

The Mission

Well, praise God, it's good to gather together to look at these resurrection accounts of the Lord Jesus Christ. And it's amazing, again, to look at this passage of Scripture, really, because we realize that it really altered the lives, again, of the disciples. And really, if we look at it and we enter in on the whole message that happens to begin right there, we realize it alters our life. And it alters our life because, again, of one stunning truth, one simple truth, and that is, again, Jesus is alive. And we started looking at this passage a couple weeks ago. And as we looked at it, we saw that this is the first appearance, again, of Jesus Christ, at least in this gospel, to the disciples.

And he comes to them. They're in this locker upper room because of fear of the Jews. And as they're in this room, Jesus suddenly appears. And they think they're seeing a ghost. And we can understand why. I mean, it's a locked up room. And nobody comes back, again, from crucifixion.

But Jesus, again, speaks a message to them, peace be still. And then after that message, again, of peace be still, he shows them his hands, his feet. He shows them that it is none other than the resurrection of the Lord. And he also shows them the whole evidence, again, of why they have this peace that happens to begin in their life. You know, and it's a stunning text that happens to begin right there.

And as you spend more time really looking at the Lord Jesus, it's amazing how He changes us and how He keeps changing us the more that we look at Him. And I think a lot of times we get the idea, again, of change backwards, don't we? We many times might be convicted of sin that happens to be in our life or something we've done wrong, and we commit ourselves to trying better. to really get there. And I think a lot of times why we do that is we want to prove that we happen to be getting in the Lord, or we want to prove that we're worthy of His love. In other words, we start down that avenue of what's called work salvation.

But we realize that we're not saved by our performance, but by the performance of another. And the more that we look at Christ, the more that we see who He is, it's amazing. He changes us from one degree of glory to another. And you can certainly see that in the disciples. I mean, how else can we explain? I mean, here they are in this upper room, and they're in this upper room for one reason. It's because they're fearful of the Jews. And what are they fearful of the Jews of? That they might kill them.

And then all of a sudden, after the resurrection, after the ascension of Jesus, they go everywhere in public, all the way through Jerusalem, even in the temple. proclaiming that Jesus is risen, proclaiming the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, to great cost to have us begin among themselves.

In fact, when you look at the disciples, all of them, again, were martyred for the faith, except the writer of this gospel, John, who was boiled in oil. and then exiled to the island of Patmos. We see James, the son of Zebedee, the brother of John, was the first one in the Book of Acts who was executed. He was beheaded. We also see again a little later that Peter was arrested and then he was crucified, and he was crucified upside down because he thought himself unworthy to be crucified the same way as the Lord. Paul was beheaded, Andrew was also crucified, Thomas was run through with spears, Philip was cruelly beaten and put to death, Matthew was stabbed, and we could go on and on and on about these various different things.

And people do not go through what the disciples go through in order to protect Eli. You know, they knew the truth. No matter what man could do to them, they really can't harm them. You know, they really cannot take them out of the Savior's grasp. And why? Because Jesus is alive. Those who happen to be enemies of Christianity

have a hard time really considering, really explaining the change that came over the disciples.

You know, and what we're going to look at is that ongoing ministry that God again has given us, because we realize the quick and meteoric expanse of Christianity took place because the gospel went everywhere. God gave us, Jesus Christ gave us, again, what we call the Great Commission. And the Great Commission comes from the lips of the Lord Jesus Christ in five different areas. One at the end of each of the four Gospels, and then at the beginning of the Book of Acts, we have this repeated by the Lord to go into all the world, to make disciples. of all nations, teaching them, again, the truths about the Lord Jesus Christ. And we realize, again, these are our marching orders, aren't they? There are what is given to us that we might continue on the ministry that was started by the Lord Jesus. It's amazing to look at because I think all of us recognize that the Lord has come, the Lord has given His life, the Lord was resurrected from the grave, and I think a lot of times we realize that we have to be not only living for the Lord Jesus Christ, but also speaking for the Lord Jesus Christ.

