

The Great Omission

Matthew 28:16-20; Luke 10:25-37

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May 6, 2012 – Evening Sermon

We want to approach and deal with iShare all throughout this year to try to get each and every one of the members of our congregation more engaged with sharing the Gospel and Christ's love with other people. Eric Reebals, a pastor on staff here, came up with a concept of exploring why is it we don't share the Gospel more than we actually do. He referred to it as the Great Omission. We have the Great Commission that says to go and make disciples of all nations but why is it that we have the Great Omission? Why is it that we don't share the Gospel with the frequency that we should? Maybe you do share the Gospel with the frequency that God expects you to so perhaps you don't need to read any further but for the rest of us we want to share the Gospel more and we're trying to figure out what hinders us from growing more significantly in sharing the Gospel. As I began to think and pray my way through this I just want to share what the Lord laid on my heart and I hope and pray it helps you. Hopefully this will help you think about what the obstacles are that are keeping you from being more consistent in sharing the Gospel.

When I ask my kids how they are doing that's a loaded question. All that is in that question is 'how are you doing emotionally', 'how are you doing relationally', 'how are you doing physically', 'how are you doing spiritually', 'how are you doing financially', 'how are you doing academically' and all that is wrapped up in 'how are you doing.' The first answer I get is whatever category they are doing best in. They don't generally know that I know that so they are clearly going to give me the best answer they can possibly think of and then we kind of work our way to the more difficult category. The one they generally never respond to is the one I generally keep in the conversation by saying how are you doing in this particular area. I have to be honest, if they lead with how they are doing relationally or emotionally I'll generally hand the phone to my wife and let her take it from there. She is incredibly blessed in helping someone in that area.

So how are you doing? If you want to answer me relationally, my wife Sonya is here tonight and she'd love to talk with you about that. Once we get past that I'd like to ask how you're doing in the priority areas in your life. This is not the priorities that you would determine or that I would determine for myself but if Jesus were to tell you what the priority areas are, how are you doing in the areas

that He has designated for your life. Jesus was asked by the Pharisees “What’s the priority in life?” It was worded a little differently saying “What is the greatest commandment?” If you were to ask the person you work for what the greatest commandment was that you were under with them, they will tell you what the priority of your job is. So when we ask God what the greatest commandment is, He’ll tell us what the priority is. He will tell us what we do first.

Jesus’ answer is “To love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind” and He goes on to say “to love your neighbor as yourself.” In Luke 10 Jesus gives the same answer but to a little bit different question. He is basically gives the same answer to a lawyer. Luke 10:25-37 says

[25] And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” [26] He said to him, “What is written in the Law? How do you read it?” [27] And he answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.” (In other words, the lawyer already knew what the answer was going to be.) [28] And he said to him, “You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live.” [29] But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

(If he is having to ask who is my neighbor then he couldn’t possibly have the first thing Jesus said down pat to love the Lord your God with all you heart, soul, mind and strength. If you have to wonder if you’re loving the Lord your God then you’re missing the point already. In his mind this is hard to measure but what might be objective is asking Him who is neighbor is.)

[30] Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. [31] Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. [32] So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. [33] But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. [34] He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. [35] And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, ‘Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.’ [36] Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?” [37] He said, “The one who showed him mercy.” And Jesus said to him, “You go, and do likewise.”

This is a pretty simple story that Jesus unfolds here and clearly Jesus exaggerates the story for emphasis. He is basically saying a man has been

robbed and beaten to death and literally been left for dead. Jesus could have said anyone could have walked by but He says that specific people walked by and He does this for emphasis. He wants to make sure we understand and He is ruling out some of the objections the lawyer might have. When Jesus said a priest walks by He is telling the lawyer to imagine a person walking by that you would expect would do the right thing yet He says that he does nothing and continues to walk on. Then He ups it by saying a Levite walks by, the office which was set apart by God to make the man think that certainly he would do the right thing. Yet Jesus said the Levite just passed right by. Then Jesus says a Samaritan walked by who would have had every reason to have hatred for this man and yet Jesus said the Samaritan had compassion on him. The Samaritan saw what anyone ought to see. He saw what was obvious, stopped and helped.

As I look at that story I want to believe that this is a good illustration for back in Jesus' day but that it won't work now. I would love to say that we live in a day where this story wouldn't work. There would be no way someone would walk by someone who had been beaten that badly and let them just lie there. I would love to be able to say that but I know that is not true. If you go online today you'll find out that this happens even today. People can see someone that has been left for dead and really keep moving on without doing something. Somehow we have grown so callous in our society and all around the world that we could just look at that and move on. What on earth would cause us to do that? What would we say to that guy if we ran into him later?

