
“Magnify Christ. Multiply Disciples. Wherever we go.”

MATTHEW 28:18-20

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AT A GLANCE

In this message, we introduce and explain **Wildwood Church’s new mission statement:**

Magnify Christ. Multiply Disciples. Wherever we go.

Rooted in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18–20), this sermon clarifies how Scripture shapes the mission of the Church and the role every believer plays in Christ’s work. We explore Christ’s authority, the advance of the gospel through ordinary faithfulness, and what it looks like to live on mission—locally and globally—under the lordship of Jesus.

WHAT IS A MISSIONARY?

Last week I introduced our new vision statement. Vision is a picture of the future that compels us forward. That picture is of the glory of Christ among all peoples. One day people gathered from every nation, tribe, and language will worship the exalted Jesus together forever. (cf. Revelation 7:9–10)

That future is guaranteed by God’s sovereign purposes. God has also sovereignly ordained the means by which it will come about: the preaching of the gospel through ordinary believers like us.

Perhaps you left last week concerned that in moving away from “Every Member a Missionary,” some might feel released from their responsibility in fulfilling the Great Commission. Perhaps people might say that the Great Commission is for the church, not for individual Christians. I believe today’s message will address that concern. We all participate in Christ’s work.

I also wonder if moving away from that statement may have caused more introspection in you than introducing it did four years ago. Now that I’ve said every member is a *not* missionary it may have caused you to ask yourself: if I’m not a missionary, who is? What is a missionary?

Now’s the right time to bring clarity to that ambiguity. We get our understanding from scripture. So, the question is what is a biblical missionary? Or what is a missionary according to the Bible?

Who could argue against Paul being the quintessential missionary in the Bible? We can discern several things from his missionary life that help us arrive at a biblical definition of missions.

I’m not going to put this in concrete today. Instead, I’m going to cover some basics and ask Pastor Andy and the Mission’s Committee to write an article that fleshes this out formally.

A great place for us to start is with the definition provided by one of our partner agencies that specializes in training missionaries, Engage Global. A brief survey of Paul’s life in Acts makes it clear how they arrived at this definition of missionary:

“A disciple of Jesus set apart by the Holy Spirit and sent out by the local church to cross-cultural, linguistic, and usually geographic barriers as a part of a missionary team focused on establishing healthy churches among every people group with a priority on the least reached.”

If you're interested in studying this more, review Acts 9, 11, 13, 15, 18-21, and Romans 15) Also, you can find all my notes on our website tomorrow under the Messages tab.

This is why our mission's partners, CrossCon, John Piper, and I all say, every Christian is not a missionary. However, all Christians have a part to play in the mission of God and that is where I'd like us to turn our attention today.

There's no better place to start when it comes to God's mission in the world than the Great Commission. Jesus left us with clear and plain instructions. No matter when a church exists or where a church is located, it has one mission – to fulfill the Great Commission.

[Matthew 28:18-20](#)

And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Normally we pray for an unreached people group each week, but today we're going to focus our prayer on the lost around us. Though not an unreached people group by definition, the Quad Cities is one of the least-churched communities in the United States. Therefore, we must see our community as part of God's mission, too.

[BY WHOSE AUTHORITY?](#)

Let's set the context of Jesus' command here. He has been crucified and raised again. He's taught His disciples for forty days (cf. Acts 1:3). Now He is preparing to return to the Father in Heaven.

Before departing, He leaves His disciples with a final command. We call it the Great Commission. Jesus begins in **verse 18...All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.** Absolute authority. Any place, any time—Jesus is King. And He commissioned His followers to do something under His authority.

It is our conviction that every Christian is called to participate in this mission according to their calling, gifting, and station in life. We are all called to be obedient to Jesus by making disciples of all nations. We each play a part; the great commission is for every believer.

As I said, one day people from every tribe will worship Jesus forever. This begs the question of how that's going to happen. I said last week that when you behold the glory of Christ you declare the glory of Christ so that others behold the glory of Christ and declare it to others.

