

Glorifying God

Glorifying God by Evangelism

Matthew 28:16-20

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Scripture

In his book *Early Christians of the Twenty-First Century* Chad Wallace makes a powerful statement:

Millions of Christians live in a sentimental haze of vague piety, with soft organ music trembling in the lovely light from stained-glass windows. Their religion is a pleasant thing of emotional quiver divorced from the intellect, divorced from the will, and demanding little except lip service to a few harmless platitudes. I suspect that Satan has called off his attempt to convert people to agnosticism. After all, if a man travels far away enough from Christianity he is always in danger of seeing it in perspective and deciding that it is true. It is much safer from Satan's point of view to vaccinate a man with a mild case of Christianity so as to protect him from the real disease.

Are you and I vaccinated with a mild case of Christianity or do we have the real disease? Are you and I excited or embalmed by the truth?

Our contemporary church is suffering from an identity crisis. It is like the severe amnesia victim crying, "Who am I?"

Professor Howard Hendricks says:

If you read the New Testament about the character of the New Testament church, one is compelled to conclude that the relationship between the New Testament church and the contemporary church is one of *contrast* rather than one of *comparison*.

But why? Why the tremendous difference between the church of the 1st century and the church of the 21st century?

I'll tell you why. The 1st century church never lost sight of its mission. They never forgot Jesus' last speech to them. They knew why they were still on earth and not with Jesus in heaven.

Do we know why we are still here on earth and not in heaven with Jesus?

Matthew closes his Gospel with Jesus' final message to his disciples. The final words of any person are often very important words. And so I want to read Jesus' final words to his disciples. Let us read Matthew 28:16-20:

¹⁶ Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. ¹⁷ When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. ¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ 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, ²⁰ 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 28:16-20)

Review

Our ultimate goal in life is to glorify God.

The first question in the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* asks, "What is the chief end [or goal] of man?" The answer given is, "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever."

The reason we exist is to bring glory to God. God created us and all things for his own glory.

The mission of our church is "to bring people to Jesus Christ and *membership* in his church family, develop them to Christlike *maturity*, equip them for their *ministry* in the church and life *mission* in the world, in order to *magnify* God."

Our mission as a church is to glorify God in each of five key areas: *membership*, *maturity*, *ministry*, *mission*, and *magnification*.

Interestingly, each of these five key areas corresponds to how we glorify God in our personal lives too.

First, we bring glory to God by worshiping him. This key area corresponds to *magnification*.

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Second, we bring glory to God by loving other believers. This key area corresponds to *membership*, which brings us into fellowship with one another.

Third, we bring glory to God by becoming like Christ. This key area corresponds to *maturity*.

Fourth, we bring glory to God by serving others with our gifts. This key area corresponds to *ministry*.

And fifth, we bring glory to God by telling others about him. This key area corresponds to *mission*.

Introduction

Recent studies have shown how far off target the church has become.

It is reported that three out of ten Christians agree that nothing in life is more important than having fun and being happy.

More than half the Christian public believes that they never have enough money to buy what they need, much less what they want.

One out of four believers thinks that the more you have the more successful you are.

Perhaps the most stunning fact to come out of this study shows that the proportion of Christians who hold these values is equivalent to the number of non-Christians who affirm these very same values!

Frankly, I was shocked when I read that report. What does being a Christian mean, I ask you?

Some time ago I came across an interesting definition of a *fanatic*: “A fanatic is a man who redoubles his efforts after he has lost sight of the goal.”

You see, if you don’t know where you are going, then any road will get you there. Ladies, have you ever driven somewhere with your husband and he has forgotten the map?

“Oh, don’t worry about the map,” he says, “I know how to get there!” After several hours he finally admits that maybe *you*

should ask someone where you are. You get the job of trying to get him back on track.

The church today is a lot like the man who is lost and does not want to check a map for directions. Many churches think that they are doing well, when in reality they are blissfully unaware of where they should be going.

Objectives determine outcome. That for which we aim is generally that which we accomplish. Aim at nothing, and you're sure to achieve nothing. Churches usually do aim at something, but so often it is not what the Lord has directed the church to aim at.

My purpose is not to say how bad the church is. What I want to do is show you what God says about the church's purpose.

Author John Stott reminds us that the mission and purpose of the church arises primarily out of the nature of God himself. He says, "The living God is a sending God."