I think a lot of times we have to consider the relationships God has given us. Whether it happens to be our children, whether it happens to be our extended family, whether it happens to be in our neighborhood, whether it happens to be our colleagues at work, God has given us those relationships that we might have what is called redemptive relationships.

In other words, representing and speaking for the king. But here's the question again I have for you. Are you what would be called a Great Commission Christian? You know, do you live out your faith as Lord Jesus Christ? Because here's the thing you have to understand.

This is not a subset. This is not a minor purpose of why we're saved. It's not again that we have all these glorious purposes. We have all these reasons why we live and function. This is the main function. This is the main purpose that God has chosen for us, for him to be glorified through us.

And I wonder, could we be described as a Great Commission Christian? It's an awesome, aspect that happens to be right here. And I really want us to look at the Great Commission given right here in the Gospel of John. I want to see a couple of things. One is I want us to understand the foundation. You know, we look at this command and it seems so daunting. It seems so fearful in some ways. But as we understand the foundation of what this command is given, we see how we're able to carry it out. And then I want us to look at the command itself.

And hopefully, again, it will help us to realize the implications, the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, and truly live out being great commissioned Christians. But we need to understand, again, the basis of His command. And look at verse 21 in chapter number 20. It says, Jesus said to them, Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.

And I think we all realize this, right? We all have feeble frames, don't we? We all, again, do things that we ought not to do, and we don't do the things that we ought to do many times. And we realize that's part of our sanctification process. And I think any time you talk about being a testimony of Christ, witnessing of the Lord Jesus Christ, a lot of times we feel shame and we feel guilt. You know, we're put in various different situations. We're put, again, in various different relationships. And a lot of times, we have an opportunity to speak. But guess what comes out of us? And the answer is what? Most times, nothing.

And we think to ourselves, man, I could have spoken about the Lord Jesus. I could have said this. I could have said that. And I didn't. And this is what we say to

ourselves many times. I'll try better next time. Have you ever done that? Next time, I'm going to take this opportunity. Next time, I'm going to preach the gospel. Next time, I'm going to be this witness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And I think that's like all the areas that many times we have sin in our life. We have these failures that happen to begin in our life, and then we promise ourselves that we're going to do better next time. We might even tell God we're going to do better next time. The problem, again, with that whole scenario and that whole way of thinking is even though we haven't noticed it, we've gone and taken our sanctification, which started with grace, and we've turned it over to works through effort. We're able to do these things again on our own.

So think of that, because in order to carry out and be a Great Commission Christian, in order to live for the Lord Jesus Christ, to be a functioning witness and a verbal witness of what Jesus has done for us, You have to understand the greatness, again, of the basis of this command. And that's where we read in verse number 21 where he says, Jesus said to them again, and he said this, peace be with you. Now, notice there's a repetition of this command, this truth that is given about our salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ. And I find if you're going to carry out this command, if you're going to carry out any commands that the Lord Jesus has given us, we need to understand this truth.

You know, when I was a young Christian, when I was newly saved in my early 20s, I can remember going to a church. And later on, when I went to university and I started training for the ministry, we went to chapel and a lot of times at the end of the church service, at the end of the chapel service, they had what was called the altar call. I don't know if any of you have ever experienced that or ever been in a time like that, but they would preach a message and it doesn't matter if the message was convicting or not. At the end, you had this altar call, and it basically went like this.

Every eye closed at this moment, every head bowed, and I'm going to ask you a series of question. It was basically
again, have you lied this week? Have you cheated again on an exam? Have you lusted in your heart? And there would be a number of questions about sin that happen to begin right there.

Have you done any of those things? I want you to admit it to the Lord. With every eye closed, with every head bowed, if you've done that in your life, would you please raise your hand? And of course, all these hands would go up. You know, and why? Because you had been guilty of something like that.

