

# GREAT COMMISSION MESSAGE

**"You Are Commissioned!"**

**Matthew 28:19-20**

**January 8, 2012**

## PLANT THE SEED:

### INTRODUCTION:

A huge metal structure was built in 1889 for an international exposition. It was larger than anything that was built like it before, and it was considered by many as a 'monstrosity that was to grotesque to see.' But the creator, who had spent over a year building it, knew it was destined for greatness. His name was Gustave Eiffel, and his creation was the Eiffel Tower in France. Today it is one of the architectural wonders of the modern world and stands as the primary landmark of Paris, France. Many people scoffed at Mr. Eiffel when he made the statement that he was going to build a structure that the entire world would love and travel to see. Mr. Eiffel knew that what he was thinking was correct, no matter who might have said he was wrong.

Today, I would like to talk about the church. I propose that the church, with all its problems and faults is truly a divine creation. It is not, however, one of the seven wonders of the world. It is "the" wonder of the world. It is an annoyance to many and inconsequential to others. And, it is all-important to a few. God had a plan for His church. Jesus was the great architect. Mr. Eiffel knew his creation was destined for fame, but Jesus knew His creation was destined for God's glory. Today, we are going to talk about two related subjects: What Jesus did for us, and what we should be doing for Jesus. Let's talk about...

## 1. WHAT JESUS DID FOR US

The first thing Jesus did was give His promise.

And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. ---Matthew 16:18

The first thing we see is that Jesus made a promise. He said He would build His church and the gates of Hades would not overcome it. Before we go on any further, we need to understand what a promise from Jesus really is; it is a statement that is sure. We can totally accept it as fact, even though it may not have happened yet, we know it surely will. What Jesus said will happen; will happen - period.

**ILLUSTRATION:** A former Navy officer tells about when he was in the Navy, he was stationed for a few years over in Japan. The base where he was stationed was located a short distance from Yokohama, and he used to like going down to the docks in Yokohama and watch the large ships come in and get tied down. He said you could walk by the edge of the pier, fairly close to the massive ships. He always felt quite insignificant - almost invisibly small - when standing near those large ships. He tells how the ropes always amazed him. Those ropes were almost as big around as his waist and about 16 of those giant ropes were tied to a cleat that was as big as some cars. He tells you it was a mighty impressive sight to see! But the image I want to plant in your mind this morning is that Jesus' promises are like huge mooring lines that stretch up to the Throne of the living God. And as securely as those car-sized cleats are that hold that ship steady, Jesus' promises are even more securely attached to the immovable kingdom of Heaven, and they will hold us even steadier.

Jesus has given me a promise that is so good I have to repeat it to myself every day. I want to share that promise with you this morning. Gateway Community Church is not my church nor is it your church. This church belongs to none other than Jesus Christ, our Redeemer. And as the owner of this church, Jesus has promised to make it grow. It doesn't matter how He is going to grow this church, it only matters that He loves us enough to give His promise to us. And He never breaks a promise. Now, it might not be in my lifetime that this happens. He could have put me here to see the first seeds planted. I don't know when it will grow, but I do know that as long as we put our total faith and focus in Him, it will grow - for His glory. Jesus said, "I will build my church..." This is His church and He will do the

building. As any architect uses others to lay the groundwork, Jesus is using us to lay the groundwork for building our church. Jesus gave us His promise. He also gave us a purpose. That purpose is found in MATTHEW 28:19-20:

'Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always to the very end of the age.' ---Matthew 28:19-20

Before we go on any further, let me take a few moments and break this verse down to a level that we can relate to. First of all, Jesus said "Go and make" (or As you are going...), He did not say, "Stay and enjoy." Instead of being happy to just come here every Sunday and enjoy the company of our friends and church family, we are supposed to actually try and grow God's earthly kingdom. And that is to tell others about Jesus and about His church. Even though we tend to act as if this is just a choice, it isn't. It is something we are "commanded" to do. In Verse 20, Jesus tells us it is a command and if we are truly obedient Christians we will do what He tells us to do.

Statistics tell us in poll after poll that less than 5% of all Christians actually do go out, and talk about Jesus. That means 95% of us are disobedient. A lot of explaining will be heard by many people on Judgment Day, won't there? In which percentile will you be come Judgment Day? When you see musicians bring musical instruments on the stage, you know they will be playing them, right? If you see a bunch of kids with bats walking into an empty lot, you know what they will be doing, don't you? We know what people are supposed to do in different situations, but sometimes we don't know what they are supposed to do in church. People are supposed to be gentle and loving to others in church. But that in itself does not mean they are working for Christ. We are supposed to help others within the church, but that doesn't mean that church is focused on Christ.