The Father sent his Son, Jesus Christ, into the world in order to bring glory to himself. Jesus' supreme purpose in life was to bring glory to the Father. He once said, "I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do" (John 17:4).

Just as Jesus came into the world with the supreme purpose of bringing glory to his Father, so we too are to have that same purpose in life. Pastor John MacArthur says that "the supreme purpose and motive of every individual believer and every body of believers is to glorify God."

But exactly how do we glorify God? Again I quote from John MacArthur, who says, "The supreme way in which God chose to glorify himself was through the redemption of sinful men, and it is in participation in that redemptive plan that believers themselves most glorify God."

Jesus himself participated in God's redemptive plan by defining his own mission and purpose this way, "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost" (Luke 19:10).

One of the main reasons God left us here on earth was to participate in God's redemptive plan. In fact, Jesus said, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you" (John 20:21).

Lesson

John MacArthur points out that there are five elements to help us glorify God by telling others about him. These five elements are:

1. Availability,
2. Worship,
3. Submission,
4. Obedience, and
5. Power.

I. Availability (28:16)

The first element necessary to glorify God by telling others about him is availability. This attitude is implied by the fact that the eleven disciples were where Jesus told them to be. Matthew said, **“Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go”** (28:16).

Someone once said, “The greatest ability is availability.” The most gifted and talented Christian in the world is of no use to God if he is not available to God. Faithful service to God always starts with simply being available to God, putting all reservations aside.

I remember a speaker at one of the chapel services at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, where I went to seminary. Having been introduced as our main Missions Conference speaker for the week, he asked us to pray with him. We all bowed in prayer and, after a pregnant pause, John Stensether prayed, “Dear Lord, I will do anything you want me to do. I will go anywhere you want me to go—but, please Lord, don’t send me to Africa. Amen!”

I tell you that man got our attention! You see, he was illustrating the point that too many Christians place conditions upon their availability to God. And as soon as you place conditions upon your availability to God, you become useless to him.

Robertson McQuilken, former president of Columbia Bible College, once said in reference to Christians and missionary service, “Many Christians say that they are willing to go, but in reality they are planning to stay when, in fact, they should be planning to go, but be willing to stay.”

People who are not available to God for service will never fully know God’s purpose for their lives. God always uses people who are fully and completely available to him for service.

II. Worship (28:17)

The second element necessary to glorify God by telling others about him is worship. Matthew says that **“when they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted”** (28:17).

When God is not truly worshiped, he cannot be truly served, no matter how talented or gifted his disciples may be. True service flows out of an attitude of worship.

This principle is wonderfully illustrated in the very first missionary journey of the church. We read in Acts 13:1-3:

In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

Notice that it was while they were worshiping that the Holy Spirit called Barnabas and Saul to their missionary work. Further, notice also that it was *only* Barnabas and Saul who were sent off. The rest of the prophets and teachers were left in Antioch to continue the ministry there. And no doubt the mission flourished because they were a worshiping church.

So, the first element is availability. The second element is worship.

III. Submission (28:18)

The third element necessary to glorify God by telling others about him is submission. Matthew says in verse 18: **“Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.’”**

Jesus declared his authority, and implicit is submission by his disciples. Before Jesus gave his Great Commission, he stated his authority for doing so. He has been given all authority in heaven and on earth by his Father.

Submission to Jesus’ authority is not an option for believers. It is our supreme obligation to submit to Jesus’ commands. It is not ours to negotiate but rather to obey. Our attitude must be, if we are truly Jesus’ disciples, “Whatever your will, Lord, I will obey.”

The first element necessary to glorify God by telling others about him is availability. The second is worship. The third is submission. Only when these elements are present can we move to the next element.

IV. Obedience (28:19-20a)

The fourth element necessary to glorify God by telling others about him is obedience. Jesus said in verses 19-20a: **“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.”**

These verses are known as the “Great Commission.” The main verb and central command of this passage in the Greek text is *not* the word **go**. Rather, the main verb and central command of this passage is **make disciples**.

In Greek the words **go**, **make disciples**, and **teaching** are participles. As such, then, they are dependent upon the main verb, which is to **make disciples**.

Jesus' command is simply this: "You who are my disciples, you are to reproduce yourselves in this world. Therefore, go into the world and tell the world about me, baptize those who come to faith in me, and then teach them to do what I have commanded."

It is just that simple. It is not complicated.

The first element is availability. The second is worship. The third is submission. The fourth is obedience.

