



REASON TOGETHER
— CHURCH —

GO YE...

— Mark 16:15 —



— Sermon & Pastor's Commentary —

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— ♦ —
Pastor & Teacher

REASON TOGETHER STUDIES

GO YE...

Mark 16:15

MAIN STUDY QUESTION

*What did Jesus mean when He said,
“Go ye into all the world”?*

INSIDE THIS PUBLICATION

PART ONE

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

The approved Sunday message in its spoken cadence.

PART TWO

PASTOR’S COMMENTARY

The Biblical reasoning and interpretive depth behind the sermon.

REASON TOGETHER STUDIES

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

GO YE...

Mark 16:15

“What did Jesus mean when He said, ‘Go ye into all the world’?”

Dr. Thomas W. Hawksley

Pastor & Teacher

Aloha.

What did Jesus mean when He said,

“Go ye into all the world”?

Those are familiar words.

Some of us have heard them since childhood.

We have heard them preached during missionary conferences.

We have seen them printed on banners.

We have heard missionaries quote them before leaving for distant countries.

And perhaps we have always assumed that the word “go” meant exactly what it sounds like.

Go.

Leave where you are.

Carry the gospel somewhere else.

But in recent years, another explanation has become increasingly common.

Some people say,

“That is not really what the original Greek says.”

They tell us that Jesus did not command His disciples to go.

They say the original wording should be translated,

“As you go.”

According to that understanding, Jesus was not necessarily telling His followers to leave where they were.

He was telling them that wherever they happened to go during the ordinary course of life, they should make disciples.

That leaves us with a sincere question.

Did Jesus deliberately send His followers into the world?

Or did He simply tell them to speak of Him wherever life happened to take them?

That is our question today.

And if this is your first time with us at Reason Together Church, we are especially glad you are here.

We are not going to ask you to stand.

We are not going to ask you to identify yourself publicly.

You are welcome to sit with us, open the Bible with us and reason together through the Word of God.

That is what we do here.

We begin with a sincere question.

We do not begin by assuming that we already know the answer.

We do not begin with a denominational position.

We do not begin with something we heard someone say many years ago.

We begin with the Bible.

We examine what the text says.

We compare Scripture with Scripture.

We consider the evidence carefully.

And then we follow the Word of God wherever it leads.

So bring your questions.

Open your Bible.

And let us reason together through the Word of God.

Let us pray.

Our Heavenly Father,

We come before You with open Bibles and, we pray, open hearts.

We do not want to place our assumptions into Your Word.

We do not want to weaken anything that Jesus commanded.

We also do not want to demand something that Jesus did not say.

Give us wisdom as we examine these familiar words.

Help us to see what is actually written.

Teach us what it means to proclaim the gospel.

Teach us what it means to make disciples.

Show us where this commission belongs in the life of the Church and in each of our lives.

And when we understand what Christ commanded, give us the courage and humility to obey Him.

We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Let us begin with Mark 16:15.

“And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.”

Now listen to Matthew 28, beginning with verse 16.

“Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them.

“And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted.

“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

“Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”

Before we consider the Greek wording, let us make a simple observation.

Mark and Matthew do not say exactly the same thing.

We often combine them in our memory.

We may remember something like,

“Go ye into all the world and make disciples of every creature.”

But that is not what either passage says.

Mark says,

“Go ye into all the world.”

Then Mark says,

“Preach the gospel.”

Then Mark says,

“To every creature.”

Matthew says,

“Go ye therefore.”

Then Matthew says,

“Teach all nations.”

Then Matthew tells us about baptizing and teaching those who become disciples.

Mark emphasizes proclaiming the gospel.

Matthew emphasizes making disciples.

Mark says “the whole world.”

Matthew says “all nations.”

They are not competing commissions.

They are complementary accounts of the same worldwide mission.

But that means we should not take one word from one passage and build our entire understanding upon it.

We need to hear the complete commission.

Now let us consider the word “go.”

The Greek word translated “go” in Mark 16:15 is the same form used in Matthew 28:19.

The word is poreuthentes.

It is true that the word is grammatically a participle.

That is where the “as you go” explanation begins.

Someone notices that “go” is a participle, while another word in the sentence is the principal command.

In Matthew, the principal command is “make disciples.”

In Mark, the principal command is “proclaim.”

That observation is correct.

But the conclusion sometimes drawn from it is not.

A Greek participle does not always function like an English word ending in “ing.”

It does not automatically mean,

“While you are going.”

It does not automatically mean,

“If you happen to go.”

It does not automatically mean,

“As you go about your ordinary routine.”

This particular construction commonly joins the participle to the command that follows it.

The result is what we naturally express in English as,

“Go and do this.”

We can see the same kind of construction elsewhere in Matthew.

In Matthew 2:8, Herod told the wise men,

“Go and search diligently for the young child.”

Was Herod saying,

“If you happen to go somewhere, look around for the child”?

No.

They could not search without going.

In Matthew 9:13, Jesus said,

“Go ye and learn what that meaneth.”

Was Jesus saying,

“If life happens to take you somewhere, perhaps you can learn this”?

No.

The going and the learning belonged together.

In Matthew 11:4, Jesus told John’s disciples,

“Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see.”

Could they deliver the message to John without going to him?

No.

The command required movement.

In Matthew 28:7, the women at the tomb were told,

“Go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead.”

Could they remain at the tomb and still deliver that message?

No.

They had to go.

And in each of these statements, the going serves the action that follows.

Go and search.

Go and learn.

Go and tell.

Go and proclaim.

Go and make disciples.

The same is true in the Great Commission.

In Mark, they must go in order to proclaim the gospel throughout the world.

In Matthew, they must go in order to make disciples among all nations.

So is “as you go” completely wrong?

It depends upon what we mean.

It can be a good application.

Wherever a Christian goes, that Christian should be willing to speak of Christ.

At home, we should belong to Christ.

At work, we should belong to Christ.

When we travel, we should belong to Christ.

When circumstances move us into a new neighborhood, a new school or a new season of life, we should not leave our witness behind.

In that sense, we should bear witness wherever we go.

But that good application should not be used to remove the force of what Jesus said.

Jesus did not merely say,

“If you happen to encounter someone along the way, perhaps say something about Me.”