And then again, he would say, all hands down. And the music would start playing really softly, just as I am. And it would go on and on and on. And everybody would stand up to sing. And then the preacher would challenge, if you put your hand up, I want you to come up to the altar. I want you to kneel right here.

And sometimes there was various different people that happened to be there. Sometimes, again, you just knelt there. The whole goal again of kneeling at the altar was basically saying this, I will try better next time. I will do better next time. You almost felt invigorated by doing it. You went in and a couple of days later, it started to wane and you felt yourself doing the same sin again. This went on.

Then there was another altar call and you would come down and you would kneel down and then you'd make that promise, I'll do better again. And then it failed. And then after a while, you just stop putting your hand up. And why? Because you knew you were going to fail.

And we look at that. And please don't get me wrong. God wants us to put effort into our sanctification. He wants us to say no to sin, that we might say yes to the Lord Jesus Christ. And we should try harder. We should be able to say no to those things. When you look at the order of this great commission that happens to be going right here in John, the order is absolutely significant because he starts off before he gives the command and he says this again, peace be with you.

And we looked at that phrase a couple of weeks ago, and we said it's based upon this, Christ's peace that's given to us. And at the heart of that peace, that we have peace with God, is the doctrine of justification by faith alone in Jesus Christ alone. That's why we say all of our sins are transferred to Jesus Christ the moment we believe. All of his righteousness is transferred to us. So when God the Father looks at us, he looks at us not only as our sin being paid for, but absolutely guiltless. We're absolutely righteous in the Lord Jesus Christ. And therefore, there's no barrier between us and God.

You know, and the more that we realize this, and this is an amazing thing, the more that you look at God, the more you study who He is, the more again we look at those prophetic texts about His might, about His glory, about who He happens to be. Here's the amazing thing, the more we see our sin, The more we see the utter lostness of our heart, and here's what happens, the more that we see Jesus Christ and what he has done, and our need for the Lord Jesus Christ, and the more that we see Jesus Christ, and you can see this in this text, the more we start to celebrate, the more we start to be in awe of him, and the more we start to follow him.

And that's the whole basis. Now, that might be a bit confusing, so I'm going to give an illustration of this. And all illustrations fail. This is actually an illustration, again, from the book I recommended this morning. But it's amazing. So picture this. I realize, again, it's not perfect. But think about this. Think about, again, a woman who lived next door.

And next door to her was a dog who was always chained in the front And every time she would come out, the dog would bark, bark, bark, bark, bark, and she hated it. It was so noisy, it would jump up, it was a big dog, it was on a chain, it would yank its chain, and she just hated it. She hated it so much so that she taunted the dog. Every time she came up, she would yell at the dog, she would try to scare the dog, or whatever it happened to be, but she hated that dog. She wished that dog was gone. She had no love affair for that dog.

And one day when she was walking down the sidewalk, all of a sudden there happened to be, again, another dog. And it was facing her, and this dog, again, was on all fours, its shoulders were up, its fangs were hanging out, the drool was coming down, and it was growling, and it was barking, and it was just about to pounce on her. And just at that time, when that dog was about to pounce her, and she was just absolutely terrified, this neighbor dog came and stood in between them. And he growled. His drool was coming out. He began to bark at this other dog. And the other dog relented and went off. And at that time, the neighbor dog, his hind feet again went down and he just sat there.

And she came over timidly and she put her hand on his head and began to pat him. And when she saw again it was safe, she began to scratch him again under the neck. And she found such a profound sense of thankfulness, you know, safety with this dog. And it changed the way that she looked at him. Every time she would come out of her house, she would hear the barking, the same barking, but she was so thankful for that barking. She would buy little treats for this dog, little toys, again, that he could play with. She would throw them in the yard. And she was so thankful for that dog. Now why is she thankful? Why the big change? And this is why. Because of the actions of the dog.