I shared with you Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 4 where he describes our conversion in terms of God's sovereign act of shining a light into our hearts to see the glory of God in Christ Jesus. (2 Corinthians 4:4–6) Conversion begins with God, not with us.

When that happens to you, you get to become like little flashlights that God uses to enlighten the hearts of others as you preach the gospel of the glory of Christ.

[HOW DOES THE GOSPEL ADVANCE?](#)

But how does that happen practically? It's one thing to be compelled by a vision, and I hope it did compel you. But it's another to understand your place in the mission of God, especially remembering that obedience flows from grace, not the other way around.

Paul tells us in Ephesians 2:8–9 that we have been saved by grace through faith, not by works. Then, having established the foundation, he builds on it.

He adds, *“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” Ephesians 2:10*

Those good works take many forms, but together they serve Christ’s larger work of building His church and making disciples. This is His work in the nations.

Let me give you the mission of Wildwood Church and then we’ll unpack it a little.

The mission of Wildwood Church: Magnify Christ. Multiply Disciples. Wherever we go.

MAGNIFY CHRIST

Let’s unpack that from Scripture and define some terms. When I say “magnify Christ” your first thought might be a magnifying glass; that our job is to make Jesus bigger. But we do not increase God’s greatness. Rather, we acknowledge it, proclaim it, and live in light of it.

One of our church’s favorite psalms to sing is Psalm 34. The chorus comes from verse 3: *“Oh, magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together!” Psalm 34:3*

Biblically, to magnify God is to behold His true greatness, exalt Him publicly, order your life around it, and treat Him as supremely weighty and worthy. *“For the LORD is great and greatly to be praised.” Psalm 96:4*

Consider Mary’s response to her cousin Elizabeth’s blessing of her and Jesus in the womb, *“And Mary said, ‘My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.’” Luke 1:46–47*

A LIFE ORIENTED ON THE GLORIOUS ONE

The Christian life is a life of magnifying the Lord and rejoicing in God our Savior. It is a life oriented on the glorious One who both created us and redeemed us.

Those redeemed by the Lord are called to *“...do all to the glory of God.” 1 Corinthians 10:31*

Paul even expressed his desire in Philippians 1:20 that Christ be magnified (or honored) in his body, whether by life or by death. Our whole lives are to be lived with the aim of glorifying the Father in heaven and Jesus Christ our Lord.

This was Jesus’ own pattern. (cf. John 17:1–4) And this is the work of the Holy Spirit in us. (cf. John 16:14) As we walk by the Spirit, we are being transformed—not by self-effort, but by union with Christ—into His image from one degree of glory to another. (cf. 2 Corinthians 3:18)

Further, and finally as it relates to magnify, Jesus tells us, *“In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.” Matthew 5:16*

We magnify Christ as we rejoice in Him and live lives that reflect His glory to others through our loving obedience to Him in the midst of a corrupt world.

Magnify Christ: humbly treasuring *Christ’s glory* and reflecting it in loving obedience. (cf. Psalm 34; Matthew 5:16; Luke 1:46–47; 1 Corinthians 10:31; Philippians 1:20)

I’ll conclude this section with a quote from John Piper, “God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him.” Nothing you do magnifies Christ more than humbly receiving His love and responding in love back. Everything else flows from that precious and eternal spring.

MULTIPLY DISCIPLES

Next, let's talk about the phrase **Multiply Disciples**. Jesus told us in **verse 19** to **make disciples**. But He qualified that with **teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you** in **verse 20**.

You are saved by grace alone through faith alone. But saving faith never remains alone—it always bears fruit. While not every Christian is discipled, or discipled others, in the same way or to the same degree, every Christian is being shaped as a follower of Jesus whose life bears witness to Him.

WHAT IS A DISCIPLE?

Since Jesus' command is to make **disciples**, not “converts” it bears asking, “What is a disciple?”