He sent His followers outward.

He placed the nations before them.

He placed the whole world before them.

He placed people beyond their existing boundaries before them.

“Go” is not the principal command in Matthew.

“Make disciples” is the principal command.

But making disciples of all nations requires someone to go.

And “go” is not the principal command in Mark.

“Proclaim” is the principal command.

But proclaiming the gospel throughout the whole world requires someone to go.

Going is necessary.

But going is not the final goal.

A person can travel halfway around the world and never proclaim Christ.

A person can cross an ocean and never make a disciple.

A person can obtain a passport, board an airplane and live in another culture without fulfilling the Great Commission.

The Great Commission is not fulfilled because a Christian traveled.

The going serves the gospel.

The going serves disciple-making.

That brings us to another important question.

What exactly were they sent to do?

The King James Version says in Matthew 28:19,

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations.”

The Greek word translated “teach” there means to make disciples.

That is different from the ordinary word for teaching.

Matthew uses the ordinary word for teaching in the next verse.

First, Jesus says to make disciples.

Then He says to teach those disciples to observe everything He commanded.

That distinction matters.

Jesus did not command His followers merely to distribute information.

He did not say,

“Go into all the world and make sure everyone has heard at least one religious statement.”

He did not say,

“Go into all the world and obtain as many decisions as possible.”

He said to make disciples.

A disciple is more than someone who has heard about Jesus.

A disciple learns from Jesus.

A disciple follows Jesus.

A disciple submits to Jesus.

A disciple begins to live under the authority of Jesus.

That does not mean disciples earn salvation through obedience.

Salvation is entirely by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ.

But the Christ who saves us also calls us to follow Him.

Conversion is the beginning of discipleship.

It is not the completion of discipleship.

Jesus described a continuing process.

The gospel is proclaimed.

A person hears about Christ.

That person repents and believes.

The believer publicly identifies with Christ through baptism.

The new disciple is taught what Jesus commanded.

The disciple learns to obey Christ.

The disciple continues growing.

And eventually that disciple helps another person follow Christ.

This is not a momentary religious transaction.

This is a life shaped by Jesus Christ.

So Mark tells us to proclaim.

Matthew tells us to make disciples.

And when we place the other commission passages beside them, the picture becomes even clearer.

Listen to Luke 24, beginning with verse 46.

“And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day:

“And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

“And ye are witnesses of these things.

“And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.”

Luke tells us the content of the message.

Christ suffered.

Christ rose from the dead.

Repentance and forgiveness of sins are proclaimed in His name.

Luke tells us where the movement begins.

It begins at Jerusalem.

Luke also tells us that the witnesses cannot accomplish the mission through human enthusiasm alone.

They must receive power from on high.

Then John 20:21 says,

“Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.”

Jesus was sent by the Father.

Now Jesus sends His followers.

And Acts 1:8 says,

“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”

Now the complete commission begins to emerge.

Who possesses the authority?

Jesus Christ.

Matthew says,

“All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.”

The word translated “power” includes the idea of authority.

Jesus does not begin by telling the disciples how strong they are.

He begins by telling them who He is.

The mission does not rest upon the confidence of the messenger.

It rests upon the authority of the risen Christ.

What power enables the witnesses?

The power of the Holy Ghost.

The disciples were not told to develop an impressive marketing plan and then conquer the world through human organization.

They were told to wait until they received power from on high.

What message do they carry?

They carry the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Christ died.

Christ was buried.

Christ rose again.

Repentance and forgiveness are proclaimed in His name.

Where do they carry it?

Jerusalem.

Judea.

Samaria.

The uttermost part of the earth.

What are they seeking?

Not admirers.

Not religious customers.

Not people who add Jesus to an otherwise unchanged life.

They are seeking disciples.

People who believe the gospel, identify with Christ and learn to obey Him.

And are they sent alone?

No.

Jesus says,

“Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.”

Christ sends.

The Holy Ghost empowers.

Believers proclaim.

The gospel calls.

Disciples follow.

And the Church continues.

Now consider the size of the change contained in this commission.

Earlier in His ministry, Jesus gave the Twelve a temporary restriction.

Matthew 10:5 says,

“These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not:

“But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

“And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

At that time, Jesus directed their mission specifically to Israel.

Do not go to the Gentiles.

Do not enter the cities of the Samaritans.

Go to the lost sheep of Israel.

But after the resurrection, the language changes.

Go into all the world.

Make disciples of all nations.

Preach repentance and forgiveness among all nations.

Bear witness in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

The earlier restriction is gone.

The gospel is not the possession of one nation.

The gospel is not limited to one language.

The gospel is not reserved for one culture.

The gospel is not only for people whose background looks like ours.

The gospel is not only for people who already understand how church works.

The gospel is not only for people who dress like us, vote like us, speak like us or live like us.

No geographic boundary places someone outside the reach of the gospel.

No ethnic background places someone outside the reach of the gospel.

No language places someone outside the reach of the gospel.

No social position places someone outside the reach of the gospel.

No sinful past places someone beyond the saving grace of Jesus Christ.

That does not mean every person will believe.

It does mean every kind of person may be invited to believe.

“All nations” does not merely mean the political countries appearing on a modern map.

Jesus was not commissioning the Church to capture national governments and force people to behave like Christians.

He was commissioning His followers to make disciples among every people.

The gospel crosses boundaries.

It crossed from Jews to Samaritans.

It crossed from Samaritans to Gentiles.

It crossed from Jerusalem into the Roman world.

It crossed languages.

It crossed cultures.

It crossed social divisions.

It reached religious people and pagan people.

It reached wealthy people and poor people.

It reached government officials and prisoners.

It reached business owners and slaves.

The gospel went where the people were because Jesus said,

“Go.”

But now we must ask another question.

Who is included in that word “ye”?

Jesus first spoke these words to the Eleven.

Matthew says so plainly.

We should not erase the original audience.

These were the men who had walked with Jesus.

They had heard His teaching.

They had witnessed His miracles.

They had seen Him crucified.

And now they stood before the risen Christ.

They had a unique apostolic responsibility.

But could eleven men personally reach the entire world?

Could those eleven men live until the end of the age?

Could they enter every nation themselves?

