asking you to lay hands on a sick person or a dead person, but he is asking you to believe that he can influence people's lives through you. Belief in God's power can take on many different vehicles and opportunities. It can start with a simple prayer for an opportunity and then move into something more complex like inviting them over for dinner, offering carpools to school, meals when someone is ill, and maybe even coffee and encouragement when times get hard. People are more apt to listen when we actually take the time and put in the effort to connect with them. The movement of the Holy Spirit doesn't start with church; it starts with compassion and human connection. These are the things that allow the Holy Spirit to work in our relationships. With a relationship, the door opens for much more. It's a lot easier to pray for healing, spiritual problems, and even resurrection when those issues have names. God has given us power to influence; we just have to believe it works. Believing in the Holy Spirit helps others and it also helps us by strengthening our faith. Church on a Sunday morning has never healed anyone, but the power of the Holy Spirit sure has.
3. **GO Share Hope, Compassion, and Generosity** – Don't just invite them to church, actually share hope, extend compassion, and be generous with them. Instead of just inviting someone to church maybe try getting to know them and sharing why you attend church first. The invitation to church isn't the first step, usually it's one of the final steps. First you have to examine your own motivations are you sharing out of a selfish desire to achieve in your faith? Or are you sharing because you have a genuine desire to express care for someone who may need hope, compassion, and generosity. This is what makes God's kingdom a reality, people caring about others because God cares about them and we care about them. This is what Jesus meant by telling people the

kingdom is here. In order for the message of the kingdom to become clear, the Holy Spirit must intervene and allow us to speak from a place of influence. Sharing hope, compassion, and generosity opens doors for influence and makes the story about much more than a sermon and empty invitation. Sharing the kingdom is more than church, the church has never saved anyone, but Jesus sure has. That's the power of his Kingdom message.

"Being a Christian is less about cautiously avoiding sin than about courageously and actively doing God's will."

- Eric Metaxas , Author of Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Prophet, Martyr, and Spy.

Conclusion –

God's purpose in our world has always been establishing his kingdom and his relationship with us. The church was never the intended end; it was merely the vessel he chooses to bring about his kingdom through. God is using his Church to transform the world it's his plan A and there is no plan B. Church, we have a responsibility to be good neighbors and to use our everyday life to impact the lives of others inside and especially outside our church. We have a mandate to aide in the establishment of Gods kingdom. We, however, do not have a mandate to give our money or simply extend invites to someone to church. Offering someone a hand to hold on to when life gets hard is a lot more impactful than writing a check so someone else can do it. How are you impacting the non-believing people closest to you with the message of Jesus and the Kingdom of Heaven? Are you showing them what hope, compassion, and generosity look like? Are you tapping into the real, transformative, and irrefutable power of Christ? The reality is that if you profess faith in Christ then he wants to use you to impact the lives of people around you. You just have to decide if you are going to let him. Today, you have two choices. You can heed Jesus exhortation and take advantage of his desire to empower you to be his disciple and bring about his kingdom or you can walk from here and let nothing change.

Whether you're a believer who attends here every week or you're the most skeptical person in the entire world and you're here to prove us Christians wrong... my challenge to you is to take a stab at impacting the life of someone who isn't active in a church. Actually try to build a relationship with someone and see what happens. You just might make a friend.

Imagine what would happen if we began to see our everyday lives as a way for God to impact the world? That's what the story of Christ and his kingdom is all about. What if from our church we unleashed a powerful movement of people who believed that Monday through Saturday are just as important as Sunday. Folks, it's the people who want to see God work that will experience his power. We can choose to sit on the sidelines or we can choose to take part in the work of God in our world. There are people who don't believe in Jesus right now because we the church are failing to show the

reality of Jesus. God is doing his thing and transforming our world whether we like it or not, but he is also inviting us and urging us to take part. He wants to use you to transform the lives of people around you. The time has come for us to stop believing that anything other than God has the ability to change lives. If you want to see change in the world around you, maybe it's time you choose to let God have an active role in your life. What do you have to lose?

Pray