And think how significant of that, because we realize none of us can come to a saving knowledge of Lord Jesus Christ, except the Spirit of God work in our hearts. You know, we all of a sudden see our sin and how massive that sin happens to be. And there's no way, even if I try harder, even if I try harder, even if I try harder, I can take away that sin. But the more that we see our sin, the more we see the need of Jesus Christ, who came and died on the cross, even knowing how much I would mess up. after I became a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And the more that we see that, the more we recognize it, the more thankful we are, the more, again, that we're amazed at His grace that happened to be in our life. And that's the impetus of change. And why do we change? We change because of the actions of our Savior. We're just overwhelmed with what he has done in our life. How can we ever be the same again?

And so think of it, we look at this massive command, we look at any command that happens to be in the word of God, and we look at that, and here's a massive, again, great commission, go into all the work. Be this witness, be this light in the world that God has given us.

How do we carry it out? And here's how we carry it out. We carry it out because we recognize that we don't just have peace with God. But we have the peace of God. You know what this peace with God is meant to do? It's meant to be experienced, folks. It's meant to just not be known, but felt in the deepest recesses. No matter what comes into my life, no matter what obstacles, no matter even what I do in my life, nothing will ever separate me from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

And why do we change? Why do we want to follow him? Here it is, because of the actions of our Savior. It's amazing. The more that we see our sin, the more that we see the need of Christ, the more that we start to change. We start to live out this peace and announce this peace to others.

Now, that's the basis of the command. The basis of the command is what Christ has done for us, being enthralled, being amazed at that. Now, let's look at the command itself. It's right here in verse number 21. Jesus said, Jesus said to them, again, peace be with you. As a father has sent me, even so I am sending you.

And if you've ever been a witness of the Lord Jesus Christ, if you ever testified of the Lord Jesus Christ, and if you testified over and over, you probably had this experience sometime at the beginning of your life. And it basically goes like this. What do you think of heaven? How do you think a person gets there? And they tell you. And you start telling them, again, about the Lord Jesus Christ. And they might say something like you. Who do you think you are saying that Jesus is the only way?

What gives you the authority in your life to say that I am wrong? What gives you the authority? What gives you the right to say every other religion that happens to be on planet Earth is wrong, and there is no way that you can get to heaven if you follow them? What gives you that authority?

Because we do say that, right? You know, Jesus even said, I am the way, I am the truth, and I am the light. And no one comes to the Father, here it is, except through me. It's an exclusive gospel. What gives you the right to announce that? And here it is. It's not based upon our own authority. It's not based upon our own rights, but it's based upon the authority of another. We recognize this one who came, this one who died, this one, again, who redeemed our soul has the authority to tell us what's right, what is wrong, and we live by the authority of another.

You know, none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. So look at this verse with this in mind. He says, Jesus said to them, peace be with you. And he says, as a father has

sent me, even so I'm sending you. Now, there's one thing that we have to know about this verse. And I think, again, it's really obvious, isn't it? This command is not given for everybody, is it? You know, who's it given for? And we would say it's given for, anyone know? It's given for? What's that? Believers, praise God. It's given to all believers. It's not just given, again, exclusively to the disciples. You know, right here, again, it's given to the disciples, but it's given to all believers.

All of us are to be so overwhelmed with what Jesus Christ has done. He's given us, again,

this peace forevermore between us and a holy God that we want to serve him, we want to announce him. You know, it's given in such passages as 2 Corinthians 5, where it says, therefore, We are ambassadors for Christ. And I love that term, don't you? We are representatives of a great God. You know, and look at what he says, God making his appeal through us.

What's that appeal? We implore you on the behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God for our sake. This is what happened. He made him to be sin who knew no sin. So that outcome in him, what? We might become the righteousness of God. you know, we have that perfect standing in Christ. And so we're to take this message to all those that happen to be in our sphere of influence and announce that.

So when you look at this command that's given, it's so critical that you see that there's two key words. And I love little words because little words are so significant many times. And the key words that happen to begin right here to understand this commitment, understand this command, understand this commission, are the words as, And so, and so he says this, as the father sent me, and here's the second one, and so I am sending you.