No.

The commission began with them, but it could not end with them.

Jesus told them to make disciples.

Then He told them to teach those disciples to observe everything He had commanded.

Those disciples would make other disciples.

Those disciples would teach still others.

The gospel would pass from witness to hearer.

From hearer to believer.

From believer to disciple.

From disciple to disciple-maker.

The promise also extends beyond the lifetime of the Eleven.

Jesus said,

“I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”

The commission was spoken first to the apostles.

But it was entrusted through them to the continuing Church.

That does not mean every Christian receives the same assignment.

The Bible does not say every believer must become a foreign missionary.

The Bible does not say every believer must preach from a pulpit.

The Bible does not say every believer must leave his family, move to another country and learn another language.

God gives different gifts.

God assigns different places of service.

God calls particular people to particular work.

Some are pastors.

Some are teachers.

Some are evangelists.

Some are sent into foreign fields.

Some support those who are sent.

Some serve in their home community for a lifetime.

But different assignments do not mean different missions.

The whole Church shares the commission.

One person may cross an ocean.

Another may cross a street.

One person may learn a new language.

Another may finally speak to the person who sits beside him every day.

One person may be sent publicly by a church.

Another may be placed quietly by the providence of God.

We do not all go to the same location.

But none of us should be ashamed of Jesus Christ.

None of us should decide that the gospel is someone else's concern.

None of us should assume that the people around us will hear without someone speaking.

Romans 10 asks,

“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

“How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?

“And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?

“And how shall they hear without a preacher?

“And how shall they preach, except they be sent?”

Someone must go.

Someone must speak.

Someone must explain.

Someone must open the Bible.

Someone must answer the question.

Someone must tell what Jesus Christ has done.

And Acts shows us at least two ways that happened.

Acts 8 begins with the persecution that followed the death of Stephen.

Listen carefully to verses 1 through 4.

“And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.

“And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.

“As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison.

“Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.”

Notice who remained in Jerusalem.

The apostles.

Notice who was scattered.

The believers of the church.

And what did those scattered believers do?

They went everywhere preaching the Word.

They did not all stand behind pulpits.

They did not all become vocational missionaries.

They carried the good news with them.

Persecution moved them.

Circumstances changed their addresses.

Their lives were disrupted.

They did not choose the circumstances, but they remained faithful within them.

Wherever they went, the gospel went with them.

That is providential going.

Sometimes God sends a person through a clearly recognized call.

Sometimes God moves a person through circumstances that were never expected.

A new job moves someone into a new community.

A family responsibility brings someone into contact with people he would not otherwise know.

Military service takes someone across the world.

A medical need creates a relationship.

A closed door in one place opens a door somewhere else.

The believer may not have selected the road.

But once the believer is on that road, Christ is still Lord.

That is one way the gospel moved.

But it is not the only way.

Listen to Acts 13, beginning with verse 1.

“Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

“As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.

“And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

“So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus.”

This was deliberate.

The church prayed.

The church fasted.

The Holy Ghost called.

Barnabas and Saul were separated for the work.

The church laid hands upon them.

The church sent them away.

They selected a route.

They boarded a ship.

They crossed the sea.

They entered new communities.

They preached the Word of God.

Acts 8 shows believers who went because they were scattered.

Acts 13 shows missionaries who went because they were sent.

One was providential.

The other was intentional.

Both carried the gospel outward.

The Church must not choose between them.

We should bear witness wherever God places us.

And the Church should intentionally send people beyond the places we can personally reach.

“As you go” is a good description of what happened in Acts 8.

“Go” is a good description of what happened in Acts 13.

The Church needs both.

We are called to go intentionally and to bear witness wherever we go.

Now this raises a practical question for the local church.

Should we bring people to the gospel?

Or should we take the gospel to people?

The primary movement of the Great Commission is outward.

Jesus did not tell the world to find the Church.

He told the Church to go into the world.

The book of Acts records the gospel being carried into homes, cities, synagogues, marketplaces and distant regions.

The gospel did not remain locked inside the place where believers gathered.

That does not mean it is wrong to invite someone to church.

Please invite people.

First Corinthians 14 anticipates that an unbeliever may enter the Christian assembly, hear the truth, become convicted and recognize that God is among His people.

There is nothing wrong with bringing someone to a place where the Bible will be opened and the gospel will be proclaimed.

But an invitation to church cannot replace personal witness.

We cannot place all responsibility for evangelism upon a Sunday morning service.

We cannot assume that people who need Christ will walk through the door on their own.

The gospel does not wait inside a building for the world to come and find it.

The church gathers to worship.

The church gathers to pray.

The church gathers to learn.

The church gathers to encourage one another.

The church gathers to become equipped.

And then those believers carry Christ's message into the world.

In the world, we reach them.

In the church, we teach them.

And sometimes someone who has not yet believed enters the gathering, hears the gospel and receives Christ.

These truths do not compete.

They work together.

The attached reference sermon also raised another important concern.

What about feeding the hungry?

What about clothing people?

What about helping someone who is suffering?

Can those activities replace preaching the gospel?

No.

Food cannot forgive sins.

Clothing cannot reconcile someone to God.

Housing cannot produce the new birth.

Medicine cannot give eternal life.

Political reform cannot remove guilt before God.

A person may become healthier, safer and more comfortable while remaining separated from God.

The greatest need of every person is reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ.

So works of mercy must never become a substitute for the gospel.

But we must be equally careful on the other side.

The command to preach the gospel does not release Christians from the command to love their neighbors.

The early Church cared for people in need.

The church at Jerusalem made sure that neglected widows received assistance.

The believers in Antioch sent relief to Christians suffering from famine.

James warned against seeing someone without food or clothing and offering only empty religious words.

Jesus taught His disciples to show mercy.

And what did Jesus say in Matthew 28?

Make disciples.

Baptize them.

Teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.

The Great Commission produces disciples who learn to obey all the commands of Christ.

That includes loving our neighbors.

That includes showing mercy.

That includes doing good.

That includes caring about suffering.

Mercy is not the gospel.

But people transformed by the gospel should become merciful.

If we feed someone but never tell that person about Christ, we have not completed the commission.

