

Matthew 4:17-25 and 28:18-20 Evangelistic Gospel Movement (Mission)

Introduction

- This month, we are looking at the Vision of Grace City Church. Today, we will be focusing on our mission, about how we do the work of proclaiming the Gospel. The "Vision" is both our dream, the goal we hope to achieve as a church, as well as what we should be engaged in as a community to reach that goal. Our "mission" illuminates the specific ways we as individuals can take an active role in the spread of the Gospel. Let's look at the mission statement of Grace City Church
 - Grace City is a gospel-centered community. (Identity)
 - Our vision is, by making disciples of Christ, that Tokyo would be filled with God's grace. (Vision)
 - Our mission is, through faithful Bible teaching and worship, to see people's lives remade, to help restore our communities, to contribute to the renewal of culture, to respond to the suffering in our society, and to bring an evangelistic gospel movement from Tokyo to the world. (Mission)
- When Jesus was on earth, how did he choose to spread the news of Heaven (which was his mission)? The Bible says that through the Word and the Spirit, Jesus is even now working among us. If this is true, and Jesus is alive and working among us, should we not seek to be used by him in his mission?
- Matthew 4:17-25, 28:18-20 (pasted at the end of the transcript)
- In the passage we just read, both in the first sermon of his ministry as well as in his teachings after he rose from the dead, Jesus gives us our important role in evangelism and Gospel mission. It is from these teachings that we have taken Grace City's 3 points of mission. Let's look at those together. First, we have each been individually transformed the power of the Gospel of Christ, so then we can participate in the work of transforming others through the work of the Gospel as well.
- Secondly, our whole lives are to be comprehensively used in this work of Jesus. In this way, the Gospel is not only at work in the transformation of individual lives, but in the reformation and renewal of our society and our culture as well. Thirdly, just as the gospel spread from Galilee to the ends of the earth, so our goal in mission is to spread the Gospel from Tokyo to the rest of the World.

Matthew 4:17-25 (ESV)

From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." 18 While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. 19 And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." 20 Immediately they left their nets and followed him. 21 And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. 22 Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him. 23 And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people. 24 So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, those having seizures, and paralytics, and he healed them. 25 And great crowds followed him from Galilee and the Decapolis, and from Jerusalem and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan.

Matthew 28:18-20 (ESV)

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."

A Gospel-Transformed Life

- In the Matthew 4 passage we just read, he reveals how Jesus's mission got started and what he preached in that first message. Jesus is telling the people the good news that the Kingdom of Heaven is coming. He then transforms the lives of 4 fishermen and calls them to be part of his mission.
- The first characteristic of Jesus's mission is that individual's lives are changed by the Gospel. These 2 pairs of brothers, Peter and Andrew, James and John, met with Jesus himself. They were each moved by the good news Jesus was sharing and consequently followed his request to "come and follow me".
- Jesus preaches an extremely simple Gospel message. "Repent because Kingdom of Heaven is near." This likely sounds like complete jibberish to our 21st century ears. However if we were to look at it in light of the whole Bible, the message would become fully clear. So then, anyone who faithfully reads and studies the Bible can hear the transforming message of the Gospel - to believe in Jesus, and repent of their sins.
- It is because of this truth that at Grace City we seek to faithfully present the Bible so that anyone can study it and discover the life changing message of the Gospel and the Kingdom of Heaven. This study, though, is not just about intellectual knowledge of the Bible or even of God himself. The Bible focuses on the Gospel that Jesus preached. He teaches so that his hearers understand with their minds, accept deeply in their hearts, and go on to apply in the lives they were living in that society. In short, he asks that the message of the Bible becomes real in our lives and the way we conduct ourselves in the society in which we live.
- This is why we listen to the word of God during worship. This is why we routinely study the Bible itself in community groups. If you go to our website, you will see a daily Bible reading (devotion) calendar. And frequently we have Bible and faith studies series that gather before the worship service.
- Studying the Bible in this way enables us to meet God and draws us into worship of him. If we were define worship in one phrase, it would be personally meeting the Trinitarian God through the message of the Gospel. Jesus says, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is near" but through worship we are able to meet with God and experience his real presence even now.
- In addition to this, the Holy Spirit is working among us, right in the middle of our world, to transform unbelieving hearts to know and accept the message of the Kingdom of Heaven. It changes the trajectory of self-centered lives into ones that are centered on God and the Gospel of Christ. This is true repentance. This is how transformation and renewal happen and how lives are made new.
 - a. Isn't this true, brothers and sisters. We are all currently struggling with the spread of COVID. But this doesn't mean that God is absent or asleep. He is working among us. As evidence of this, 2 people's lives in our community have been changed and they were baptized on August 23rd of this year. This kind of thing isn't just happening at Grace City, other churches are seeing God work in the same amazing way.
- In a way we may not be able to fully see or understand, this situation is being used in accomplishing our mission - to see people's lives change through faithful teaching of the Bible and worship. Moving forward, the thing we want Grace City Church to work towards is a focus on discipleship - seeking for our lives to be further changed by faith and repentance, and maturing to become more like Christ.
- We all have been deeply influenced by consumerism and consumer culture. We have the tendency to be comfortable focusing on our own success and happiness rather than following God. Let's move from being consumers of the Gospel being true disciples of Christ. The key to this is true repentance and faith in Christ. We are all together on this journey. And because of this, we are going to be starting up discipleship groups. I really encourage you to be a part of one of these communities.

