

## 13. We believe in the evangelism of the lost and the nations of the world.

(Transcript of message preached by Pastor Rick Minett on June 5, 2005 at Grace Community Church)

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*"He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.'" (Mark 16:15).*

Mark 16:15 is probably one of the most memorized and treasured scriptures in the entire Bible, along with John 3:16. The reason is because both verses teach us so much in so few words. John 3:16 not only tells us that God loves the world, it also tells us how much He loves the world, what He did to demonstrate that love and what happens to people when they respond to that love—all in a single verse. Mark 16:15 is just as concise and just as powerful because in this single verse we discover four great truths about our commission.

### The Mandate: "Go"

The Gospel is relatively simple; so simple that it can be condensed into two words: "Come" and "Go." Just think about it for a minute and I believe you'll agree. In Matthew 11:28, Jesus said, *"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."* The word "come" is used more than 1,800 times in the Bible and in many of those references it relates to an invitation from God to His creation regarding His desire to bless us now and forever. Is it any wonder Jesus said these words in John 6:37, *"All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to me I will by no means cast out."* But that is just one half of the equation. The second half is the one that gives us most of the problem, and that is the half that says "go."

When you are traveling through cyberspace on the "Internet Highway" you become very familiar with "go commands." But long before Al Gore invented the internet, the Bible was talking about "go commands." Let me give you a few examples.

First of all, in Matthew 9:13, Jesus said, *"Go and learn..."*

Secondly, in Matthew 21:28, Jesus said, *"Go and work today in my vineyard..."*

Thirdly, in Matthew 28:7, the angel on Easter morning said, *"Go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead..."*

Fourthly, in Luke 10:27, Jesus spoke about the wonderful attributes of the "Good Samaritan" and then He said these four words to His disciples, *"Go and do likewise."*

Fifthly, in John 8:11, to the woman that was caught in adultery, Jesus said, *"Neither do I condemn you; go, and sin no more."*

Now these are just a few of the "go commands" of the Bible: Go and learn... Go and work... Go and go quickly... Go and do likewise... Go and sin no more... And then there is Mark 16:15, where Jesus says, "Go..." and spread the good news. The bottom line is this: We've got a job to do and we can't do it sitting on the couch at home or sitting on the pew in the church. There comes a time when we need to "Just do it!" Mark 16:15 gives us the mandate, and the mandate is to "go!"

### The Missionary: "Ye"

The original King James Version says, *"Go ye into all the world..."* It is really pretty amazing when one thinks about it. God could paint the sky with a message from heaven that tells men and women the plan of salvation; He could fill the earth with the millions and millions of angels that stand ready to obey His command and allow them to be the messengers of truth; but instead, He has chosen us. He has chosen you! He has placed you where you are, this very hour, for a very specific purpose. None of us are here today by accident!

And because God, in His divine wisdom, has chosen us to be His messengers, that tells me that God has a lot more confidence in us than we tend to have in ourselves. That tells me that our "greatest limitation" isn't our lack of ability, but rather, our lack of ambition. In other words, ability does limit us—unwillingness limits us. Sometimes we don't even try! It reminds of an old mule named Dusty.

A salesman was driving down a country road one day when he hit a patch of mud and slid over into the ditch. So he got out of his car, walked to the nearest farm and asked for help pulling the car out of the ditch. The old farmer said, "Sure, I'll be glad to help you. Let me just hitch up old Dusty and you'll be out in no time." A few minutes later he appeared with Dusty—an old, swaybacked, almost blind mule. After Dusty was hitched up to the car, the old farmer cracked the whip and said, "Pull, Buck, pull." Nothing happened. He cracked the whip a second time and said, "Pull, Clyde, pull." Nothing happened. Then he cracked his whip a third time and said, "Pull, Dusty, pull." And Dusty began to pull until the car was out of the ditch. The man thanked the farmer and then said, "Sir, I'm dying of curiosity. If your mule's name is Dusty, why did you say, 'Pull Buck' and 'Pull Clyde'?" The farmer replied, "Well, Dusty is old and doesn't see too good, and frankly, he doesn't have much confidence now-a-days. So if he thought he had to do all the work himself, he'd never even try."

At times, I'm afraid we are a lot like old Dusty! We lack confidence in ourselves and so we don't even try! So we say things like: "I'm just a sinner; God could never use me. I'm no one special; I can't make a difference. I'm only one person; what can one person do?" And we forget the lessons history teaches us.

For example, Andrew brought Simon Peter to the Lord, but that turned out to be thousands because Simon Peter brought three thousand to the Lord on the Day of Pentecost. And it was only one man that led D.L. Moody to the Lord, but that turned out to be tens of thousands as D.L. Moody reached that many and more. And it was one man that brought Billy Graham to the Lord, who has since introduced possibly hundreds of thousands to Christ. Our potential is just as great as Simon Peter's, D.L. Moody's or Billy Graham's, because we possess the same thing inside of us that they had or have, and that's the presence of the Holy Spirit. So let us unleash Him, let Him flow through us, and begin to live up to our potential!