So think about that, because the prototype is how the father sent the son, isn't it? Here we have an eternity, and the father again decides to send the son, and the son comes voluntarily. And when he comes, he wants to do the will of the father. He wants to glorify the father. He wants to announce this coming kingdom to the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. He wants to give his life, give his all for the father. Father. And it's verbal. It's his life. It's everything that happens to be about it.

And he says, just as the Father has sent me, so I'm sending you. So when we look at ourselves, what do we do? We make much of Christ. We talk about Christ. We talk about his saving efficacy. We point to him. We point to him. We point others to him all the time. Just as the Son pointed to the Father, guess what we're to do? We're to point to Jesus Christ as our hope. as are all that happens to begin right here. He is the prototype.

And I think when you look at the gospel again of the Lord Jesus Christ, I don't think it's really hard. I don't think it's really difficult to understand what we call the Great Commission. I think it's the carrying out of it, many times because of the baggage many times we carry.

I think a lot of times we like safe and comfortable places, don't we, to make known Jesus Christ. We have churches where we can do that, we have Christian schools where we can do that, we have Christian friends, and we many times can preach, we can many times teach, we can many times talk about the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ to them. But it's amazing because God wants us to establish in this world, he has ordained various different relationships that happen to begin in our life, and this is what he wants us to be. He wants us to have redemptive relationships, In other words, all the goal of our relationships, whether it happen to be family, whether it happen to be friends, whether it happen to be colleagues at work, all the relationships that God has given us, again, are for this intention, that we

might be an example, that we might be a mouthpiece, that we might audibly make known Jesus Christ. You know, that's the whole purpose of those.

And because it's so uncomfortable many times, we just don't do it. You know, and listen to what John Stott, and he absolutely says this correctly. This is in his book, The Great Commission. He says, I personally believe that our failure to obey the implications of the command is the greatest weakness of evangelical Christians in the field of evangelism today.

We do not identify. We believe so strongly and rightly in proclamation. That's the heralding of the gospel from a pulpit or somewhere like this. that we tend to proclaim our message from a distance. We sometimes appear like people who shout advice to drowning men from the safety of the seashore. In other words, we don't get involved in people's lives, in people's, again, brokenness. We do not dive in to rescue them. We are afraid of getting wet, and indeed, of greater perils than this. But Jesus Christ did not broadcast salvation from the sky.

He visited us in great humility. We cannot give a preaching, for proclamation is the essence of salvation. Yet true evangelism, evangelism that's modeled on the ministry of Jesus, It's not proclamation without identification any more than it's identification without proclamation. Evangelism involves both. It involves identifying with sinners that happen to begin around us, befriending them. But here it is, being that mouthpiece of Jesus Christ. And let me ask you, do we establish what is known as redemptive relationships that happen to begin in our life?

Because I find this really convicting. You know, and it's so convicting, this is what I wanted to do with this passage. I'm so convicted by this passage, I want to say this, I'll do better. And we're right back to that whole scenario again. And this is where I find Paul so helpful. Paul's helpful in 1 Timothy 1, verse number 15, because he says this. is saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance.

That Christ Jesus, this is the reason why he came. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. And then he says this about himself, of whom I am the foremost. And I think this is helpful on both those fronts. First of all, again, why did Jesus Christ come? Jesus Christ came to glorify the Father. And we ask again, how is he chiefly going to glorify the Father? And it's like this, through the salvation of sinners. So when we look again at those coming to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, what does it do?

It glorifies the Father that happened to be above. It shows again his justice. It shows his mercy. It shows his love. It shows his long-suffering. It shows his patience. It shows again his steadfast love to individuals like us. Right? So think about it. Again, what's our goal? Our goal is for the Father, for Jesus Christ, to be glorified. So when we preach Jesus Christ crucified, when we preach Jesus Christ risen from the grave for sinners like us, the Son, again, is glorified. He's magnified. And if the Son is magnified, the Father will be magnified through him. Right? That's the whole purpose. That's how he's glorified. But here's the question, because I think, again, we all know this. And I think, again, we all, let me just say this first of all. I think, again, when we realize this fact, many times we try to get ourselves off the hook by this.

