

Sermon Outline

“We Promote What We Prize” – Matthew 28:16-20 – Jon Smith September 4, 2011

Introduction

1. If we want to grow in evangelism, personally and as a church, it is probably not going to happen by focusing on the great need in the world today, as great as that is. It's not going to happen by focusing on endless evangelistic programs in which to participate, as helpful as they can be. It isn't going to happen by focusing on apologetics, as important as this knowledge can be. It is going to happen by focusing on God.

Why Should We Evangelize?

1. In Matthew 28:16-20, there is one command in these verses: “make disciples.” The other words, “go,” “baptize” and “teach,” describe *how* we make disciples. So if we read that command and consider “how one is to make disciples,” the answer is you do it by going, baptizing and teaching.
2. Immediately before this command is a very important word: “therefore.” “Therefore” connects and grounds what Jesus is about to say with what he just said. And what he just said was, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”
 - a. Jesus is saying that God's unstoppable mission begins with an unbelievable message before we go make disciples: we must stop and treasure who God is and prize the person and work of his Son. What this passage reveals is that *the mission of Jesus is grounded in the identity of Jesus*. And the identity of Jesus is this: He possesses all authority in heaven and on earth.
3. So what is Jesus saying? He is saying that he has *the right to define reality and the might to carry out that reality*. What does Jesus have authority over? All of heaven and earth, i.e., everything! Not only does Jesus have all authority over nations and nature, but Jesus also has the authority to rescue us from the prison cell of sin and rebellion in which we lived. He is not one king among many. He is the King of kings who sacrificed all to take on the poverty of humanity, live the sinless life we could never live, die as a ransom in our place and rise again to redeem us from eternal condemnation and hell.
4. Why should we evangelize? Because Jesus Christ is King, and as King is worthy to be made known in the all the world. Evangelism is a rescue mission to reality – the reality that Jesus is the One true God and there is salvation in no one else.

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- a. Our worship of Jesus and evangelism are inextricably linked together. They are linked together because we proclaim what we prize. There is no greater reality in the entire universe that deserves our total and passionate admiration, esteem, love, and affection than Jesus. God is worthy to be made known and proclaimed for who He is. The proclamation of our great God and Savior is, therefore, fundamental to our engagement in evangelism.
- b. When we are captivated by who God is, we evangelize. When Jesus is our greatest treasure, we promote what we prize; we bring Jesus into everyday conversations.
- c. So why don't we evangelize? If we are not evangelizing, it is usually not because we lack skill. It is most likely because we are admiring something else more than Jesus. It is because we have given our heart to cherish something else more than him. It is because we fear something else more than we fear him. The main question we all need to think about is this: What does my engagement or lack thereof in evangelism reveal about who or what I prize the most?

How Do We Evangelize?

1. *Pray.* This mission exceeds the faith, bravery and determination of the very best of us, *unless* we have help from a greater source than ourselves. We must pray that God gives us the zeal, courage, determination and faith to follow him. Without this we cannot be what we profess. We can't muster up the strength, the intellect, the perseverance needed. We can't create a love for the lost. But he can. If we try to do this in our own strength, we will be miserable missionaries; we will fail. But if he fills us with his power, the world can be turned upside down. We must pray.
2. *Know.* We promote what we prize and we do not prize what we do not know. Evangelism is mainly a transfer of Truth: the Truth about God. In order to share this truth we need to know this Truth. If we want to prize Jesus more, we must know him more deeply by studying the character of God and the person of Jesus.
3. *Go.* We must go and seek the lost by being with them, loving them, and sharing the truth of the gospel with them.

Conclusion

1. How confident would you be to go out into the lost world if Jesus were to show up right now, stand right next to you and say, "Let's go. I'm with you. Hold my hand and follow me. I will keep you, and strengthen you"? In fact, that *is* what he is doing, "And behold I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).

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Fellowship Starters

1. Take time as a Care Group to read Matthew 28:16-20.
2. What does your engagement, or lack thereof, in evangelism reveal about who or what you prize the most?
3. What fears do you have about sharing your faith with those around you?
4. What have you learned about God from his Word lately that has captivated your heart? How can you allow that new revelation to increase your love for God? How can you share these new thoughts about God with others?
5. What can you do to grow in knowing, loving and prizing God the Father and Jesus Christ?
6. How can the truth that all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Jesus (Matthew 28:18) practically change your posture toward sharing your faith in daily life?
7. What does "go" look like for you? What one step could you make this week to move you in that direction?