



“Mission in the Church”  
Matthew 28:18-20

**Idea:** The church exists to bring glory to God by making disciples of neighbors and nations.

**Intro:** Jason was talking with his new neighbor Shawn alongside the driveway. Shawn and his family moved in next door last month, and this was third time Jason had gotten to speak with him. His first interaction happened when Jason and his wife took over a freshly baked apple pie and a half-gallon of vanilla ice cream just after the movers finished unpacking the moving truck. They walked next door simply to introduce themselves and welcome this new family to the neighborhood. Nothing says, “We are glad you are here” quite like apple pie. Their second interaction took place when all their kids were playing together in Jason’s backyard one evening. The two couples got a chance to get to know one another a little better that evening since the unpacking was finished and life was stabilizing for the new neighbors. It was now a Saturday morning on this third interaction, and Jason was hoping to invite Shawn and his family to church. As they stood there talking about the struggle of getting settled in a new community, Jason asked Shawn, “Would you like to join my family and I this Sunday and be our guest at church?” Shawn thanked him for the invitation and expressed how good it would be to connect with a church.

Hopefully, you have asked this question or something similar to a neighbor or a coworker in recent weeks. If not, then I hope after this series we are beginning today you will be encouraged to regularly do so. I believe, we as followers of Christ and members of this local church ought to regularly invite others to be our guests at church. With that said, have you thought much about what you are inviting someone to when you invite them to church? Biblically do you understand what the local church is and the role it is supposed to play in our lives? In many cases, I seriously doubt the average person you are inviting knows much about the church.

There are many ideas circulating out there about church. Some are good and biblical. I have shelves of good books in my library written specifically on the church and how it should be formed and operate. There are other ideas out there, however, which are nothing more than secular humanism with at best a veneer of Christian spirituality. How then, are we to think about the church? The Apostle Peter relates the church to living stones that form a spiritual house or temple before the Lord (1 Pet 2:4-5). Using this image of a house, it is easy to recognize the importance of using the proper materials when constructing the church house. After all, we want it to be strong and hold up.

The word for church in the Greek New Testament is ἐκκλησία (ekklēsia). It is compound word, stemming from the preposition ἐκ (“out of”) and the verb καλέω (“to call”). Literally, it means “the called-out ones.” In the Greek culture, ἐκκλησία was used to speak of a body of citizens gathered as representatives to discuss the affairs of the state. In the New Testament, this term speaks of the people who had been called out of the world and gathered by God into His family. We learn that God uses the church as a vehicle for displaying His glory to

His creation. These redeemed representatives gathered as the church display God's glory and wisdom, both to unbelievers and to unseen spiritual powers (John 13:34-35; Eph 3:10-11). We also discover in the New Testament that the church has an exclusive message – the Gospel. The church is the only institution entrusted by God with the message of repentance of sins and belief in Jesus Christ for forgiveness. We also see that the church possesses a certain set of ordinances (baptism and the Lord's Supper) that were established by Christ. Therefore, no one should mistakenly see the church as anything other than unique. It is not another nonprofit organization, a social group, or even a Christian company. Instead, according to Mark Dever, we ought to view the church as a corporate, organic structure made up of people that accurately magnify God's glory and faithfully communicate His Gospel.

Today, we are beginning a new sermon series entitled "In the Church." Our objective throughout these nine messages will be to describe the structures that strengthen and enable the church to display God's glory. The first structure for us to examine is mission in the church.

Mission is an interesting term that we often throw around in the local church. We might define it as "an important assignment carried out for political, religious, or commercial purposes" or as "a strongly felt aim, ambition, or calling." Mission, therefore, is that strong sense of calling that leads us to action. The church has a mission, does it not? Surely, we can all agree that there is a mission in the church. Emil Brunner said, "The church exists by mission as fire exists by burning." There is no doubt we have a mission. What is the mission of Christ's church?

Before we define and describe the mission in the church, I believe it is important for us to express what the mission of the church is not. As we think about this over and against the New Testament, we discern that...