All-encompassing Evangelism

- So now let's look at an overview of what the work of Jesus's evangelism looked like. Verses 23 and 24
 - 23 And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people. 24 So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, those having seizures, and paralytics, and he healed them.
- The common conclusion from this passage and ones like it is that evangelism is about both word and deed. That through both preaching and testifying to the words of the Gospel, and through showing love by charitable behavior, the message of the Kingdom of Heaven will be shared.
- It's common sense, isn't it, that if we pair our words with loving actions, we display that the Gospel has true power. In the book of James, he emphasizes the ease of declaring faith with our mouths, but the importance of a faith that is accompanied by works.
 - James 2:14 What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him?
- Jesus's work of healing the sick and casting out demons had an even deeper meaning in the first century Jewish community in which he lived. In that day, to be sick or demon-possessed was a sign that you had been cursed and made unclean by God as a condemnation for your sin. Approaching or touching these people was strictly forbidden. They were cut off from their community and were often jobless and homeless. But God's Gospel was for the outsider.
 - One time, Jesus healed a woman who had suffered from a blood disorder that caused hemorrhages for 12 years (Mark 5:25-34). Because of this woman's bleeding, she was unclean, unable to be with other people, and therefore thought she was unable to be touched by Jesus. So she quietly came up to Jesus and tried to secretly touch the edge of his robe. The moment she touched his robe she was healed. But then Jesus went out of his way to single her out of the crowd and declare that it was her faith that healed her. He then reinstated her to her community with the words, "go in peace, and be healed of your disease."
- Do you see what he was doing here? Jesus did not just save this woman and individually change her life. He restored her relationship with her community. This woman's long-awaited healing and her reinstated presence in the community would have had a large impact, would it not? It would have likely ignited a community renewal as well.
- Jesus's work of healing this woman shows us how the Gospel can work to restore the discrimination, hatred, condemnation, sadness, despair, distrust, superiority, and self-centeredness that plague our communities. This Gospel can be the starting point, the breakthrough point, for new life in our communities. It's a bright lamp of hope, even if it's small.
- So, we proclaim that Grace City's mission is "to help restore our communities, to contribute to the renewal of culture, to respond to the suffering in our society". This is not evangelism based solely in our words, but an all-encompassing evangelistic message that is made real in every part of a person and the society in which they live.
- There are some of you who hear "contributing to the renewal of culture" and may think this statement is a little grandiose, and may be suspicious that the church should even have a role in cultural renewal. However, we believe that the Gospel affects everything and is about changing the entire world into God's Kingdom. The story of redemption, creation -> fall -> redemption -> renewal -> restoration, is continuing even now.
- The Bible tells us we are to "be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it". We are commanded to create spaces that are filled with the love of God and his glory. This is called the "cultural mandate". This includes art, work, and all kinds of labor, including housework and child-rearing.
- If you have been changed by the Gospel of Christ, you will grow in your desire to show how wonderful God is in the work that you do. Through intentionally sharing the Gospel in evangelism and work, you will begin to be used by God in this way. Do you all think this way? The Bible says that the work of Jesus Christ included the proclamation of the

Gospel message and the healing of “the sick and hurting, the demon-possessed, the epileptic, and the paralyzed people”. Jesus answered society’s distortion and pain with love and justice.