If Henry Ford came to town and offered a free car to anyone who would just believe that he is the one offering it, we would have no problems seeing that as

fact. But, when Jesus Christ came to town and offered salvation if we would just believe it comes from Him, we fight it tooth and nail, don't we? We get confused and forget what we are supposed to be doing.

As a pastor, I get all kinds of emails and magazines from Christian organizations with unique ideas for church ministry. I find all sorts of things going on in churches from chess clubs to aerobic classes - and these are all fine things to do and learn, but according to Jesus Christ, who founded the church - and who died for it - our main purpose is to make more and better disciples! So, when we do these things the focus should remain on Making Disciples. I suppose it's in the "how" you make disciples that lead to all the unusual things being done by churches today. But we must never let our focus as a church get off the main thing, which, according to Jesus is to make disciples. We take people like we used to be; sinful, vile, and unsaved. We take them and train them up in the way of the Lord, through loving friendships and the Word of God.

Jesus gave His church something else. He gave us the process to follow so that we could accomplish His purpose, which is to make more disciples. That process involves four steps.

Jesus said to the curious: *'Come and you will see.....'* ---John 1:39

Jesus said to those who understood: *'Come, follow Me.....'* ---Mark 1:17

Jesus saw some who became committed. *'Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him.'* ---Mark 3:13

He told those who were committed to *'Remain in Him', 'Remain in me, and I will remain in you.'* ---John 15:4

And in MATTHEW 28, He told them to *'go and do'.* *'Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, ---Matthew 28:19'*

**ILLUSTRATION:** Rick Warren has developed a Discipling Class at Saddleback

called C.L.A.S.S. 101. One of the graphics he uses is the baseball diamond. That shows us where our paths should be taking us: **First base = 'Come and see'; Second base = 'Follow Me'; Third base = 'Remain in Me', and Home = 'Go and do.'**

This should be the constant focus of every person in every church; Come and see what Jesus offers; Follow Jesus; Remain in Him, and then Go and do for Him. So, through His promise, Jesus gave us purpose. Then He gave us the process in which to fulfill that purpose. But He gave us something else, too. He gave power that will enable us to implement His procedures. One of the most important verses in the Bible in regards to those who have already received Jesus is found in -

**'But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.'**  
---Acts 1:8

This is very important - we must operate as a church on Holy Spirit power and not on our own power or we're not going to make it.

**ILLUSTRATION:** I love the story about what happened a few years ago on New Year's Day, in the Tournament of Roses parade. With the television cameras whirring and bands playing, a beautiful float suddenly sputtered to a halt. Tractors are used to power the floats, and the tractor powering this particular float ran out of gas. The whole parade was held up until someone could get a five-gallon can of gas and then climb under the beautiful flowered float to fill the tractor's gas tank. The most amusing thing about it was this float represented the Standard Oil Company. Owning much of the nation's gas reserves, its own tractor ran out of gas.

Sometimes we are like that in the church. We have all the resources of God's power available to us through his Holy Spirit, and yet more often than I care to admit, even my own engine coughs, sputters, and quits because I've been running on Bruce's power rather than on the Holy Spirit's power. I wonder how many churches run on their own power and forget about using the power in God's Holy Spirit? Jesus Christ says for us not to rely on our own power - but on the Spirit's power.

We talked about what Jesus did for us, but now let's talk about ...

## 2. WHAT WE SHOULD DO FOR JESUS?

The Lord gave us His promise, His purpose, His procedures, and His power. What should our response be for His giving us those four things? I think we need to remember who our Leader really is. He is Jesus Christ, the head of the church. We should never follow a pastor or any other man who walks the face of this earth.

*'And God placed all things under His feet and appointed Him to be the head over everything for the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills everything in every way.'* ---Ephesians 1:22-23

And when we remember, we can relax because our Christ is the One who is in control of everything. Christ Jesus is faithful to His word, and He has promised to build His church. Many of American's Christians need to relax and get out of His way as He goes about that job of building His church - and then He can use us to do His work. Many others need to remember that the church is not just one choice among many choices but that it is the most important thing that we can be a part of. What we are doing for and within the church is much more important than anything else we do in life. We are building strength and abilities within the body of Christ.

**ILLUSTRATION:** There is the story of a man who walked by a construction site. He saw a man chiseling a large rock and he asked him what he was doing. The man looked at him and with a disgusted tone of voice said, "What does it look like I'm doing? I'm breaking rocks." The man walked a little further and saw another man chiseling a stone. He asked the second man what he was doing and the man replied with a smile, "I'm building a cathedral."