If we speak about Christ while remaining cold toward obvious suffering, we have not taught obedience to everything Christ commanded.

We do not need to choose between truth and love.

Biblical love tells the truth.

Biblical truth produces love.

Now let us return to the center of the commission.

Mark says,

“Preach the gospel.”

What is the gospel?

The word means good news.

But good news about what?

First Corinthians 15 gives us a clear summary.

Paul writes,

“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand;

“By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

“For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;

“And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.”

That is the message we carry.

Jesus Christ died for our sins.

He did not merely die as an example of courage.

He died for our sins.

He bore the judgment our sins deserved.

He was buried.

And on the third day, He rose from the dead.

The grave could not hold Him.

Death did not defeat Him.

Jesus Christ is alive.

And forgiveness is proclaimed in His name.

The gospel is not,

“Try harder and perhaps God will accept you.”

The gospel is not,

“Become religious and perhaps your good deeds will outweigh your sins.”

The gospel is not,

“Join a church and learn to look like the people around you.”

The gospel is the good news of what God has done through Jesus Christ.

Christ died for sinners.

Christ rose again.

Christ offers forgiveness.

Christ calls us to repent and believe.

Before we ask where you will carry the gospel, we must ask whether you have received the gospel.

It is possible to know the words “Go ye into all the world” without knowing the Savior who spoke them.

It is possible to attend church without being reconciled to God.

It is possible to do good things without receiving the gift of eternal life.

It is possible to admire Jesus without becoming His disciple.

The Great Commission first reaches us.

Someone carried the message to us.

Someone opened a Bible.

Someone preached.

Someone taught.

Someone answered a question.

Someone crossed a boundary.

Someone spoke when remaining silent would have been easier.

And through that witness, we heard about Jesus.

Have you believed the gospel?

Have you recognized that your sin separates you from God?

Do you believe that Jesus Christ died for your sins?

Do you believe that He rose from the dead?

Are you willing to turn from trusting yourself and place your trust in Him?

The Bible says,

“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

You do not need to perform for us.

You do not need to repeat words you do not mean.

You do not need to make a public display.

You may call upon Christ sincerely.

You may tell Him that you know you are a sinner.

You may tell Him that you believe He died and rose again.

You may ask Him to forgive you.

You may place your trust in Him.

And when you receive Christ, that is not the end of your journey.

It is the beginning of discipleship.

You begin learning from Him.

You begin following Him.

You begin growing in His Word.

You identify with Him.

And eventually you help someone else discover what you have discovered.

That is how the commission continues.

One disciple helps another person become a disciple.

One generation teaches the next.

One church sends people into places it cannot reach by itself.

One believer speaks to one person with an open Bible.

And the gospel continues moving outward.

So what does this mean for those of us who already know Christ?

Where has Christ placed you?

Who is already near you?

Who may never enter a church building unless someone takes the gospel to them?

Is there someone in your family who knows that you attend church but has never heard you explain why you trust Jesus?

Is there someone at work who has asked a question you avoided because you did not know how to begin?

Is there a neighbor you greet but do not really know?

Is there someone from another culture whom God has placed directly in your path?

Is God asking you to cross a boundary?

Perhaps the boundary is geographic.

Perhaps God is calling you to another community, another island or another nation.

Perhaps He is calling you to support someone who is already preparing to go.

Perhaps the boundary is relational.

You need to cross the room.

You need to sit at the table.

You need to begin a conversation.

You need to listen before you speak.

You need to ask what the person believes.

You need to open the Bible together.

Perhaps your part is to pray faithfully for a missionary.

Perhaps your part is to give so that someone else can go.

Perhaps your part is to help a new believer learn the Word of God.

Perhaps your part is to stop assuming that someone else will speak.

This is not an invitation to manufacture guilt.

I am not going to suggest that every person who remains in Hawaii is disobedient.

I am not going to suggest that every faithful Christian must leave home.

I am not going to suggest that crossing an ocean automatically makes someone obedient.

The question is not whether you have traveled far enough.

The question is whether you are available to Christ.

Are you willing to go where He sends you?

Are you willing to remain where He places you?

Are you willing to speak when He gives you an opportunity?

Are you willing to help the Church send someone beyond your reach?

Are you willing to invest the time required to make a disciple rather than merely obtaining a decision?

Jesus did not say,

“Stay where you are and wait for the world to come.”

He sent His followers outward.

But the destination was never the point by itself.

We go so the gospel may be proclaimed.

We proclaim so people may hear.

People hear so they may believe.

Those who believe become disciples.

Those disciples are baptized.

They are taught to obey Christ.

And then they carry the same gospel to someone else.

What did Jesus mean when He said,

“Go ye into all the world”?

He was sending His followers outward under His authority.

He was not merely telling them to mention Him if an opportunity happened to appear during the ordinary course of life.

He was placing the whole world before His Church.

He was removing geographic, cultural and ethnic boundaries from the reach of the gospel.

He was commanding that the good news be proclaimed and that disciples be made.

The whole Church shares that mission.

But Christ assigns different believers to different places within it.

Some go because the Church deliberately sends them.

Some go because circumstances move them.

Some cross oceans.

Some cross streets.

Some speak to crowds.

Some sit with one person and an open Bible.

We are called to go intentionally.

And we are called to bear witness wherever we go.

In just a moment, we will close in prayer.

Before we do, I want to mention a few things for those who are visiting with us.

We do not pass an offering plate at Reason Together Church.

If you belong to another congregation, we encourage you to support your home church.

We are not asking you to give to us.

Our members who choose to support the ministry may use the giving method we have made available.

There is also a guest card available.

It asks only for your first name and email address.

We do not need a long form filled with personal information.

We simply want to thank you for being here and help you remain connected if you choose.

The sermon transcript and Pastor Commentary for this study will also be available in the study package.

You will be able to return to the Scriptures, examine the research and continue reasoning through the question after today.

And I hope you will join us at the Reason Together Café.

The coffee is free.

We serve locally grown coffee in our Reason Together Church mugs.

And there are always free refills on conversations.

If you still have questions, bring them with you.

If you noticed something in the passage that we did not discuss, let us talk about it.

If you received Christ today or want to understand the gospel more clearly, please speak with me.