One of the reasons someone would give for not stopping is categorically "I didn't want to get involved" in which they think there is a lot more going on there and it's a messy situation so they just didn't want to get involved. They think they have enough to handle in their life as it is and didn't want to get involved. Perhaps a reason could be that they were fearful about getting involved and think the same thing could happen to them. They might think that the man would turn on them and think they were the one who did that to him. They may think that there is too much going on in their life to stop and get involved. Bottom line is they wouldn't say they are too busy but they'd just look and wouldn't care enough to stop. Practically speaking that is what could happen and does happen in our own community and all over the world.

Even though I know that happens I don't believe there is a person in this room that would do that. If you would not stop, then don't tell me because I want to believe the best in our civilization. It's hard for me to believe that we could literally and physically do that. The reason I use this story is because if we could see people the way God sees people which is what He is trying to teach us to do then we would stop. These people that are beaten down are created in the image of God and yet Satan has robbed them of that truth and the understanding of the Gospel. Satan is seeking to devour them. In a sense we could say that every unbeliever in the world today is left for dead. They are literally the walking dead.

Why left for dead? It is because the wages of sin is death. It is separation from God.

So in a very real sense I have to ask myself is it simply because I can't see their wounds, their destiny, and the destruction in their life that makes it so easy to walk past someone who is an unbeliever and if so, what could I ask God to do in my life? How is it that we can walk past those people every single day and not stop and have compassion on them? I'm not going to say that I know what the primary reasons are that people don't share the Gospel. I can tell you some common reasons why people don't but I'm not sure I know the primary reasons. It's not that I need to know what they all are but I just need to know what they are for me. You need to know what they are for you. I thought we would go through a handful of these reason in this study and perhaps some will impact you.

I think one of the reasons we're not more active in sharing the Gospel is that we really don't believe that person will die and spend eternity in hell. I wonder if we don't just sometimes struggle to believe in the reality of hell. It is not a popular thing when you talk a lot about hell. When you go to these churches that are growing like crazy many of them don't mention hell. They may tell you how God wants you to be happy and blessed but they won't talk about the reality of hell. Jesus did put that thought before His disciples. He wanted them to live with the perspective that judgment is coming. They understood that those who didn't know Him at their death or the point of His return would spend eternity away from Him.

I believe that Jesus did see unbelievers as beat up people left for dead on the side of the road. I'm not sure we understand the reality of their situation because we see them differently. For many of these unbelievers in our life they may look like they have it all together. They are trying to convince themselves, if not everyone else, they are on the right path. So they are trying as hard as they possibly can to grab all the world that they can get and they are trying to convince everyone they are okay. They may even seem antagonistic to our point of view. That is the moaning of a person who is beaten, lying on the side of the road and left for dead. It may sound like an argument of strength but it is a push back from a position of weakness because they do not know the Lord.

If you say that you struggle with understanding the reality of hell I would encourage you to do a study of the Bible on hell. There are a lot of good resources on the internet where you could cross reference words on hell. If you go to Bible Gateway on the internet you could type in hell under topics and it would bring up every verse in the Bible that mentions that word. You can find out what God says about hell, what Jesus says about hell and what He is teaching us about the reality of hell. Then ask God to give you that perspective. Lord, let me see people through Your lens. Let me see myself correctly through Your lens.

The second common reason is whether we really love other people. Think about what happens when you drop a pebble in the water and the ripples it creates. Now put yourself in the middle of those ripples. How far out does your love go? Because of our human nature and sinfulness there is some extent where it gets hard to love those that are so different from us. If at any point these people push back where they serve as an antithesis of ourselves then it gets really hard to love them. To love them with the love of Christ would be to say while we were yet sinners Christ died on the cross for us. In Christ's pond there are no close ripples, no one similar to Jesus because there are none who seek Him, no not one. As far away from that as you can possibly imagine Christ died for us. While we were enemies of His Christ chose to die for us and He has called us to love other people.

He says that the world is going to look at you to first see if you love your God which is priority number one, and then the world will see if you love one another. He says that it is fair for the world to look at the church and see if the church loves one another. Then the world will look and see if you love them. Are you able to love them even when they are being antagonistic toward you or their existence serves as the antithesis of that? I believe that is impossible and that we're incapable of doing it unless Christ loves them through you. We are incapable of loving someone who is our enemy before us but it is possible in Christ. He can give us a love for certain groups of people that would literally be an antithesis of us. If that would be your struggle just ask God to break your heart and then move toward someone in that sphere and begin praying for them in every aspect of their life. Ask God to give you the ability to see them the way He sees them.