V. Power (28:20b)

The fifth element necessary to glorify God by telling others about him is power. Jesus concluded his statement in Matthew 28:20b with these words, "**And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.**"

Each of the previous elements hinge on this final element. Not one of us would be able to accomplish one thing for Christ were it not for the fact that he is enabling us to carry out his purposes. It is because of this promise that we can press on in the task that Christ has set before us. If we did not have a promise like this, we would all eventually succumb to discouragement and despair.

So, in order to glorify God by telling others about him we need these elements: availability, worship, submission, obedience, and power.

Conclusion

I repeat my question that I asked at the start of this message: *Are you and I vaccinated with a mild case of Christianity or do we have the real disease?*

Christian disciples are those who glorify God by participating in his plan of redemption. The Christian's life is characterized by availability, worship, submission, obedience, and power.

Does the description fit you?

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This is God's purpose for you as an individual in the body of Christ. It is my prayer that you would take God's purpose and make them your purpose for your life.

I would like to close with a parable. It goes like this:

On a dangerous seacoast notorious for shipwrecks, there was a crude little lifesaving station. Actually, the station was merely a hut with only one boat, but the few devoted members kept a constant watch over the turbulent sea. With little thought for themselves, they would go out day and night tirelessly searching for those in danger as well as the lost. Many, many lives were saved by this band of men who faithfully worked as a team in and out of the lifesaving station. By and by, it became a famous place.

Some of those who had been saved as well as others along the seacoast wanted to become associated with this little station. They were willing to give their time and money in support of its objectives. New boats were purchased. New crews were trained. The station that was once obscure and crude and virtually insignificant began to grow.

Some of its members were unhappy that the hut was so unattractive and poorly equipped. They felt a more comfortable place should be provided. Emergency cots were replaced with lovely furniture. Rough, hand-made equipment was discarded, and sophisticated, classy systems were installed. The hut, of course, had to be torn down to make room for all the additional equipment, furniture, systems, and appointments.

By its completion, the lifesaving station had become a popular gathering place, and its objectives had begun to shift. It was now used as sort of a clubhouse, an attractive building for public gatherings. Saving lives, feeding the hungry, strengthening the fearful, and calming the disturbed rarely occurred by now.

Fewer members were now interested in braving the sea on lifesaving missions, so they hired professional lifeboat crews to do this work. The original goal of the station wasn't altogether forgotten, however. The lifesaving motifs still prevailed in the club's decorations. In fact, there was a liturgical lifeboat preserved in the *Room of Sweet Memories* with soft, indirect lighting, which helped hide the layer of dust upon the once-used vessel.

About this time a large ship was wrecked off the coast and the boat crews brought in loads of cold, wet, half-drowned people. They were dirty, some terribly sick and lonely. Others were black and “different” from the majority of the club members. The beautiful new club suddenly became messy and cluttered. A special committee saw to it that a shower house was built *outside* and *away from* the club so shipwreck victims could be cleaned up *before* coming inside.

At the next meeting there were strong words and angry feelings, which resulted in a division among the members. Most of the people wanted to stop the club’s lifesaving activities and all involvement with the shipwreck victims.

“It’s too unpleasant, it’s a hindrance to our social life, it’s opening the door to folks who are not *our kind*.”

As you would expect, some still insisted upon saving lives, that this was their primary objective—that their only reason for existence was ministering to *anyone* needing help regardless of their club’s beauty or size or decorations. They were voted down and told that if they wanted to save the lives of the various kinds of people who were shipwrecked in those waters, they could begin their own lifesaving station down the coast! And they did.

As years passed, the new station experienced the same old changes. It evolved into another club. . . and yet another lifesaving station was begun.

History continued to repeat itself. . . and if you visit that coast today, you will find a large number of exclusive, impressive clubs along the shoreline owned and operated by slick professionals who have lost all involvement with the saving of lives.

Shipwrecks still occur in those waters, but now, most of those victims are not saved. Every day they drown at sea, and so few seem to care. . . so very few.

Friends, I do care. And I believe you do too.

God has called you and me to glorify him in our lives. One of the ways to glorify God is by telling others about him. Commit yourself today to tell others about God. Amen.

Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ
and **membership** in his church family,
develop them to Christlike **maturity**,
equip them for their **ministry** in the church
and life **mission** in the world,
in order to **magnify** God's name.*

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