The Keiki Kids Center is also available during our services and events so families can participate fully.

Let us pray.

Our Heavenly Father,

Thank You for sending Your Son into this world.

Thank You that Jesus Christ died for our sins.

Thank You that He was buried.

Thank You that He rose again.

Thank You that forgiveness is proclaimed in His name.

Thank You for the person who carried the gospel to us.

Thank You for the pastor, teacher, parent, friend or faithful believer who spoke when remaining silent would have been easier.

For anyone receiving the gospel today, make the truth clear.

Draw that person to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

Give assurance through Your Word.

Lead that new believer into a life of discipleship.

For those who already know Christ, show us where You have placed us.

Show us the people we have overlooked.

Show us the boundaries we have been unwilling to cross.

Give us wisdom to speak.

Give us patience to listen.

Give us compassion for those who suffer.

Give us courage to proclaim Christ without shame.

Raise up missionaries from among Your people.

Guide churches as they pray, send and support them.

Strengthen those already serving far from home.

Protect them.

Provide for them.

Encourage them when the work is lonely.

Help us never to substitute human activity for the gospel.

And help us never to use the gospel as an excuse for coldness or indifference.

Make us disciples who obey everything Christ commanded.

Make Reason Together Church a faithful witnessing church.

May we carry the gospel beyond our building.

May we carry it into our homes, our community, these islands and wherever You send us.

We cannot accomplish this through our own strength.

Fill us with the Holy Ghost.

Keep us under the authority of Jesus Christ.

And remind us that the One who sends us has promised to remain with us, even unto the end of the world.

We ask these things in the name of Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Please remain with us for coffee and conversation.

Bring your questions.

Open your Bible.

Let's Reason Together the Word of God.

To each of our first-time guests,

Aloha Nui Loa.

And to everyone,

Aloha.

REASON TOGETHER STUDIES

PASTOR'S COMMENTARY

GO YE...

Mark 16:15

And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. Mark 16:15

Dr. Thomas W. Hawksley

Pastor & Teacher

Commentary in Brief

CENTRAL CONCLUSION Jesus did not describe an optional witness that occurs only when believers happen to be traveling. He commissioned His Church to move outward under His authority, proclaim the Gospel and make disciples among all peoples. “Go” is participial in form but directive in function. The whole Church shares one mission through different assignments.

The words “Go ye into all the world” are familiar enough to sound simple. They are printed on missionary banners, spoken at commissioning services and used to call believers beyond the walls of the church. Yet a popular explanation has introduced a question: Did Jesus actually command His followers to go, or did the original wording mean only “as you go”?

The answer requires more than choosing between two English slogans. In Mark 16:15 and Matthew 28:19 the word translated “go” is a participle, while the finite imperatives are “proclaim” in Mark and “make disciples” in Matthew. That grammatical observation is important, but it does not make the movement incidental. The participle is joined to the command and shares its directive force. The risen Christ sends His followers outward with a message and a task.

The complete meaning becomes clearest when Mark is read beside Matthew, Luke, John and Acts. Christ possesses all authority. He sends witnesses in the power of the Holy Spirit. They announce His death and resurrection, call people to repentance and faith, baptize those who believe and teach disciples to obey Him. The mission begins where the disciples are, but it does not end there. It presses toward all nations and the uttermost part of the earth.

This commentary expands the Biblical reasoning behind the sermon. It examines the language of “go,” follows the Commission through the four Gospels and Acts, distinguishes the Church’s common mission from the believer’s particular assignment and explains why compassionate service can accompany the Gospel but cannot replace it.

1. Hearing the Commission as a Whole

One Commission, Several Witnesses

The New Testament does not preserve the Great Commission as one isolated sentence. Matthew 28:16–20, Mark 16:15, Luke 24:44–49, John 20:19–23 and Acts 1:6–8 present complementary aspects of the risen Lord’s charge. These accounts are not competing versions from which the reader must select a favorite. Together they provide a fuller view of the same mission.

Mark stresses proclamation: “preach the gospel.” Matthew stresses the making of disciples through baptism and teaching. Luke identifies the saving events and response at the center of the message: the Christ suffered, rose from the dead and repentance and remission of sins are to be preached in His name. John presents mission as a

sending patterned after the Son's own obedience to the Father. Acts adds the promised power of the Holy Spirit and traces the expanding geography of witness from Jerusalem to the uttermost part of the earth.

Reading the accounts together protects the Church from narrowing the mission. Proclamation without disciple-making can become a momentary announcement with no patient teaching. Disciple-making without the Gospel can become religious formation without the saving message of Christ. Global concern without local witness can become admiration at a distance. Local witness without intentional sending can leave entire peoples beyond the Church's active concern.

The Risen Christ Is the Speaker

The Commission follows the resurrection. Jesus is not offering general advice about improving society or extending a religious institution. The crucified One has risen, possesses universal authority and sends witnesses because a decisive saving act has occurred. The Church's mission begins with what God has done in Christ, not with what Christians hope to accomplish through their own energy.

This setting also gives courage to imperfect messengers. In Mark's immediate context Jesus addresses disciples whose unbelief and hardness of heart have just been rebuked. In Matthew some worship while some doubt. In Luke the disciples must wait for power from on high. Their adequacy does not come from natural confidence, flawless understanding or institutional strength. They go because Christ sends, and they depend upon the presence and power He provides.

2. Mark 16:15: Movement, Message and Scope

"Go Ye into All the World"

Mark 16:15 joins four ideas that should remain together. "Go ye" supplies movement. "Into all the world" supplies the field. "Preach the gospel" identifies the entrusted message. "To every creature" gives the proclamation its comprehensive human horizon. The verse is outward in direction, global in scope, verbal in action and evangelical in content.

The phrase "into all the world" is not naturally heard as a description of permanent stillness. The Greek preposition *eis* ordinarily expresses movement into or toward a place. The whole world is the sphere into which the witnesses are sent. Jerusalem is not despised, but it cannot remain the boundary. Familiar people are not neglected, but familiarity cannot define the limit of Christian concern.