A third reason is that perhaps we have a bad view of grace. We tend to lose our amazement with grace. The people who tend to be the most aggressive in sharing their faith are new Christians and then we grow entitled. We begin to feel like we deserve this and we use grace as kind of a rationalization to us to create this safe place for us where we're loved by God. Then we don't understand why we should be amazed by grace and why we should share this with other people. So one of the reasons we don't share the Gospel is because we don't understand an accurate view of grace. We are saved by the grace of God, sanctified and it is by the grace of God that He would chose to use us in sharing Him with others.

I love the way Jerry Bridges in his book *The Disciplines of Grace* says we should preach the Gospel to ourselves every day. Wake up every day and repeat the Gospel back to yourself every day. Thank the Lord for opening your eyes and the grace He has poured out upon you. Acknowledge and confess your sins daily before the Lord and thank Him for the gift of eternal life. Thank Him for the work He is doing in us that we cannot do ourselves. When you finish doing that then say verbally the names of those you know are not believers. Surely we can get in

the habit of doing that daily and surely God will give us a heart to know that these people are in need of grace.

The fourth reason is that we're afraid. It's a unique kind of fear. The most common experience I have is so trivial that it's almost embarrassing to say out loud. I'm afraid that they will not think great things about me. I'm not afraid that when I share the Gospel that I will get hurt physically or they'll kidnap my family. I'm afraid that it won't go well and in not going well they'll think not great things about me. There are two ways I try to work my way through that. One is very practically and not a new revelation to me that there are those who already don't think great things about me. I give people plenty of other reasons not to think great things about me and the Gospel sharing is not the primary one that will cause someone not to think great things about me. Secondly, I would think, how arrogant that is. I have just placed myself in front of the name of Jesus Christ. I am more concerned about what people would think about me than proclaiming the name of Jesus Christ. And two I'm more concerned about what they think of me than their eternal destiny. I really shouldn't think out loud like that because it's extremely convicting when you do it to yourself like that. So what I'm really afraid of is that they wouldn't like me or that they wouldn't think great things about me?

I've also realized that the concept of fear that exists here is more of a spirit of fear than it is a reality. Satan is the father of deception and he can place a spirit of fear on you. A spirit of fear is like when you're child thinks there is a monster under their bed. There is no monster under their bed and there never has been. It's a spirit of fear. There is uneasiness in their life and so now all of a sudden they have fear that's not real. Several years ago in my life something traumatic in my life happened and I was trying to deal with this and about a week later I drove someone to their house and drove the next three miles scared to death back to my house. I thought someone was in my trunk and had gotten in their when I walked up to the door for a minute with the person I dropped off. I sped home and wondered about whether to park in the garage or outside. That was a spirit of fear. My world was shaken and so I was living in this spirit of fear.

The same thing happens in sharing the Gospel. Is it a real fear? It has not been a real fear for me but it is a spirit of fear where Satan is doing a work trying to convince me that when I go out and share the Gospel to someone that person will turn on me and cause life to be more difficult for me. Satan wants to put the spirit of fear before me. If you're like me you begin to spiritual rationalize the fear where I begin to think that someone else should share the Gospel with this person. I'm not the right person for this so God wants me to pray for this person, be nice to them and then God will send someone else to share the Gospel. I begin to rationalize that fear. Once again, it's still self-focused.

If that is it then you do what you always do when you want to deal with the fear in your life. You shine the light of Truth on the lie. Satan gives you the lie that you ought to be afraid and you just shine the light of Truth on that lie. God said in

Matthew 28:19- 20, [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.* God is saying that He is with us in every single Gospel conversation we would ever have and He is in control of that other person too. He is in control of the person's response. He is in control of the world. He can take care of it. We are just to share His love with them. He will take care of what happens. God will never leave us or forsake us. He will never send us out to do something that He will not empower us to do and that is certainly true of sharing the Gospel with other people.