Biblically, a disciple is someone chosen by Christ, justified and redeemed by His blood, who abides in Christ, learns from Him, and follows Him in obedience. (cf. John 15:16; Romans 5:9; John 15:4; Matthew 11:29; Luke 9:23)

Thus, the call to multiply disciples of Jesus is a call to be used by the Holy Spirit as He brings about conversion and sanctification, forming believers who, in turn, obediently make more disciples.

In 2 Timothy 2:2, Paul urged Timothy to teach others who would be able to teach others. The church exists today precisely because disciples make disciples who make disciples.

ORDINARY FAITHFULNESS

This happens all the time through ordinary faithfulness—parents discipling their children by educating them in the fear and admonition of the Lord. It happens as believers encourage one another in regular fellowship here at church and in homes, and throughout the community each week.

It happens through volunteers in kids and youth ministries who teach our young people. It happens through elders who equip the saints for the work of ministry. It happens through neighbors who go “across the street” ready to share their hope in Christ.

And yes, it happens through missionaries who are sent “around the world.”

Multiply Disciples: joyfully participating in *Christ's work* among the nations. (cf. Matthew 28:18-20; Romans 10:14, 15:21; 1 Corinthians 3:6-7; Philippians 1:3-5; 2 Timothy 2:2; Revelation 7:9-10)

You fit somewhere in this description. Every believer is called to participate—according to your season, capacity, and calling—in the multiplication of disciples. The question is: are you willing to discover where you fit, and to use your capacity to participate?

WHEREVER WE GO

So far, we've worked through magnify Christ and multiply disciples. Let's move to our final clause: **Wherever We Go**

When Jesus issued the Great Commission He said in **verse 19**, **Go, make disciples of all nations...** The command is not **Go** but rather **make disciples**. **Go** is in the aorist sense, which assumes movement. This is not a command to pack your bags and then make disciples.

A better way to translate **Go**, is “as you go” or as we did, “wherever you go.” Wherever you find yourself in the course of your life, under the providence of God, that is where Jesus is calling you to faithfulness.

James reminds us, *“If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.” James 4:15* God’s providence never replaces the call for obedience—it directs it.

So, when Jesus says, “as you go,” He means as God leads you through the ordinary and extraordinary circumstances of life. Because to be a Christian is to eagerly follow Jesus. He leads, we follow.

Thus, the statement *“Wherever we go”* assumes that we are following Christ’s lead. We know that Jesus leads His people in their local community, in their region, and to the nations because He said so in a parallel commission found in Acts 1.

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” Acts 1:8

The first thing Jesus’ followers did when the Holy Spirit filled them was share the gospel where they were. And they kept sharing the gospel wherever they went. (cf. Acts 2-4)

Wherever we go: eagerly following *Christ’s lead* across the street and around the world. (cf. Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 1:8; James 4:15)

If you go to East Moline, multiply disciples there. And if you go to India, multiply disciples there. Be faithful wherever you go. It is quite unlikely that wherever you go you’re going to participate in Christ’s work in taking a single person from unbeliever to fully mature disciple by yourself.

That cannot be the standard for obedience. You’ve got to be ok with a little planting and a little watering, knowing that it is God who gives the growth. So, if you’re in the grocery store with your new Wildwood shirt on and the cashier smiles at it, and you spur him or her on with a few words of encouragement in Christ, you’re multiplying a disciple there.

If you’re sitting at your table opening your bible with your kids in family worship, you’re multiply disciples there.

And if you hear God’s call to sell everything and go to an unreached people group with a team to plant a church you’ll be multiplying disciples there.

The key is not where, nor to what extent. The key is faithfulness wherever you go.

UNLESS THE LORD BUILDS THE HOUSE...

Church, as we set out with new vision and mission statements that we hope bring clarity and mobilize our congregation for years to come, let’s remember, *“Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain.” Psalm 127:1*

Unless we are all attuned to the leading of the Holy Spirit, these statements will be just that. But as we listen carefully to the leading of the Spirit of God and follow Jesus in loving obedience, we can anticipate that we will have meaningful impact on the kingdom of God both in the Quad Cities and around the world as we...magnify Christ and multiply disciples wherever we go.