"Proclaim the Gospel"

The finite command in Mark is *kēruخته*, from *kēryssō*, meaning to proclaim or herald publicly. A herald did not originate the royal announcement. He carried another's message under delegated authority. That image

serves the passage well. The Church does not possess the freedom to substitute its preferred program, political cause or moral philosophy for the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The herald image must not be pressed too far. Apostolic proclamation included explanation, reasoning, teaching, appeal and patient answers. Paul reasoned in synagogues and marketplaces. Peter instructed believers to be ready to give an answer with meekness and fear. Faithful proclamation therefore means that the message remains Christ's while the messenger labors to make it understandable to real hearers.

"To Every Creature"

The King James expression "every creature" translates *pasē tē ktisei*, literally "to all creation" or "to every creature." In this commission the phrase points to humanity throughout the created world as the audience of Gospel proclamation. It emphasizes breadth. The good news is not the property of one nation, language, class or culture.

This universal horizon agrees with Matthew's "all nations," Luke's "all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" and Acts' "unto the uttermost part of the earth." No ethnicity lies outside Christ's authority. No culture is beyond the Gospel's address. No person is beneath the Church's concern. The command does not promise that every individual will hear from one generation of believers, but it establishes the continuing direction and breadth of the Church's mission.

3. "Go" and "As You Go"

Poreuthentes in Form

The Greek word translated "go" in Mark 16:15 is *poreuthentes*, an aorist participle from *poreuomai*, "to go," "travel" or "proceed." In grammatical form it is not the finite imperative of the sentence. A very wooden rendering could begin, "Having gone, proclaim the Gospel." Matthew 28:19 uses the same participial form before the imperative "make disciples."

This observation explains why some teachers prefer the phrase "as you go." They want believers to recognize that witness belongs in ordinary life, not only on a distant mission field. That pastoral concern is sound. Homes, workplaces, neighborhoods, journeys, hardships and providential relocations all become places in which Christians may speak of Christ.

Directive Force in Context

The grammatical form, however, does not by itself determine the full force of the expression. Greek participles can accompany a command so closely that the actions form one directive unit. Grammarians often describe this use as attendant circumstance. In such a construction the participle is subordinate in form but participates in the

command's force. English translations therefore responsibly render the expression "Go ... and preach" or "Go ... and make disciples."

Context confirms the outward force. The witnesses are sent into the whole world and to all nations. Acts shows believers crossing geographic, ethnic and cultural boundaries. Churches deliberately set apart and send workers. Paul describes his ambition to preach where Christ was not named. These patterns cannot be reduced to mentioning Jesus only when ordinary travel happens to place someone elsewhere.

What "As You Go" Gets Right and Wrong

"As you go" is helpful when it means, "Do not wait for a special trip before you bear witness." It is misleading when it means, "No one needs to go intentionally." The first statement restores daily faithfulness. The second weakens the Commission's worldwide movement and ignores the deliberate sending found in Acts.

The better synthesis is: We are called to go intentionally and to bear witness wherever we go. Intentional going protects the Church from passive waiting. Witness wherever we go protects mission from being restricted to foreign travel. One truth answers complacency, while the other answers the mistaken idea that ordinary places do not matter.

4. Matthew 28: Make Disciples

The Governing Command

In Matthew 28:19 the finite imperative is *mathēteusate*, "make disciples." The object is "all nations." The Commission is therefore not fulfilled merely by movement. Travel without the Gospel is not mission, and a brief religious impression without disciple-making is not the whole task. The Church goes so that people among all nations may become followers of Jesus.

The word translated "nations," *ethnē*, often refers to peoples or Gentile nations rather than to modern political states alone. The vision reaches beyond maps and national borders to cultural and ethnic communities. A church may be geographically near people who remain culturally distant. Faithfulness may require crossing a street, learning another language, listening across social difference or entering a community that is close in miles but far from the church's accustomed life.

Baptizing and Teaching

Matthew continues with two participles that describe essential features of disciple-making: baptizing and teaching. Baptism publicly identifies the believer with the triune name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Teaching forms disciples in the obedient life of faith. Jesus does not say merely, "Teach them what I commanded." He says, "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." Biblical instruction aims at faithful practice.

This protects evangelism from a thin view of response. The Gospel calls for repentance and faith, but those who believe are not abandoned after an initial decision. They enter the fellowship of Christ's people, confess Him publicly and learn His ways. Proclamation gives birth to discipleship, and discipleship continues to be nourished by the Gospel.

Christ's Authority and Presence

The command is framed by two assurances. Before it Jesus declares, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." After it He promises, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Mission rests between Christ's universal authority and Christ's abiding presence.

The Church does not go to make Jesus Lord of places where He lacks authority. It goes because the risen Jesus is Lord. Nor does the Church carry His message while He remains at a safe distance. The One who sends remains with His people. This promise does not remove hardship, but it means that obedience never requires the disciple to leave Christ behind.

5. Luke, John and Acts Complete the Picture

Repentance and Forgiveness

Luke 24:44–49 grounds the mission in the Scriptures and in the saving events they anticipated. The Christ must suffer and rise from the dead. Repentance and remission of sins are then proclaimed in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. The message is neither vague spirituality nor general moral improvement. It announces what God has done through the crucified and risen Christ and summons hearers to turn to Him.

Beginning at Jerusalem reveals both grace and order. The city associated with Christ's rejection becomes the first field of resurrection witness. Grace reaches guilty people. Yet "beginning" does not mean "remaining." Jerusalem is the starting point of a widening mission that reaches Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth.

Sent as Christ Was Sent

In John 20:21 Jesus says, "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." The comparison does not make the disciples additional redeemers. Christ's saving work is unique. It does show that Christian mission is patterned by His obedience, presence among people, truthfulness, compassion and sacrifice. The Church cannot faithfully announce the Servant while pursuing its mission in pride, coercion or contempt.

Jesus' words are accompanied by the sign of the Spirit. John's account, like Luke and Acts, refuses to separate sending from divine enablement. Mission is not a human project to which God is asked to lend assistance. It is Christ's work carried forward through witnesses who depend upon His Spirit.

Spirit-Empowered Witness

Acts 1:8 supplies a programmatic statement for the book: “Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me.” The promised power is directed toward witness. The expanding places that follow, Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the uttermost part of the earth, form both a geography and a theological movement.