Whoever is chosen before the foundation of the world will come to Christ, no more, no less. And we're absolutely right on that, folks. You know, God selects who will come. The Holy Spirit has to operate in the heart to bring anyone to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. But what we're talking about here is desire. You know, do we have a desire to glorify Christ? Because this is what God uses so often, isn't it? It's the desires of our heart that he might be magnified, he might be glorified.

So think about it, because I don't think when you look at evangelism, when you look at being a Great Commission Christian, that's really difficult. I think we know the gospel. I think we know the ins and outs. There's many courses that happen to be out there. This is how you testify. This is how you witness. You go through these various different steps. And I think we know that, folks. I don't think we're ignorant about that. Now, get this.

The reason why we do not do this, the reason why we don't carry out the Great Commission is basically this, and it's this easy. You know, it's just because we don't want to. I mean, isn't that true about any sinful attitude, any sinful disobedience that happens at the beginning of our life? The reason why we do those things is just basically this. We just don't have the desire to do them.

You know, so we look at a lost person, we realize they're lost, we realize they're bound for hell, we realize they need the Lord Jesus Christ, but we desire something greater. And what do we desire greater? Our comfort. You know, our assurance. You know, our safety. You know, and therefore, we just do not do this.

And that's why I love the end of this verse that happens to be in 1 Timothy 1.15, because it says, the saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. And then he says this, of whom I am the foremost. Do you see how it comes back to Jesus Christ? I mean, again, I love this because it's present active. Paul is not talking about, again, just the past. You know, I used to persecute Christians. I used to put them to death. I used to put them, again, to jail. He's not talking about that.

He's saying, when I look at my heart, when I look at my life, when I look at my inner man, what do I see? I see the foremost of sinners. And have you ever done that in your life? Have you ever looked at the sin that happens to begin in your heart? You see lust, you see anger, you see vengeance, you see, again, these wrong attitudes, these hatreds, this ingratitude, you see this pride, you see this bitterness. And when you start to see all of that, folks, it can be terrifying that happens to begin in the life. In fact, when you really think about it, when you think about an eternal destiny, when you think about hellfire, yeah, yeah, yeah, that's what I deserve. But here it is.

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. And then he says this, of whom I'm the foremost. Of whom I am the greatest. That happens to begin right there. And he's overwhelmed with this. And I am convinced, beyond any shadow of doubt, that the ones who give grace best in their lives are those who realize how much grace they need in their lives. I am

absolutely convinced that those again who give forgiveness best in their life are those again who recognize how much forgiveness they need in their life. And when it comes to the Great Commission, being this witness of the Lord Jesus Christ, when I see my overwhelming need as the chief, as the foremost of sinners, I become what I am not. I start to witness, I start to look out. So here's my plea.

God in his goodness has given us a purpose in which he's going to be magnified and glorified. Christ has given us again this glorious commission in our lives and the secret to carrying it out is no secret at all. It's being overwhelmed with this great God and all that He is for us, that what comes out of us used to be war-making, but what comes out of us now is peacemakers, where we want others to know that they could truly have peace with God and experience what we call the peace of God. He's a good God.

Let's bow our hearts in a moment of prayer. Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you for this text. We thank you for your glory. We just ask that you be with us, Lord, help us so much that we would recognize the greatness of Christ and walk in his ways. We

thank you, Lord, that the more that we look at Christ, the more that we look at you, Lord, the more we're convicted of our sins. But the more that we look at Christ and recognize his work on the cross, it's incredible, again, how you change us from one degree of glory to another. Just be with us and help us. We thank you so much, in Christ's name. Amen.