Think about it, the early church was deeply committed to the Great Commission and they literally changed the world in a few short years even though they didn't have the things that we have at our disposal. Some say that we, the church, are "no longer fishers of men, but keepers of the aquarium." In other words, instead of going out and gathering new fish, we just swipe fish from another's bowl. But God has a higher call for each of us, because even though we are not saved "by" good works, we are saved "for" good works. Paul makes that very clear in Ephesians 2:8-10 when he says, *"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is a gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works..."*

I read a statistic this week that said the average insurance agent makes 45 calls a week on prospects. Out of those 45 calls, only 15 will even listen to him. Out of those 15, only 2 will put their name on the "dotted line." So if an insurance agent calls 45 people and only sells two policies, why is it that we get so discouraged if we talk to one person about Christ and they don't respond as we want them to? Possibly it is because we've forgotten the mandate. The mandate is to "go and tell..." The Holy Spirit will take care of the rest! So don't allow fear and insecurity to keep you bound, just obey the Lord and "go" and you'll be amazed at what He will do through you as you simply walk in obedience to His command. And regardless of how people respond, never forget the words of the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:58, when he said, *"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."* In other words, whatever you do, regardless of the response—it counts in heaven! So "go!"

### **The Mission Field: "Into All The World"**

Jesus gives greater definition about the mission field in Acts 1:8, when He says, *"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."* Our mission field begins here in Houston. It doesn't begin in Africa or South America, it begins right here in Spring Valley, in Humble, in Katy, in The Woodlands, or wherever God has placed you.

I'll never forget a missionary that came to our church when I was a young man and he told us an amazing story. He spoke about a church in South America that he had visited that had grown by leaps and bounds in a single year. He asked the pastor what caused such a transformation and the pastor told him that a year before they had a special service that focused on the Great Commission. He said that single verse, Mark 16:15, settled so deep within the heart of one member of the church that when that member got back to his little village he wept before the Lord. He said, "God, I want to fulfill this commission. I want to reach the world for You, but how can I do that? I'm only one person and the world is so big. And greater still, I've never been out my country; and for that matter, I've seldom traveled outside of this village. My whole life revolves around these few streets." And the pastor said the Holy Spirit spoke to this man and told him, "That's right, your world does revolve around these few streets—so go into 'your world' and preach the gospel to every creature." So the man counted the homes in his little community—27! And now with a clear mission and established goal, he said, "I will do all I can through my witness and through acts of compassion to reach 'my world' for eternity." And the pastor finished by telling the missionary, "In the audience today there are 22 families in our church from his little community, all because one man was determined to reach 'his world' for Christ. And when others in our church saw what this man did, they began to step out in faith as well and the church has grown by hundreds and hundreds this year alone."

The mission field begins at home, in our neighborhoods, in our schools, at our workplaces...and then it fans out to our state, our nation, and throughout the world. That is why we support local ministries like the Mission of Yahweh and Hope Pregnancy Center. That is why we support national ministries like Young Life and the Gideons. And that is why we support missionaries in countries all around the world and why 20 of us are leaving next month to go to Mexico City, and why I'm planning for us to go to Honduras and Africa in the near future. We have a mandate: "Go..." We have a personal calling: "Go ye..." And we have a destination: "Go ye into all the world"—whether it be Africa or Houston.

### **The Message: "The Gospel"**

Don't let the term "gospel" throw you. People hear that and they think, "That's for preachers!" No! Gospel simply means "good news." In other words, tell people the good things that Christ has done for you. That's easy to do, isn't it? Tell people about the love of God—that's easy to do! It isn't hard to talk about good things and the things we love, is it? For instance, just watch after the service and you'll probably see a group of men somewhere in the foyer talking about golf. Somehow golfers find each other and love talking about that two foot putt that grows to a twelve foot putt by the time the story ends. And in another corner you'll see a bunch of folks talking about their grandchildren. They're easy to spot—you see them reaching into their wallets or purses for pictures at a rapid rate. If you ask them about their grandchildren, they'll talk your arm off and insist on showing you a dozen pictures. And somewhere else you may see a group of ladies talking about the best sales in the city or the best restaurants or the best fashions. And believe it or not, there's another group you will always find, and that's the group that lives in Houston but their heart is still in College Station. And what do Aggies talk about? Maybe they are talking about that news story that came out of College Station just this week about a plane crash. Did you see that in the paper this week? I kept a copy of it. It reads: "A small 2-seat Cessna airplane, piloted by two Texas A&M students, crashed into a College Station cemetery earlier today. Search and rescue workers have recovered 300 bodies so far and expect the number to climb as digging continues into the evening. The pilot and copilot survived and are helping in the recovery efforts." Maybe that's what they are talking about!

Seriously, people talk about things they love. And if you want proof of that, just look in the New Testament and you'll find the members of the early church talking over and over about the thing that meant the most to them—and that was Jesus! And because they constantly talked about Jesus, they changed the world! At its heart, that is what the gospel is: People talking to other people about the thing they love most—Jesus!