The disciples had asked about the restoration of the kingdom to Israel. Jesus redirected their attention from controlling the timetable to fulfilling their calling. The Church may easily become absorbed in speculation, controversy or its own security. Acts returns attention to the task before it: receive the Spirit’s power and bear witness to Christ.

6. Two Patterns in Acts

Providence through Scattering

Acts 8:1–4 records severe persecution after the death of Stephen. Believers are scattered through Judea and Samaria, and “they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.” Their movement was not the comfortable result of a carefully planned itinerary. Providence used suffering and displacement to carry the message beyond Jerusalem.

This passage demonstrates the truth often expressed by “as you go.” Ordinary believers, not only the apostles, carried the Word into the places where circumstances moved them. A new job, military service, migration, education, family responsibility or an unwanted interruption may place a Christian among people who need to hear. Providence can create a field that was never part of the believer’s original plan.

Intentional Sending

Acts 13:1–4 presents a second pattern. The church at Antioch worships and fasts. The Holy Ghost directs the congregation to set apart Barnabas and Saul for a particular work. The church fasts, prays, lays hands on them and sends them away. This is not incidental travel. It is deliberate, Spirit-directed and congregationally recognized mission.

Acts therefore refuses the choice between providential witness and intentional sending. The Church needs believers who carry the Word wherever life places them, and it needs workers who cross boundaries because the Spirit calls and the congregation sends. A healthy missionary vision makes room for both.

The Antioch pattern also challenges spiritual independence. Barnabas and Saul do not appear as religious adventurers accountable only to themselves. They emerge from a worshiping and teaching church. They are set apart in community, sent with prayer and later report what God has done. The local church equips, discerns, sends, supports and receives.

7. What the Church Carries

The Gospel Is Christ's Message

The command to go receives its identity from the Gospel carried. The New Testament's good news is not generic encouragement. Paul reminds the Corinthians that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, was buried and rose again the third day. The apostles announce Jesus as Lord, proclaim forgiveness in His name and call people to repent and believe.

The messenger therefore serves a message that has been received. Culture may shape the questions people ask and the illustrations that help them understand. Love requires listening, clarity and patience. Yet contextual wisdom must never become permission to remove the offense of the cross, deny the resurrection, soften the call to repentance or replace faith in Christ with confidence in human progress.

Heralding, Teaching and Persuasion

Some discussions describe a herald as one who merely announces and never explains or persuades. The New Testament is more complete. Paul can speak of the necessity laid upon him to preach the Gospel, adapt his manner for different hearers and reason with people from the Scriptures. He identifies believers as ambassadors through whom God makes an appeal.

Faithfulness is neither manipulation nor indifference. Christians cannot produce spiritual life through technique, pressure or eloquence. They also cannot use divine sovereignty as an excuse for careless speech. The Gospel deserves clear announcement, honest explanation, thoughtful answers and a loving appeal to be reconciled to God.

8. One Mission, Different Assignments

The Whole Church Shares the Responsibility

The words were first spoken to the apostolic circle, whose foundational witness to the risen Christ is unique. Yet the mission reaches beyond the lifetime of the apostles. Matthew's promise extends to the end of the age. Acts records scattered believers preaching the Word. Congregations send laborers, and leaders equip the saints for the work of ministry.

Every Christian is therefore connected to Christ's mission. No disciple is authorized to be unconcerned about whether others hear the Gospel. This common responsibility does not mean that every believer must perform the same role. The New Testament body has many members and varied gifts, yet those members serve one Lord and participate in one purpose.

Not Every Believer Has the Same Geography

Some believers are called to cross oceans. Others cross a culture within their own city. Some speak to a neighbor, coworker or family member. Some remain in a place for decades and cultivate patient credibility. Some teach, translate, host, give, pray or provide practical support that allows others to go. These assignments differ, but none should be used to excuse indifference.

The measure of obedience is not whether one believer's assignment appears as dramatic as another's. A person should not manufacture a foreign calling from guilt, and a person should not hide from a genuine call behind the language of local faithfulness. The proper question is whether the believer is available to Christ and faithful in the place and work He gives.

Senders, Goers and Faithful Local Witnesses

Romans 10 traces a necessary sequence: people call on the Lord because they believe, believe because they hear, hear through preaching and receive preaching because messengers are sent. The passage honors both the one who speaks and the community that makes sending possible. Mission is not sustained by admiration. It requires prayer, resources, encouragement and enduring partnership.

At the same time, support for distant work does not purchase exemption from nearby witness. The believer who gives to missions still has neighbors. The pastor who teaches global mission still encounters people in the community. The missionary who travels far must still speak to the person directly in front of him. The Commission joins the far horizon to present faithfulness.

9. Compassion, Good Works and the Great Commission

Biblical Mercy Matters

Scripture commands love of neighbor, generosity, impartial justice, care for the vulnerable and visible good works that glorify the Father. Jesus had compassion on the sick and hungry. The early Church remembered the poor. James warned against words of blessing that refuse practical help. Any interpretation of mission that treats bodily suffering as irrelevant has failed to hear the whole counsel of God.

Compassion also belongs to the character of the messenger. The Church cannot truthfully commend the love of Christ while displaying contempt for people. Hospitality, mercy and practical service may open relationships, remove needless obstacles and visibly express the love proclaimed. They are genuine forms of Christian obedience, not public relations devices.

Good Works Cannot Replace the Gospel

The distinction is equally important. Feeding the hungry is good, but bread does not explain the cross. Seeking justice is right, but social improvement does not reconcile a sinner to God. A life of kindness may commend the messenger, but observers cannot infer the death and resurrection of Christ without words.

The Church should therefore reject both reductionisms. It must not proclaim a message of eternal life while becoming cold toward present suffering. It must not become so absorbed in worthy social action that Christ's saving Gospel is assumed, obscured or omitted. Mercy accompanies the mission. Holiness adorns the message. Neither becomes a substitute for proclaiming Christ and making disciples.

10. The Local Church and the World

Equipping the Saints

Ephesians 4:11–16 describes leaders given to equip the saints for the work of ministry and to build up the body in truth and love. The local church is a forming community. It teaches believers to understand Scripture, state the Gospel, answer sincere questions, live holy lives and serve with the gifts God has supplied.