- The mission is not to expand a political party or agenda.
- The mission is not to secure any nation's borders.
- The mission is not to end world hunger.
- The mission is not to solve the nation's homelessness.
- The mission is not to manage the illegal immigrant crisis.
- The mission is not to fix the drug epidemic.
- The mission is not to decry the social injustices in the world.
- The mission is not to eradicate abortion on demand.
- The mission is not to eliminate sexual abuse.
- The mission is not to make members feel comfortable.
- The mission is not to build bigger buildings.
- The mission is not to increase budgets, baptisms, and bottoms in the church.

Now, not all of these initiatives are bad. Some of them are very good. In fact, the Bible's teaching would lead us to feed the hungry, care for the immigrant, stand for justice, and fight for life among many other things. On the flip side, there are other initiatives that sometimes occupy the church's time and energy that ought not to be so. Remember mission is an important assignment stemming from a sense of calling. The Lord Jesus knew His calling and the purpose for which He had come to this world. He stated it very succinctly in Luke 19:10 by saying, "*For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.*" During His life and ministry, Jesus invested in and called people to Himself so that they might follow His example after His departure. Just before His ascension, Jesus called the Church to join His mission.

Read Matthew 28:18-20.

**Inquiry:** We refer to these verses as The Great Commission. It is called this because Jesus here gives a clear command and mission to the apostles and the early church. These were Jesus' final words before ascending to the Father. As such, He determined what was to be the priority of the church. Jesus could have made any one of the many other things that challenge humanity the church's main concern, but He commissioned mission as

the one thing. There are actually five great commission passages in the New Testament (Matt 28:16-20; Mark 16:14-18; Luke 24:44-49; John 20:19-23; Acts 1:4-8), which solidify the mission of the church. As we examine these verses, I want us to see and understand the mission Christ has given us in the church. Here at Red Lane, we articulate our mission by saying, “We exist to bring glory to God by making disciples of our neighbors and the nations.” Let’s look at the three components of this mission.

## 1. The Purpose – God’s Glory

*For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. – Col 1:16*

The Apostle Paul is speaking of Jesus Christ in this and the surrounding verses in his letter to the Colossians. He is making the case for the full deity of Christ as he describes the Savior’s activity in creation. As we read the creation account in Genesis 1, it is evident that all three Persons were involved. What is also evident is that God created humanity in His image and likeness and placed the first man and woman in Eden so that they might reflect His glory. This was the purpose for which humanity was created. They were to glorify God by serving as His regents over creation. Adam was not God, but he perfectly reflected the image of God.

On some level, it is difficult for us today, since we live on the wrong side of Eden, to grasp the biblical idea of God’s glory. In some ways, we wonder whether God is worthy of glory and praise. While the Bible contends that He is most worthy of glory, it mostly assumes His worthiness as it calls the reader to give glory to Him.

*Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness.  
– Psalm 29:2*

From Colossians 1 and Psalm 29 as well as the general teaching of Scripture, we discover our purpose in life. We exist to bring glory to God. Now, if you know your Bible, then you know there is a major problem standing in the way of this call to glorify God. Due to Adam’s rebellion in Eden, all of us have been born into this life in rebellion against God (Rom 5). We carry Adam’s nature. No one is righteous and holy, and no one seeks for God (Rom 3:11). We were created to glorify God, but our sin prevents us from doing so. Instead, it strives to steal glory away from Him. Humanity, therefore, is lost in sin.

Thankfully, God’s mission is to restore His image bearers so they will bring Him the glory due His great name. For this purpose, Jesus was born. He *“came to seek and to save the lost.”* God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is glorified as the broken image of God in men, women, boys, and girls is remade, which brings us to the second component of this mission.

## 2. The Strategy – Making Disciples

*“Go therefore and make disciples...baptizing them...teaching them to observe all that I have commanded...”*

The church and by default Christians are commanded by the Lord Jesus to go to others with the gospel. There is no hint that they should wait for lost people to come to them. Jesus does not commission His church to build attractional ministries that draw people to it. Instead, Jesus commissioned His church to do the exact opposite. He said, *“Go.”* The church is to go to the lost and make disciples.