Let me give you an example straight from the pages of scripture. In this example, we find four steps to effective witnessing. The story is found in the 8<sup>th</sup> chapter of the book of Acts and it tells the story about Philip. It says, *"Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word. Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them. And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did"* (vs. 4-6). But verse 26 tells us that Philip didn't stay in Samaria. Something happened... Verse 26 says, *"Now an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, 'Arise and go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.' This is desert."*

The first step to effective witnessing is being sensitive to the Spirit. In John 16:13, Jesus speaks of the coming of the Holy Spirit and He says, *"...when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you..."* Does the Lord want me to witness to someone today? I believe He does. I believe He wants my light to shine so that others might see that light and be drawn to Him. But do I know exactly whom I should witness to today? Most of the time, I don't. But guess who knows? The Holy Spirit. He knows exactly who it is that God is going to allow my life to intersect with today, so that is why I must be sensitive to Him—His voice and His leading—so that I can be in the very place that He wants me to be, at the very time He wants me to be.

The second step to effective witnessing is being obedient. *"Now an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, 'Arise and go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.' This is desert. So he arose, and went..."* (Acts 8:26-27). Did Philip know exactly where he was to go and who he was to see? No. All he knew is that the Lord told him to go down a certain road and just keep walking. And with no more information than that, he obeyed. It reminds us of the faith of a man named Abraham who was told to take his beloved son, Isaac, to the land of Moriah and offer him there as a burnt offering. Abraham had no idea what was going to happen, yet he obeyed. He went to the land of Moriah and placed his son on the altar, trusting that God would provide another sacrifice, which of course, He did.

The third step to effective witnessing is simply talking about Jesus. Again, that's what preaching the gospel is all about. For example, in Acts 2 we read about the first sermon of the church. Simon Peter stood up, and who did He talk about? Jesus! And 3,000 were added to the church that day. In the next chapter, chapter 3, we find Peter and John on the way to the Temple when a crippled man begs them for money. Their pockets were empty, but they still had something to give. *"Silver and gold I do not have, but what I have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk"* (Acts 3:6). And that caused such a commotion that people ran to the Temple to see what had happened and Simon Peter took advantage of the opportunity to talk about the thing that He loved the most—he talked about Jesus. And the Bible says that an additional 5,000 people were added to the church that day. There's a lesson here somewhere: Churches always grow when people go outside the walls of the church and simply talk about Jesus!

And that is exactly what Philip did. He was sensitive to the Holy Spirit, He was obedient to the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit brought him face to face with an Ethiopian eunuch who happened to be the minister of finance for Queen Candace of Ethiopia. The eunuch had been in Jerusalem to worship even though he was a Gentile. Today we would probably call him a "seeker." Even though he held a prominent and powerful position in government, he was searching, looking, trying to find something to fill the void in his life.

"Seekers" are living all around us. You are living on a street of seekers; you are working with a company of seekers; you are related to a family of seekers. They may not say it with words, but deep in their heart they are searching for spiritual fulfillment. They know their life is empty; they recognize something is missing. And we have what they want! We know the only thing that will truly fill the vacuum in their lives. But how will they know what that is unless someone tells them? That's the exact question the Apostle Paul asks in Romans 10:14, when he says, *"How shall they ask Him to save them unless they believe in Him? And how can they believe in Him if they have never heard about Him? And how can they hear about Him unless someone tells them?"* (TLB) Philip told the Ethiopian eunuch exactly what was needed in his life. Verse 35 says, *"Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him."*

Seldom do I preach about political issues. And the reason is because I believe the primary commission of the church is to preach Christ crucified and risen from the grave, because that's the gospel! I love what John Bisango said when he was pastor of First Baptist Church here in Houston. In the seventies, he had an evangelist lead a revival in his church. The first three nights the evangelist preached hard-hitting sermons about the evils of communism. At the end of his messages he would extend an invitation for people to come forward and accept Christ, but no one ever did. After three days, the evangelist confided in Dr. Bisango and said, "I can't understand why people aren't responding to the invitation." And Bro. Bisagno said, "What do you expect them to do? Come down and join the FBI!"

I'm not suggesting that we should ignore social issues, but Jesus must be the center and focus of our message! Philip understood that and that is why the Bible says that he "preached Jesus" to the eunuch.

The fourth step to effective witnessing is being a good listener. You've heard it a million times: "People don't care how much you know, until they know how much you care." Verse 31 says, *"And he asked Philip to come up and sit with him."* And that is what Philip did. He listened to his concerns. He listened to his questions. We don't have to shout at people. We don't have to "sell our product" and somehow try to force people into responding. And believe it or not, we don't need to do all the talking! We don't have a message to sell, we don't have a message to yell; we have a message to tell. And that is what the Great Commission is all about. People like you and me who are willing to step outside the walls of the church and simply tell people about the thing that we love most, and that is Jesus Christ!

You can do that and so can I. The question is: Will we?