- What happened afterwards to these people that Jesus healed? Surely they told everyone about their Healer. Surely they began to live out the love of Christ in their communities. Because they were healed, surely they began to show how the Gospel is real in the work they were now restored to do. Brothers and sisters, out of his great love for us, Jesus died on the cross for our salvation so that we can work to redeem the communities in which we live.

The Movement of the Gospel

- A ministry that looks like this would surely cause a movement of the Gospel and evangelism, would it not? In fact, our passage says the impact of Jesus spread from Galilee to Jerusalem.
 - Matthew 4:25 (ESV): And great crowds followed him from Galilee and the Decapolis, and from Jerusalem and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan.
- Here you can see the geographic spread of Jesus’s ministry. Within the very first movement of this new Gospel message, the word of Jesus spread all the way to Jerusalem. At this time, it was common knowledge that Jesus’s message was focused on the Jewish people, but let’s not forget that even in this first phase of the spread of Christianity, Gentiles were also coming to faith in him. Decapolis was a group of 10 cities along the Sea of Galilee populated by Gentiles. In verse 24 we can see that Gospel also spread to Syria and Palestine (modern day Syria and Arab Republics). So you can see that the Gospel message reached many Gentiles even from the very beginning.
- Then, after Jesus’s work of redemption through his death and resurrection, he gave the disciples what we call the “Great Commission” - their great evangelistic mission to the world.
 - Matthew 28:18–20 (ESV): 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.”
- Jesus said “make disciples of all nations”. In Tokyo, in Japan, and even in all the world, there are people who believe in this Gospel. Tokyo is a global city, filled with people from all nationalities and ethnicities. This means that since we live in Tokyo, we can be ministering to the whole world right where we are. People from all over the world come to visit, live, and work here. And people move from Tokyo to all parts of the world as well.
- Brothers and Sisters, let’s spread the seed of this Gospel message. Let’s go out and make disciples. Let’s teach and study the Gospel that Jesus taught us. Let’s discuss, encourage, and pray together for how this message will continue to spread more and more. Let us be used by God in such a way that through faith and the process of repentance, we will grow in spiritual maturity and in so doing, Tokyo would be filled with the grace of God.
- In doing this, though, you could still say there is the difficult cultural barrier to the work we are trying to do. However cultural and ethnic barriers to the Gospel have been around since the time of the Bible. At that time the opposition between Jews and Gentiles, particularly Samaritans, ran deep, and both sides treated each other as enemies.
- Even among us, we find the sin that damages our relationships and communication causes barriers to deep fellowship with each other. This can be a result of the self-centered and a false “self-love” that causes us to put ourselves before the needs of others. Sometimes we are paralyzed by fear of others and unable to let them in at all relationally. And on the other side of self-centeredness, we can be so focused on others that our pride or our envy can result in us being used by others or self-deprecation in front of them.
- But remember what Jesus says to us in this Great Commission passage. “Behold I will be with you, even to the end of the age.” It was because of our opposition, hatred, pride,

and envy that Christ offered himself on the cross as a sacrifice of love for sinners like you and me.

- And because of this miraculous love, you and I are able to go out into this world and in love work towards the movement of the Gospel.
 - Grace City is a gospel-centered community. Our vision is, by making disciples of Christ, that Tokyo would be filled with God's grace. Our mission is, through faithful Bible teaching and worship, to see people's lives remade, to help restore our communities, to contribute to the renewal of culture, to respond to the suffering in our society, and to bring an evangelistic gospel movement from Tokyo to the world.