The fifth reason is I'm not sure we understand the command were under by God. We have been approved by God to be entrusted with the Gospel. That means that we are stewards of the Gospel. Evangelism is a stewardship issue in our life. Somewhere along the way Satan has done a work in the way we think about this and that evangelism has become like an elective, meaning that there is core curriculum that you have to have. Prayer and understanding the Gospel are a core curriculum. For some people who want to minor in their relationship to the Lord can minor in evangelism or you can take it as an elective where at some point in your life you add evangelism as an elective to your life. To some degree we feel it is somewhat optional. We never say it's optional but it's clearly the add-on for the certain types of gifted people. Because there are people who do it better than us we somehow think we shouldn't have to do it. It begins to feel like this 'in addition to' the rest of what God has called us to do. I just think we've missed the boat on that.

God has called us to be entrusted with the Gospel. He has saved us with the blood of His Son and told us to go and share that with other people. Clearly this is not too much to ask when you see what He did to save us so when He has put that before us I don't think we completely understand that it is a command for us to go and share the Gospel. Since He has entrusted this to us it becomes an issue of stewardship. When God entrusts something to us He explains in Scripture what that means and one of my favorite illustrations of this is the parable of the talents. In this parable a master goes and gives talents to people, to one he gives five, another two and to another one. He entrusts those talents to them. They go away and the one with five invests it and puts it to use and so does the one with two but the one with one talent has an accurate perspective of God but an inaccurate perspective of what God expects.

The person with one talent knows God is a shrewd God, and that He will come back and check on what they do with the talent. So the person buries the talent and so he still has what was given to him even though he did nothing with it. The master says "You wicked and lazy servant." God has entrusted us with the Gospel which is a stewardship issue for us and He wants us to go share it with all the world, those He has placed within our path. We know that God knows what we do with it. We may study it and we're certainly grateful for it but we don't tend

to invest it with anyone else. What would God's perspective on that be? How does God view stewardship, those things that have been entrusted to us?

God's view on that just comes out of that parable of the talents. He has high expectations of the commands that He gives us. We are under the command of God to share Him with other people. He didn't tell us exactly which people we are to share with but He told us it ought to be a lifestyle that we ought always be talking about Christ to others. We don't know exactly when those opportunities will come up but we are to continue to be good stewards of the Gospel. Just like all the other issues of stewardship in your life, you don't necessarily know when and to what degree they take root and bear fruit. Think about all the other issues of stewardship in your life. You use them and invest them but you have no idea perhaps until a long way down the road what fruit will come from that. Our responsibility is to honor the Lord with the use and the expression of that talent/gift God has given you and the Gospel. God's responsibility is to produce the fruit from that.

Thank the Lord that He entrusted us with the Gospel but He did not entrust us with salvation. Praise God He entrusted us with the Gospel because that we can do. We cannot give ourselves salvation, only God can do that. I'm not sure if the reasons I have given you in this study strike a chord or not in you but I will give you a chance to pray through that in a moment. Before I do I want to read the words from a song I heard recently titled "I Refuse." While I read the words to this song just pray to yourself as you hear them. Here are the words to the song "I Refuse."

*Sometimes I
I just want to close my eyes
And act like everyone's alright
When I know they're not*

*This world needs God
But it's easier to stand and watch
I could say a prayer and just move on
Like nothing's wrong*

*But I refuse
'Cause I don't want to live like I don't care
I don't want to say another empty prayer
Oh, I refuse*

*To sit around and wait for someone else
To do what God has called me to do myself
Oh, I could choose
Not to move but I refuse*

*I can hear the least of these
Crying out so desperately
And I know we are the hands and feet
Of You, oh God*

*So, if You say move
It's time for me to follow through
And do what I was made to do
Show them who You are*

*I refuse to stand and watch the weary and lost
Cry out for help
I refuse to turn my back
And try and act like all is well*

*I refuse to stay unchanged
To wait another day, to die to myself
I refuse to make one more excuse
I refuse.*

My prayer is that you would refuse before the Lord tonight to let anything else stand in your way of sharing the Gospel to those people He has already placed in your life and those people He will sovereignly place in your life as well. Get with someone who can help you stay accountable to sharing the Gospel with those people God has laid on your heart. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, I thank You for this time in Your Word. Lord, thank You for Your Son, Jesus Christ. I thank You for Your Gospel, the message of Hope and for allowing us to be entrusted with Your Gospel. Lord, would You forgive us for our unfaithfulness, for not loving people the way You have loved us and would You set aside our pride and give us humility before You and them? Lord, would You guide and direct our conversation? Give us Your lens. Allow us to see the people in our life the way that You see them and then use us O Lord to draw them unto Yourself that You would give them saving faith. We pray that so desperately before You O Lord. We want to see You move in and through our life and we ask that in Jesus' Name, Amen.

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