This is the great strategy. We make disciples of Christ from the lost in the world. A disciple is simply a student who follows a teacher. The initial step in discipleship is the preaching of the gospel and believing on it for salvation. We see this in the command to baptize. The second step is to teach them

all of God's commands. As we seek to glorify God, we teach others to follow the Lord's example. There are four traits of a disciple of Christ:

- 1) Follows God's Word
- 2) Loves Others
- 3) Serves Others
- 4) Shares the Gospel with Others

In order to make disciples as a church, we need to go to those who are lost in sin and share the gospel with them. Then, we need to teach the Word of God to those who have responded in faith. For us to carry out this strategy for glorifying God, there are two perspectives for us to adopt.

- See the church as an embassy.  
Embassies are sovereign outposts of one nation in another nation. The ground upon which an embassy sets is beyond the rule and authority of the surrounding nation. Therefore, while it may reside in another country even in enemy territory, it reflects the sovereignty, authority, and culture of its homeland.

As a local church, we must see ourselves as Christ's embassy residing in enemy territory. While the people around us are not our enemy, they are slaves to the one who is our enemy. We want our embassy to reflect the goodness and glory of a greater King. We want the culture of our King to influence those in this foreign territory in which we live. Is this not why the church resides on earth today?

"The church is the only society in the world which exists for the benefit of those outside of its membership." – William Temple

- See the believer as an ambassador.  
Just as embassies are sovereign outposts of one nation in another nation, ambassadors are sovereign representatives of one nation to another nation.

*Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. – 2 Cor 5:20*

In 2 Corinthians 5, the Apostle Paul clearly articulates the gospel message and the ministry of reconciliation to which disciples have been entrusted through the gospel. Ambassadors of Christ represent King Jesus before lost residents of the world's kingdom.

Ambassadors share the good news of the King. Embassies teach the good ways of the King. This is our strategy for making disciples. Now, we come to the third component of mission in the church.

### **3. The Goal – Neighbors and Nations**

*"...of all nations..."*

The Greek term here for nations is ἔθνη. The idea it conveys is that of people groups rather than nations with boundaries. If we were to look at the Great Commission in Acts 1:8, we would see a call to spread the gospel out through our concentric circles of influence. The impression it gives us is to go to lost people with the gospel here and there...among our neighbors and the nations.

As a church, we believe God has sovereignly and strategically placed each believer within their circles of influence. Therefore, each member of Red Lane is a missionary in his or her neighborhood, working to make disciples in that neighborhood. Likewise, he or she is a missionary in their workplace, school, and club, working to make disciples in those spaces.

As a church, we also believe God calls us to take the gospel from our community to other places (Acts 1:8). We are to work to go with the gospel from our Jerusalem (Powhatan) to our Judea (Virginia), to our Samaria (America), and to the ends of the earth (nations). Members of Red Lane work with and support church planting in Virginia and North America. We partner with and join short term works throughout the world in places like South Asia and Puerto Rico. We also are open and responsive to God's call for us to join Him vocationally in His mission.

Our goal in this mission is to see our neighbors and the nations become disciples of Christ for God's great glory.

**Conclusion:** Mission is that strong sense of calling that leads us to action. When Jason and his wife saw that the house next door had sold, they began to think and pray about how to best represent heaven to the new neighbors the Lord was bringing to them. They viewed themselves not just as another family living in a neighborhood with other families but as a strategically placed family for Kingdom purposes. Jesus had transformed their lives, and they longed to see the people in their circles of influence transformed by His grace too. Jason and his wife embraced their role as ambassadors of Christ. They were members of a gospel-centered church that truly sought to be an embassy of Christ in a foreign land. For this reason, this Christian family worked to develop a genuine relationship of friendship with the new neighbors so that they might win the opportunity to introduce them to their King. This was their mission in life.

Today, as we contemplate the role, functions, and structures of the local church, I want us to first see what the mission is. As a church, Red Lane exists to bring glory to God by making disciples of our neighbors and the nations. How are you engaging and living out this mission in your life?