This equipping is not a retreat from evangelism. It prepares the whole body for faithful ministry. A congregation dependent upon a few public speakers will reach only the relationships those speakers can personally enter. A church that equips its members carries the witness of Christ into homes, workplaces, schools and communities throughout the week.

Reaching Outward without Rejecting Invitation

The command to go corrects the idea that a church can fulfill the Commission only by inviting unbelievers to attend a service. The direction of mission is outward. Believers must enter the places where people live, listen and speak with clarity. Permanent reliance on attraction can leave those with no interest, transportation or cultural familiarity beyond the congregation's reach.

Yet outward mission does not make invitation improper. Unbelievers may hear the truth in gathered worship, observe Christian fellowship and be welcomed into relationships. The false choice is between an inward church that never goes and an outward church that never gathers. The Biblical pattern is a worshiping, teaching, equipping and sending church whose members carry Christ into the world and welcome people to hear His Word.

11. Mark 16:9–20 and Responsible Interpretation

The Textual Evidence

Mark 16:15 occurs within the passage commonly called the longer ending of Mark. The earliest extant Greek manuscripts Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus end the Gospel at Mark 16:8. The longer ending appears in the great majority of later Greek manuscripts and has early Christian attestation. Irenaeus, writing in the second century, cites Mark 16:19. Some manuscripts also preserve other endings or mark the transition in distinctive ways.

These facts explain why modern Bibles often place Mark 16:9–20 in brackets or include a note. The notation is not a secret attack on Scripture. It allows readers to see where the surviving manuscript evidence raises a substantial question about the earliest recoverable form of the text. Faithful teaching should neither conceal that evidence nor sensationalize it.

Why the Commission Does Not Depend on One Passage

The Church may teach Mark 16:15 within its received canonical tradition while acknowledging the textual question. It should not, however, make the doctrine of worldwide mission stand on this verse alone. Matthew 28, Luke 24, John 20 and Acts 1 establish the same mission in passages whose place in the text is not disputed in this way.

The wording distinctive to Mark adds a concise and memorable emphasis on proclaiming the Gospel to all creation. The broader commission remains secure even if a reader concludes that the longer ending was not part of Mark's original conclusion. Honest textual study therefore strengthens careful faith. It teaches the Church to rest doctrine on the full witness of Scripture rather than on an isolated phrase.

12. Pastoral Meaning for the Church Today

For the Individual Believer

The Commission asks more than whether a believer supports the idea of missions. It asks whether Christ's saving purpose has practical access to the believer's life. Who is already within reach? What boundary has comfort, fear, busyness or prejudice kept the believer from crossing? Is the believer able to explain the Gospel clearly, or does witness consist only of hoping that someone notices a good example?

The next act of obedience may be a conversation, an invitation, an apology that restores credibility, a commitment to learn, an offering, hospitality or a willingness to explore a distant call. Grand intentions can postpone obedience. The Commission becomes concrete when a disciple asks Christ for the next faithful step and takes it.

For Pastors and Churches

Pastors should teach global mission without using guilt to manufacture callings. They should equip believers to speak, pray for laborers, discern and confirm gifts, send workers responsibly and sustain them after the excitement of commissioning has passed. Budgets and calendars reveal whether a church's stated concern for the world has become an actual priority.

Churches should also examine whether their customs create unnecessary barriers. Faithfulness does not require altering the Gospel, but love may require learning new language, explaining unfamiliar assumptions and listening before speaking. Paul adapted himself to different audiences without surrendering the message. The Church should pursue the same union of conviction and humility.

For Those Sensing a Call to Go

A possible cross-cultural calling should be tested through Scripture, prayer, character, gifting, opportunity and the discernment of the local church. Romantic ideas about missionary life are poor guides. The call may involve language study, ordinary work, hidden service, patient relationships, danger and long seasons in which visible results are small.

Those who go should go as members of Christ's body rather than as independent heroes. They need accountability, preparation, prayer and partnership. They must learn the people they hope to serve while remembering that the Gospel is not theirs to redesign. Faithfulness, not dramatic experience or immediate numbers, is the proper measure of obedience.

For the Person Who Does Not Yet Believe

The Great Commission is not only a responsibility placed upon Christians. It also explains why the Gospel has come within hearing. Christ sends messengers because the news concerns every people and because sinners may receive forgiveness in His name. The appropriate response is not merely admiration for missionary courage. It is repentance toward God and faith in the crucified and risen Lord.

13. The Gospel at the Center

The Church can travel widely and still miss the Commission if it does not carry the Gospel. It can speak frequently and still miss the Commission if the message becomes self-help, partisan loyalty or religious respectability. It can gather decisions and still neglect the Commission if people are not taught to follow Christ.

At the center stands Jesus Christ, crucified for sins, risen from the dead and exalted as Lord. Because He has acted, forgiveness can be announced. Because He lives, disciples are not invited to remember a departed teacher but to follow a present King. Because all authority belongs to Him, every nation lies within the reach of His claim and invitation.

The Commission therefore draws the Church away from both self-importance and passivity. The mission is too great to be accomplished by human strength, so the Church depends upon the Holy Spirit. The message is too precious to be altered, so the Church handles it faithfully. The world is too broad for one person's assignment, so the members of the body labor together.

Conclusion: Go Intentionally, Witness Faithfully

What did Jesus mean when He said, "Go ye into all the world"? He meant that His followers were to move outward under His authority with the Gospel, crossing the boundaries necessary for all peoples to hear and for disciples to be made. The word "go" is participial in form, but it functions within a directive commission. It cannot responsibly be reduced to accidental witness.

"As you go" still preserves an important truth when it calls believers to faithfulness in ordinary life. Acts shows the Word carried through providential scattering, and it also shows workers deliberately sent by the Spirit and the church. The complete Biblical picture includes both. We are called to go intentionally and to bear witness wherever we go.

The whole Church owns this mission, though Christ does not give every member the same assignment. Some cross oceans, some cross cultures and some cross a street. Some proclaim, some teach, some send and some sustain. All remain accountable to the risen Lord. The question is not whether another person's calling appears larger. The question is whether each disciple and each church will take the next faithful step with Christ's Gospel, in the Spirit's power and under the promise of Christ's presence.

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