We must keep in mind that we are not just building a local church here at Gateway Community Church. We are building a cathedral to house God's children in so they can come and worship the Lord generation after generation. We are called to do

something else for Jesus, too: As Christians; as serious followers of Christ Jesus, we are called to receive our commission. What does the word "commission" mean? In the Encarta dictionary, "commission" is defined as -

A) 'the authority granted to a person or organization to act as an agent for another' and

B) 'a job or task given to a person or group, especially an order to produce a particular product or piece of work'

We receive many commissions in life. When I became a Christian, I received my commission to pick up my cross and follow Jesus. When I got married, I received my commission to be a husband and possibly a father. When I became a pastor, I received my commission to do my best to lead a congregation closer to Jesus Christ. And when I accepted this pastorate, I received a commission to do everything within my power to increase the capacity of this church for Christ, in every way He will allow me. As a believer in Jesus Christ, you have also received a Commission. You received it the day you were baptized.

'You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit - fruit that will last.' ---John 15:16

"Fruit that will last" is the making of new Christians. Jesus wasn't speaking to Christians when He said that. He was speaking to people just like you. You have received your commission to take up the authority He gives you and to live that commission out to your dying day. And that brings us to another thing we are to do for Christ. We are to be like that phone commercial we used to hear. It said to 'reach out and touch somebody', and as Christians, that is our commission. We are to fulfill our purpose by reaching out and touching somebody for Jesus. Let me read the Great Commission once more.

'Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey

everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always to the very end of the age.' ---Matthew 28:19-20

Let us remember that we cannot reach out and touch anyone unless we love that person enough to reach out in the first place. There's an old hymn I remember singing when I was young: "The Family of God."

"I'm so glad I'm a part of the family of God - I've been washed in the fountain - cleansed by His blood! Joint heirs with Jesus - as we travel this sod, For I'm part of the family - the family of God."

**ILLUSTRATION:** There were two paddleboats leaving Tennessee and going to New Orleans. They left together and began their trek down the Mighty Mississippi River. After a while, the crew on each ship started taunting one another about how slow they were. This soon developed into rivalry and then the race was on. One boat began falling behind, however. They had enough fuel to make the trip, but not to run a race. As they began to lose way to the faster ship, one of the crewmembers had an idea that might work. He went down into the ship's cargo hold and brought some of the ship's cargo and tossed them into the furnace. When the other crewmembers saw that the cargo would burn just as good as coal, they all began to burn more supplies. That ship overtook the other ship and finally won the race. They were commissioned to take care of the cargo, but they ended up burning it all so they could win the race. How very sad that many Christians are so eager to win the race that we destroy some of our cargo along the way.

Some churches strive for massive numbers in their congregations. Along the way, some have been known to destroy the parts of the Bible that are too uncomfortable for some to hear. They stop preaching about sin and hell, and begin talking about how happy you can be in life. The biggest problem with that is a Christian life should be about sacrificing oneself for the Lord, not about fulfilling oneself at the expense of the Lord.

God has commissioned us to take care of the cargo He has given us. That cargo

might be friends and family. Yet, too many Christians neglect to take the time to reach out and touch their friends and family for Christ. Reaching out in love is what Jesus wants of each Christian, but that is also He wants from each church. And He wants us to reach out because His church is the hope of this sad and sinful world.

Yes, the church, with all its faults, is still the divine creation of Christ. We are the family of God. Christ is the head of the church while we are the servants; those entrusted to do His work. We must always stay alert and keep focused on doing God's work from within the framework of the local church. And that framework is the individual Christians within the church.

In closing, let me tell you about an eagle who dropped out of its nest right after it was hatched. A farmer saw it and took it home to nurture. He had no place to put it when it started growing, so he put it in the barnyard with the chickens. Over a period of time, the eagle learned from the chickens and began to peck around the barnyard all day long, looking for bits of food. One day, a visitor asked the farmer why the greatest of all birds was acting like a chicken. The farmer relayed the story of how he had found the eagle and had no other place to put him. Then he told the visitor how the eagle couldn't fly because it had never been taught. The visitor took the eagle up a step ladder and held it out and told the great bird to fly away. When he let go, the eagle dropped down among the chickens again. Finally, the man took the eagle to the top of the barn and held it out and told it to fly. As he dropped the bird, the eagle spread its wings and slowly soared up and away, out of sight forever.

We were all born as chickens, destined to root around in this world, being non-productive. But when we receive Jesus, we become the greatest of our kind, and it is at that point we are commissioned to soar and be productive for our Lord. I wonder if you have spent your Christian life soaring like an eagle, or slipping back to pecking like a chicken. No matter who you are, or how much you have done for God, He wants so much more out of you than you have given so far. He simply wants all of you. And He deserves nothing less.